From Rogers to Netherton: 
A Heritage of Baptist Presidents 
The First: Rev. William Rogers

William Rogers was born April 3, 1817 and was educated at Maryville College and the University of Tennessee. He first joined the Baptist church and was baptized at the Ellijoy meeting house in Blount County. He married Miss E.J. Williams and was the father of two sons.

Licensed to preach on September 27, 1842, he was called to ordination by Pleasant Grove Church in Sevier County in May, 1846 and was later ordained by Nails Creek Church. Rogers became a member of the Dandridge Baptist Church (now First Baptist) on October 28, 1848 and served as pastor from 1849 through 1851, succeeding the famous Elder Duke Kimbrough.

According to minutes of a church meeting held on Saturday, January 24, 1852 it was “…mainly through his instrumentality a Sabbath School was organised and built up in our church for the education and instruction of all who chose to attend it, with a good Sabbath School library–An evening Sabbath School for the instruction of the colored population was also organised and conducted under his care…Also through his instrumentality an interesting and useful church library was procured and placed in our church for the use of the church and denomination…”

On February 11, 1851 Rogers was appointed financial agent along with C.C. Tipton by the Baptist Educational Society of East Tennessee to raise funds for the developing Mossy Creek Baptist Seminary. In Sketches of Tennessee’s Pioneer Baptist Preachers, J. J. Burnett writes that on August 7, Rogers reported “‘three and a half months’ labor, and $2,386.50 in bonds, notes, books and cash in hand’ for the college; also the ‘favor and goodwill of many friends,’ a spirit of ‘improvement’ among Baptists, a sentiment in favor of ‘educating the ministry,’ and some ‘difficulties to contend with’” (430).

A respected teacher of literature and science, Rogers was unanimously elected president by the board of trustees on August 7, 1851. School began in September but unfortunately Rogers contracted typhoid fever and died of complications November 24. His tombstone inscription reads: “Sacred to the memory of Rev. William Rogers…An exemplary member of the Baptist church, a useful minister of the gospel, humble and persevering in the cause of Christ. He sacrificed property, health, and life for truth’s sake.”
Photocopying the Past

The Baptist Archives has been involved in a continually growing cooperative program with East Tennessee Baptist churches. While the Archives aspire to be the repository for church and association minutes for the state’s eastern division, many churches are not in a position to donate original minutes.

Realizing this, we have begun to borrow copies of original minutes, photocopy them on acid free paper and then bind them for inclusion in the collection. Often a lending church will request a copy for their church library. A researcher then has the ability to study the copy of an original document with all of its curiosities and charm, while the original may be preserved and kept from the inevitable damage that comes with frequent use. At this time, the Baptist Archives charges only for paper and binding to cover its costs.

We are currently working with First Baptist Church, Newport to copy church and deacon meeting minutes. Other churches we have worked with in the past include Mill Springs Baptist Church (1836-1993, 12 volumes) and Locust Grove Missionary Baptist Church (1843-1953, 3 volumes). Minutes of Sweetwater United Baptist Association have also been photocopied (1830-1906, 4 volumes).

This practice has been extended to include the Baptist manuscript collection. We had the privilege of copying the journals, sermon notes and receipt books of the Rev. Jesse Archibald Lockhart (1871-1969). The 25 volumes of manuscripts span the years of 1898 through 1946 and contain information on churches in Claiborne, Grainger, Greene, Hamblen, Jefferson, and Knox Counties.

A Steeple of Excellence: The Center For Baptist Studies

In 1987, Carson-Newman established four Steeples of Excellence. These Steeples “provide a forum for discussion, scholarship, and service, to and for students, churches, faculty and the larger community.” In addition to Baptist Studies, Steeples of Excellence in Appalachian Studies, Church Music, and Wellness were established.

The Baptist Archives works closely with the Center for Baptist Studies to make Baptist heritage a living influence for the Carson-Newman College community, as well as sharing that heritage with Baptist churches in East Tennessee. This includes conducting regional “Dust, Diaries, and Data” preservational workshops for interested churches.

The CBS sponsors two lecture series each year honoring a pair of C-N’s most famous graduates. In the fall, the Carlyle Marney lectures are designed for faculty. In the spring, the T.B. Maston lectures are opened to students and the general public. Past lecturers include Will Campbell, Charles Marsh, Tony Campolo, Dennis Covington, and Bill Leonard.
Baptist History Resources

Beginning with this issue, we will provide information regarding Baptist reference materials. This will include historical material as well as material to assist in the collection and preservation of Baptist history.

**Tennessee Baptists: A Comprehensive History 1779-1999** by Dr. Albert W. Wardin, Jr., professor emeritus of Belmont University. Dr. Wardin served as professor of history from 1967 to 1993. Published in 1999 by the Executive Board of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, P.O. Box 728, Brentwood, TN 37024-0728, (615) 371-2090.

“Tennessee Baptists tells the 220-year story of Baptists in Tennessee from their beginnings in 1779 into 1999. This account details Tennessee Baptist Convention developments, but it also unravels the life of all other Tennessee Baptist groups. The work sets the journey within larger religious and cultural contexts. These features distinguish the writing from all previous histories of Baptists in the state.

Beginning with pioneer patterns, this work then carefully traces our pre-Civil War promises, post-Civil War perils, shifting patterns in the early 1900’s, and the prosperity and perplexity of Tennessee Baptist life since 1945. Fascinating descriptions of local-church life saturates the volume. Throughout the work, the writer places high priority on historic Baptist convictions.” [From the dust jacket]

Carson-Newman Welcomes Baptist History and Heritage

During its annual meeting in May of 1999, the Southern Baptist Historical Society made decisions which affected its direction and operational structure. From its beginning in 1938, the Society had moved its home several times, most recently from Oklahoma Baptist University under the direction of part-time executive director, Slayden Yarbrough. The Society’s main base of operations was moved to the Baptist Building of the Tennessee Baptist Convention in Brentwood, Tennessee. A new mission statement was developed: “Helping Baptists discover, conserve, assess, and share their history.”

Charles Deweese was elected the Society’s first full-time executive director-treasurer and Dr. Mel Hawkins, assistant professor of religion at Carson-Newman, was chosen as president. He was also chosen to be editor of the Society’s journal *Baptist History and Heritage*, which is now published on Carson-Newman’s campus.

During this time of restructuring, the Baptist Archives acquired hundreds of back issues of *Baptist History and Heritage*. While serving as the traditional morgue, they will also be sold to help build resource collections of churches and other East Tennessee Baptist constituencies.

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Formed in 1938 under the leadership of W.O. Carver at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the Society functioned from 1951 to 1995 as an auxiliary of the Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. When the SBC decided in 1995 to eliminate the Commission, the Society became an independent organization. Today, the Society operates on its own, does not receive Cooperative funds, and is self-supporting. The Society is a voluntary, non-profit organization whose primary purpose is to provide leadership and direction for the study, preservation, and communication of Baptist history and heritage. Membership entitles members to receive the journal Baptist History and Heritage, the Baptist Heritage Update newsletter, a 10% discount on other Society publications and products, and reduced fees for participating in the annual meeting. For more information, contact Charles W. Deweese, Executive Director & Treasurer. Mailing address:  SBHS, P.O. Box 728, Brentwood, TN  37024-0728 Phone:  (800) 966-2278 Email:  cdeweese@tnbaptist.org Website:  www.baptisthistory.org

TENNESSEE BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY
The Tennessee Baptist Historical Society is composed of individuals, churches, associations, institutions, and other organizations that are willing to share their resources and interests for the cause of Baptist history in Tennessee. Membership entitles members to receive publications of the Society and attend the annual meeting that is usually scheduled in conjunction with the Tennessee Baptist Convention. For more information, contact Albert Wardin, Jr., Treasurer Mailing address:  208 Old Williamsburg Court, Nashville, TN  37215

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