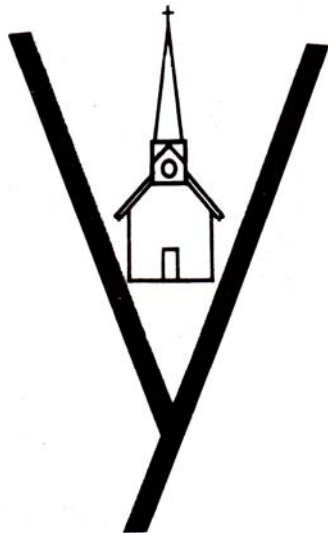


The Church Where the River Forks --



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A history of the First Baptist Church  
of Sevierville, Tennessee  
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by Harold Ownby
November, 1958 Revised November, 1970

In The Beginning

I am now standing on historic ground - the ancient site of the, Forks of Little Pigeon (now Sevierville First Baptist) church, the first Baptist church of Sevier County, constituted in 1789. Just over there stood the old meeting-house, where the old Baptist saints worshipped and where Richard Wood and Elijah Rogers preached the gospel and ministered to them as pastors for more than fifty years. And here in the old cemetery is a tombstone bearing the inscription: "Sacred to the memory of Elijah Rogers; born May, 1774: died May, 1841."

Within a few miles of this picturesque scene, on the former site of the Old Providence Church, is another tombstone bearing this inscription: "In memory of Rev. Richard Wood: Died. A. D., 1831; age seventy-five years." Solitary and alone lie pioneered the way for the Baptists over a large territory in Sevier and Blount counties, as far back as 1785. He gathered the materials for and was the founder and first pastor of the Forks of Little Pigeon (now Sevierville First Baptist) Church. He served as pastor of this church until }-,is death - a period of forty-two years.

Richard Wood was born in Virginia in 1756. He served as a soldier during the Revolutionary War and was converted by Baptist evangelists at the age of nineteen. He came to Tennessee in 1785 and settled in the Providence community of Sevier County. Near the end of 1785, he moved to the Forks of the Little Pigeon River where lie established the Forks of the Little Pigeon Baptist Church. Under his direction, the church built and occupied a log building on West Main Street, somewhere between the Main Square and the forks of the river. During tile forty-two years of his pastorate, lie had a great deal to do with the establishment of churches throughout Sevier, Blount, and Knox counties. During his lifetime Richard Wood saw the two churches he pastored much of the time, namely, "The Forks of Little Pigeon Baptist Church and Providence Baptist Church," each extend arms to three other Baptist churches in Sevier County. Thus, he was instrumental in the organizing of at least eight of the early Baptist churches in Sevier County. It was during his pastorate that the first minister of The Gospel was ordained in The Forks of Little Pigeon Baptist Church. In 1801 Thomas Hill was ordained to Preach the Gospel.

Missionaries To Knoxville

It was under the direction of Richard Wood that the East Tennessee Association now Knox County Asssciatiion, was organized in 1803. He was body for several years. The first baptism ever neighborhood of Knoxville was that of John Hillman 1 Richard Wood and Elijah Rogers. This was the tint fruit in what is now known as a Baptist city. (Thus it is seen the Baptist in Sevierville sent missionaries to Knoxville). On February 4 1831, the devoted life of this pioneer preacher came to a close.

Elijah Roger was born in Fraquier County, Virginia in 1774. At the age w fifteen lie came with his father and other members of his family to Sevier Count. Tennessee then a part of the "western territory " of North Carolina. This county at that early date was largely an unsubdued wilderness, infested by the Indians, whose hostile agassions, for a number of years, involved warfare or vigilant watching on the part of the settlers against the sudden raids of the hostile and

suspecting natives. In all of this young Rogers was an active participant.

At the age of 20, Elijah Rogers was married to Miss Katherine Clack, daughter of Spencer Clack, a Baptist and a prominent citizen of Sevier County. Rogers and his companion united with the Forks of Little Pigeon Church and was baptized by Rev. Richard Wood, who was then pastor of the church. Subsequently this church licensed him to preach but he was not ordained to the full work of the ministry till he was thirty-six years old. He was probably ordained at the Boyd's Creek Baptist Church, under the authority of the Forks of Little Pigeon Baptist Church, where he was a member.

Elijah Rogers served Boyd's Creek, Alder Branch, and Sevierville as pastor the greater part of his ministerial life. He was pastor of Boyd's Creek for more than thirty years. He was the first pastor of Alder Branch Baptist Church. He and Augustine Bowers were the founders of the church. He was successor to Rev. Richard Wood in the pastorate of the Sevierville Baptist Church. He served this church until his death in 1841.

An Embarrassing Incident

Rev. Rogers had a small Testament which he was accustomed to carrying about with him in one of the inside pockets of his coat. While getting ready to start to one of his Saturday appointments, he happened upon a pack of cards behind the barn, which some of his boys, as he supposed, had been playing on the sly and had forgotten to hide them as they intended to do. He put the cards in the same pocket in which he had previously put the Testament and went on to church. He intended to give the boys a lecture on his return home. When the time to begin preaching arrived, he had forgotten all about the cards. Imagine his surprise, when putting his hand in his pocket for his Testament, he pulled out the cards instead, in plain view of the audience. As soon, however, as he could recover himself from his embarrassing perplexity, he explained the situation and proceeded to give a moral lecture on the wickedness and folly of card playing.

Elijah Rogers was moderator of the Tennessee Association twentyfour years in succession -- a fact in itself showing unusual influence and popularity and an honor rarely duplicated in the history of deliberative bodies.

Rogers was a pioneer in missions. He could be called a John the Baptist preparing the way for the missionary movement. He was one of the first to break away from the anti-mission thought and declare his belief for missions. Churches, that were divided over the question of missions, sent for Elijah Rogers from far and near, to help settle their troubles; and few men could do more by tact and prudence to restore peace and unity to a divided church.

The influence of Elijah Rogers is still living in the life of the First Baptist Church of Sevierville. Frank Atchley, who is now Training Union Director, is direct descendent of Elijah Rogers, as is Mrs. Beulah Pack who so faithfully played our organ for a period of over forty years, and her family. Other direct descendants, who are present time members of our church include Mr. Frank Mullendore, Mrs. Hugh Blair, Miss Carol Hatcher, Mr. Robert Hatcher and daughter, and the two daughters of the late John Hatcher. Perhaps there are others that we do not

know about at this time, but we can see from this that the influence of Elijah Rogers still lives in our church.

(Note: It has been thought by some that Elijah Rogers was the founder of the First Baptist Church of Sevierville).

Richard Wood and Elijah Rogers were the chief pillars of strength to the Baptist cause in Sevier County. They, with other Baptists, had seen and felt the injustice of a compulsory religious tax to support the state church and now the pendulum had swung the other way.

Early Building Sites

For several years, the congregation worshipped in the original building that was erected on the river banks of the Little Pigeon River, somewhere between the public square and the forks of the river, possibly where the old mill stood for many years. Because of its location it was often called "The Church Where The River Forks." In the early eighteen hundreds, when part of Sevierville burned down, this log building was destroyed by fire. After several years, Spencer Clack, an outstanding Baptist pioneer of this community, gave a tract of land on Main Street at the North end of Park Road, where Carroll's Florist now stands, to the church. On this site, a second log building was erected and used as a place of worship for many years.

Following the pastorate of Rev. Wood and Rev. Rogers, the church called Rev. Eli Roberts as pastor. Rev. Roberts was born in Sevier County on October 23, 1801. While Sevier County was still subject to raids of hostile Indians, he had the misfortune to lose his mother through the hostility and treachery of these savages. The first Sunday in March, 1825, he was accepted as a candidate for baptism by the Forks of the Little Pigeon Church and was baptized the same day by Rev. Richard Wood. He was granted a license to preach in November of 1832 and a year later he was ordained by Elijah Rogers in his home church. According to the records that are available to this day, he is the last man to be ordained in our church. Rev. Roberts was also pastor of Red Bank, White Oak Flats, Wears Valley, Sugar Loaf, Bethel, and Dumplin Churches. Brother Roberts was one of the first preachers to take a firm stand on missionary ground in this part of the country. Brother Robert's influence is still felt in our church, through some of our members who are direct descendents of his. Mrs. Ada Ingle, Mrs. Ted Blalock and family, and Mr. Carroll Roberts and family are some that we know of. Perhaps there are others that are not known to us at the present time.

Rev. Roberts was followed in the pastorate of the Forks of the Little Pigeon River Church by James Cannon, Joseph Manning, W.M. Burnett, and Johnathan Quarles. Spencer Clack served as clerk of the church from its organization up to September of 1824.

Revolutionary Soldier In Early History

Spencer Clack has already been mentioned several times in this history. He seems to have been the most outstanding member of the church in its early years. He was also a very outstanding citizen of Sevier County. He served as a Lieutenant under General George Washington during the Revolutionary War. Following the war, he settled in East Tennessee

where he named Sevier County for his good friend, the great John Sevier. He was one of a delegation of five elected to represent his county in a convention called by the Governor (William Blount) to meet in Knoxville, January 11, 1796, to formulate the first constitution for the new state of Tennessee.

Clack was also a member of the Tennessee Legislature for a number of terms. One of Spencer Clack's sons became a very outstanding Baptist leader in the State of Kentucky in the early eighteen hundreds. He was the editor of the Kentucky Baptist state paper for a number of years. He also was one of the leaders in the fight against Alexander Campbell and his attempt to found the Church of Christ.

Other Churches Established

During the period of the pastorates of Rev. Richard Wood, Elijah Rogers, and Eli Roberts, The Church of the Forks of Little Pigeon River was instrumental in establishing other churches in Sevier County. The Church of the Forks of Little Pigeon River met in White Oak Flats on July 26, 1826, to discuss the organization of a Baptist Church at Gatlinburg. The result of this meeting was the establishment of the White Oaks Flat Baptist Church (now First Baptist Church of Gatlinburg) in June of 1827.

October 3, 1819, we find in the minutes, that 52 members were granted letters from the Forks of Little Pigeon River Church to constitute the Bethel Baptist Church.

Two years after the establishment of the Gatlinburg Church, thirtyeight members of the Forks of Little Pigeon River Church organized the Red Bank Baptist Church. In the church records we find: "By the request of the Red Bank Meeting House. The Forks of Little Pigeon River Church appoints Brethren Elijah Rogers. William Ogle, Johnson Adams, Andrew Connatser, and Eli Roberts as a committee to constitute the church at Red Bank Meeting House on their June Meeting."

A degree of strength had been achieved by the First Baptist Church of Sevierville by the year of 1860, but it was severely endangered by the Civil War. The rapid growth and expansion of this young church was brought to a sudden halt by this conflict between the North and the South.

Due to the pressing dangers of war and the small congregation, the church disbanded. It is written in the church records that "on Sunday, March 4, 1860, the church voted that an order be made authorizing any member of this church in good standing to apply to the clerk for a letter of dismissal. Thus, after seventy years of ministering to tile people of Sevierville and spreading the Gospel throughout Sevier County .the little log church nestled in the forks of the Little Pigeon River was left for the perils of war.

Some Quotes from the minutes of the Early Church.

1. In April, 1846 the church roll shows 86 members including 4 colored.

2. In March, 1840 the church voted that the Church Covenant be read and deferred until the next meeting, the signing of same by the members.

3. In February, 1846 the church granted a letter of dismissal to Sister Nancy a woman of color.

4. In April, 1846, a man by the name of Patrick agreed to take care of the church for a year furnishing fires and candles for a sum of \$5.00.

5. On May 5, 1855, a roll call of the members of the church was ordered. Each member reported his spiritual condition. This resulted in many rededications, and some members who did not answer were contacted and if no good reason was given for being absent they were excluded for covenant breaking.

6. In 1856, when the Courthouse burned, court was held in the Baptist Church.

7. In September, 1858, a tax of 20c was assessed on each male member for expenses.

8. In June, 1852, Indefinite call given to William S. Burnett.

9. In 1813, George Long was ordained as deacon. This was the first record of a deacon being ordained.

10. In April, 1827, the question of minister marrying a Divorcee, decided by church in the negative.

11. Some reason given in minutes for the exclusion of members: 1. Non Attendance. 2. Non Support. 3. Fornication. 4. Adultery. 5. Excessive Drinking. 6. Social Dancing. 7. Mother of Illegitimate Child. 8. Taking Money From the Academy. 9. Slave Running Away In Disobedience. 10. Profanity. 11. Singing Carnal Songs. 12. Threw Woman in Mud and Beat a Drunk Man. 13. Allowing a Ball to take Place in Her Home.

12. Records Of Membership: 1816 - 87, 1817 - 90, 1819 - 89, 52 lettered to Bethel. 1822 - 53, 1825 - 58, 1827 - 57, 1856 - 104.

13. Some Early Names of Church found in records: 1. Church Of Christ. 2. Baptist Church of Christ. 3. United Baptist Church Of Christ. 4. Forks of Little Pigeon River Baptist Church.

14. In 1848, John C. Yett and John Mullendore were ordained as deacons.

15. In 1829, William Henderson and William White were ordained as deacons.

After The Civil War

Fifteen years later the destructive war was over but the suffering and privations of the south

were far from complete. In fact, in some respects the poverty and distress that prevailed immediately after the war, combined with the repressive policies of Reconstruction, were harder to bear than the war itself. Desolation was king. As W. H. Whitsitt put, it a few years later, "Almost everything was destroyed except the courage of the people." Many church buildings had been dismantled through Military occupation or destroyed by the violence of the conflict. The First Baptist Church of Sevierville had been used by the Confederacy as a stable.

A few of the congregation reunited and found that the old building had been "completely demolished by the war." According to the first record made after the war in 1876, we find that there was no meeting held for the transaction of business of the church from 1861 to April 5, 1876.

The spirit of growth in these Baptist pioneers had not been destroyed by the destruction of war. On April 5, 1876, the few remaining members of the original congregation met in the Sevier County Court House for the purpose of reorganizing the church. Quoting from the original record we find: "The following order was adopted: Elder Joseph Manning, Moderator and Elder W.M. Burnett, Clerk.

The names of the original members (at this meeting) were as follows: George Henderson, Eliza Henderson, Huldah McMahan, and Elizabeth Blair. A call was made for letters from members of sister churches (many of the members had been "lettered off") and the following were received: Robert Henderson, Cora Henderson, Pleasant Stafford, Jerusha G. Graham, C. H. Thomas, Eliza Thomas, William Smith, Hulda Houk, Marusha McMahan, Nancy Chambers, and Sarah Henderson. So, with a group of seventeen members the church was reorganized. Brother Pleasant Stafford and Robert Henderson were elected and set apart for the ordination of deacons and were ordained the fourth Saturday of May, 1876."

Burnett Called To Preach

The church by unanimous vote called Rev. William M. Burnett as its first pastor after the reorganization. Burnett was born in Knox County on June 10, 1814. For forty years there was not a better or more favorably known preacher in Knox, Blount, and Sevier Counties, or a more stalwart defender of the Baptist faith than W.M. Burnett. During the Civil War, when lie was not serving as chaplain in the army, lie was preaching everywhere at home in both the Baptist and Methodist churches.

Besides being pastor, lie was Circuit Court Clerk, Deputy County Court Clerk, and County Trustee of Sevier County. He served as pastor of Sugar Loaf, Pleasant Grove, Henderson's Chapel, Knob Creek, Maryville, Sevierville, and Boyd's Creek. Under his leadership, the small group of men and women set about to rebuild their beloved church.

During the time immediately following the reorganization, the church held their services in the Old Nancy Academy. A little later, the congregation of the Southern Methodist Church offered their church building to the Baptist congregation in which to worship until the Baptist church could be rebuilt and the offer was accepted. After the Baptist congregation had made use of the Methodist house of worship, we find the following written in the church record; "The

following resolution by Brother Pleasant Stafford was adopted.

Resolutions of Thanks To The Methodist Church Of Sevierville, Tennessee.

Whereas, on the 29th day of April, 1876, The Baptist Church met in the Methodist Church for the purpose of reorganizing and:

Whereas, at that time and until the present, we have been without a house of worship, and;

Whereas, said Methodist Church did in Church Conference render to us the use of their House of Worship, and;

Whereas, they have by their money and words of encouragement aided us in building our House of Worship, and;

Whereas, we feel under many obligations to them for their many acts of kindness and words of encouragement, and;

Whereas, there is now existing a good feeling between us and we sincerely hope that it may ever exist

Be it therefore resolved:

1. That we the Baptists at Sevierville, Tennessee do render the Methodist Church our heartfelt thanks for their many acts of kindness toward us.
2. That should they by accident or otherwise become destitute of a House of Worship that we throw our doors open to them.
3. That we will do everything in our power to keep alive that Christian fellowship which now exists between us.
4. That a copy of these resolutions be sent to the pastor in charge of the Methodist Church with a request that they be read at their next conference.
5. That a copy of these resolutions be spread upon our church record.

Third Building Completed

In the fall of 1878, the third building of this church was completed at a cost of \$1,443.29. It was a large frame building with Sunday School rooms on both sides and in the back of the auditorium. We have no records of a Sunday School in tire church at this time, but we assume from this building that the Church did have a Sunday School at this time.

The church met on August 24, 1878 for the dedication of the new building. We find in the

church record the following three resolutions: "Therefore resolved:

1. That as we dedicate this church to the worship of God, we also give ourselves anew to his service and that we henceforth feel ourselves more dependent upon the great Giver of all good.
2. That we are under many and lasting obligations to the Building Committee for the untiring energy with which they have labored for the welfare of our church and that we heartily commend them for the strict fidelity with which they have discharged their trust.
3. That a copy of these resolutions be spread upon the records of our church and a copy be sent to the Baptist and Reflector for publication."

In July, 1880, we find in the records of our church the first mention of a Sunday School. The minutes read that in the letter to the East Tennessee Baptist Association our church shows that we have a Sabbath School with 57 scholars with a average attendance of 41; also, that we have 33 members at this time.

An Outstanding Layman

One of the outstanding laymen in the church during these years was Brother Pleasant Stafford. We find in the church record a report on the obituary of Brother Stafford. It reads as follows:

"Through the providence of God, our dearly beloved brother, Pleasant Stafford departed this life on the 18th of November, 1886. He professed faith in Christ when 14 years old, under the influence of a revival meeting held at Jones Chapel. He moved his membership from Jones Chapel to this church and was foremost in serving the Baptist church in this town. He worked, paid, planned, and prayed until the church was rebuilt and free of debt. He was a deacon and clerk of this church; both of which lie has done honors to himself and given entire satisfaction to the church.

Therefore be it resolved: That as a token of respect to his memory a copy of this obituary be spread upon the minutes of the church and a page in the record be dedicated to his memory."

Others Who Served As Pastor

Following the Rev. W.M. Burnett, who served as pastor after the reorganization, the church called Rev. John (Uncle Jack) Russell as pastor in 1881. Rev. Russell served as missionary of the East Tennessee Association for four years and two years as its moderator. He served as pastor of his home church, Jones Chapel, for thirty-eight years. He occupied the pastorate of the Sevierville Baptist Church for three years at a salary of \$ 120.00 per year. Under his pastorate, the first board of trustees was elected. It consisted of: Pleasant Stafford, C.M. Hardin, Robert Henderson, C.H. Blair, and Jesse Atchley. In 1969, we still have direct descendents of Rev. John Russell active in our church program: Namely, E. T. King who now serves as City Judge, his son, Carroll King, who at the present time is an active deacon in our church and his two children,

Shelby Allen and daughter, Mrs. Chandler McMahan and her children. Perhaps there are others who are not known to us at this time.

Rev. P. B. McCarroll became pastor of this church in 1884 and served in that capacity until his death in August of 1887. Serving as pastor-evangelist, he had much success. As pastor he served the following churches: Mt. Lebanon, Rockford, Alder Branch, Pleasant Grove, Island Home, and Sevierville. He was greatly loved by his churches, very popular with the people, and he loved children and had a great influence over them. It was during his pastorate that the Sevier County Baptist Association was organized in the Sevierville Baptist Church.

In 1888, Rev. D. F. Manley became pastor of this church and served until 1889. As pastor, he trained his churches to support the ministry and to support the gospel at home and abroad. As a result, his churches not only supported him, but gave liberally to missions and education. He was very interested in Christian education and was a member of the Board of Trustees of Carson Newman College in 1897.

Following Rev. D. F. Manley, Rev. J. S. Maples, Rev. H. C. Hampstead, Rev. W. S. Bryan, and Rev. H. B. Clapp served as pastors of this church.

In 1894, Rev. J. F. Hale became pastor of the church. Rev. Hale served the church as pastor for a period of sixteen years. During his pastorate, we find one of the most progressive periods in the early history of the church. Rev. Hale was very active in the associational life of Sevier County Baptists. It was while he was moderator of the Sevier County Baptist Association that they voted to establish Smoky Mountain Baptist Academy in the year of 1915. Smoky Mountain Baptist Academy has meant much to Baptist people in Sevier County and surrounding territory. Many preachers are still preaching who attended school at Smoky Mountain Baptist Academy and we still have many members of our church who attended this school. Today the premises of Smoky Mountain Baptist Academy have been converted into Camp Smoky, where many of our boys and girls of this county attend camp during the summer months.

Training Union and W.M.U. were organized under Rev. J. F. Hale.

Concerning the Training Union, we find in the church record that: "Each week of the month the young people have held a meeting for the purpose of promoting Christian growth and discussing live topics for the Christian of today." We find that the following have served as training union directors since that time: M.H. Cooper, Bill Atchley, Ada Allen, James Turner, Ralph Roberts, Frank Atchley, John Douglass, and Clyde Baker. Frank Atchley is the present Training Union Director. The present enrollment of the Training Union is over 200.

It is during this period that we find the first record of one of the most active organizations of the church, that of the Women's Missionary Union. In the church record of April 4, 1896, we find: "The Ladies Missionary Society report a box sent to a frontier missionary valued at sixteen dollars and twenty-five cents." And in the church record for June 3, 1898, we find: "The Ladies Missionary Society gave an entertainment and ice-cream supper to raise funds to pay off the pastorium debt."

During Rev. Hale's pastorate we find that the Sunday School was making progress. In the church record in 1896 we read: "There has been a Sunday School each Sunday of July at 9 o'clock with a fair attendance and modicum of interest." The first recorded Sunday School Superintendent was J. J. Ellis. Some of the men who have served as Sunday School Superintendent are: I. J. Massey, Robert Houk, P.M. Maples, John Chandler, S. F. Rogers, G. F. Ownby, T. J. Stafford, James H. Atchley, J. G. Price, James R. Atchley, Carl Ownby, Clifford Frost, Herbert McMahan, Paul Galyon, and Charles Ownby. Herbert McMahan is now serving as Sunday School Superintendent and the Sunday School has an enrollment of approximately 800. I am sure that there are others who have served as Training Union Directors and Sunday School Superintendent, but due to some of the church records being missing we are not able to name them.

The Women's Missionary Union has continued to occupy an important place in the life of our church. Working through several Circles or Groups, the Women's Missionary Union sponsors the Young Women's Auxiliary, Girl's Auxiliary, and the Sunbeams. They also sponsored the Royal Ambassadors before a Brotherhood was organized a few years ago. Some of the presidents of the W.M.U. that we have a record of are: Mrs. W. R. Mize, Mrs. Conly Marshall, Mrs. Carl Ownby, Mrs. Clyde Hamby, Mrs. Herbert McMahan, Mrs. Bill Atchley, Mrs. Chandler McMahan, Mrs. Paul Welch, and Mrs. James Temple, who is now serving as president. Again I am sure that there are others who have served as president that we do not recall or do not have the record of. Mrs. James H. Atchley served as; secretary of this organization from 1925 until 1968; a period of 33 years.

Rev. Hale is the oldest pastor of the church to have a living member of his family still a member of our church. Brother Clyde Hale one of our present members is a son of Rev. J. F. Hale. So it is, as in the life of other former pastors their lives are still having their influence in our church today.

Rev. W. A. Catlett, Rev. S. M. McCarter, and Rev. A. W. Daniels served as pastors following the pastorate of Rev. J. F. Hale.

A Period Of Building

Fruitful years followed because more and more the church was blessed and the need arose for a larger building. During the pastorate and under the guidance of Rev. R. E. Corum, the church decided on August 4, 1921, to move forward in a new building program. The following stands of record: "On motion duly voted at a regular session of the Sevierville Baptist Church, the Moderator, Rev. R. E. Corum was authorized to appoint a committee on church building with full power to buy, sell, and dispose of property in the name of the said church; to collect and disburse money in any way connected with said church building or church property; to select and locate a site for said new church building; and all other matters pertaining to the erection of a new church building."

The Moderator then appointed the following building committee: G. F. Ownby, S. L. Atchley, E. E. Conner, S. A. Blalock, H. D. Bailey, T. J. Stafford, and J. S. Ballard. This

committee met and organized as follows: H. D. Bailey, Chairman and J. S. Ballard, Secretary-Treasurer. After various discussions on plans etc., the committee adjourned subject to call of the chairman.

On October 21, 1921, a lot adjoining the old parsonage on Park Road was purchased for the price of \$3,000.00. On March 1, 1922, an adjoining lot was purchased for the price of \$2,750.00.

On March 15, 1924, the building committee decided to begin construction of the new building. They launched a campaign to raise \$15,000.00 to begin this work.

Contract was let August 11, 1924, for the brick work to J. F. & N. McMahan and Company and the woodwork of the building contracted with A. J. King Lumber Company.

Rev. Corum died during the construction period and for several months the church was without a pastor. The death of their pastor was a severe blow to these people who had launched out on faith in a huge building program. Even without a leader, the work went forward. The building was completed at a cost of \$65,000.00 and the congregation moved into the new building in 1926, after having called Rev. Albert S. Hale as their pastor.

Some notes we find in the records of the church during the years of 1876 to 1940:

1. In 1880 money was raised to buy an organ.
2. On February 6, 1867, a committee was appointed to fence the church to keep the hogs out.
3. In 1888, the deacons were authorized to act as a committee on discipline.
4. In 1892, Sunday School had 41 present with 72 cents collection.
5. On November 5, 1892, Mr. A. C. Atchley made application to church for license to preach. The church recommended that he attend Carson Newman College and make preparation for same. No record of the church having ordered the license granted.
6. Motion prevailed that the names of persons contributing to pastor's pay be read at the close of each quarter.
7. October 7, 1903, a committee was appointed to dispose of hickory tree in back of church.
8. Other recorded deacons not previously mentioned: J. J. Massey, W. B. Bryan, and W. A. Catlett.
9. April 6, 1938, the last person we find recorded as being excluded from the church.
10. 1940 the church budget was \$2,686.00, with pastor's salary \$1,820.00.

11. December 4, 1940, we find the second men's Sunday School class organized. Until this time there had been only one class for all the men in the Sunday School.

After moving into the new building in 1926, with Rev. Hale as their pastor, the congregation faced a debt of \$21,000.00 which was borrowed to pay the contractors, and a depression period faced them. Rev. Albert S. Hale served the church as pastor for a period of only eight months, resigning in September, 1929.

In February, 1927, Rev. Jake H. Sharp was called as pastor. This was a period when the faithfulness of the members of the church was tested. With the payment on the church debt and increasing expenses of the church it was a very testing time, but the faith and courage of the members never failed. J. S. Ballard, Marshall Davis, and T. J. Stafford took months about serving as janitor and firing the furnace that had to be fired by hand, in order to save money to pay on the church debt. Some cold periods this was an all night job, on Saturday night, to have the church warm on Sunday. The good ladies of the church took care of the cleaning because there was no money available to hire this work done.

Deacons of the church at the time of entering the new building were: S. L. Atchley, James H. Atchley, John F. Norton, T. J. Stafford, and John Whaley. These men were great leaders and were inspirational in carrying on the church program.

Rev. J. H. Sharp served as pastor from February, 1927 to 1931.

In 1931, Rev. L. W. Clark an ex-Army Chaplain was called as pastor of the church. The highlight of the pastorate of Rev. Clark was a series of cottage prayer meetings held in the homes in different sections of the town each night in the week, with great attendance, being climaxed with one of the great revivals that we have experienced, in modern times. Rev. A. R. Pedigo was evangelist in this revival and many men, women, and children were converted in this revival. Rev. Clark served as pastor from 1931 to November, 1933.

In February, 1934, Rev. J. Lacy Basham was called as pastor at a salary of \$30.00 per week. Payments continued to be met on the payment of our church debt, but there was not enough money coming in to make the payments, to pay interest, and to pay expenses. Some of the women organized a dime a week club, to raise money to pay the interest on the church debt.

On April 4, 1934, a covenant was presented to the church and adopted for officers and teachers to sign, if they expected to continue to serve in that capacity. Many of the officers and teachers signed the covenant, but some saw fit not to sign, thus, caused the closest thing to a division in our church that has occurred in modern times. Some of the members quit teaching and left the church. Some came back in later years, but some have never returned. One result of this action was, that the bank from which the 511,000.00 balance on our church debt had been borrowed, requested that we pay this debt off. Of course, this caused much concern from our membership, as this much money was not easy to come by, during these depression years. As a result of this request, on February 13, 1935, a committee of George Allen, Ralph Denton, and T. J. Stafford was appointed with authority to execute and deliver any and all papers, notes, trusts,

and etc. in the name of this church necessary for the renewing or refinancing said outstanding indebtedness. 01 March 20, 1935 this committee reported that the \$11,000.00 had been borrowed from five individuals, and the note at the bank had been paid off.

During the pastorate of Rev. J. Lacy Basham, in October of 1936, another one of the great revivals of modern times in our church was held, with Rev. T. C. Wyatt doing the preaching. On Wednesday night, October 28, 1936, there were 48 people baptized; many of whom were adult men and women. There were also 38 received by letter during the revival; making a total of 86 additions to the church during this revival.

Rev. Basham served as pastor until August, 1938, at which time he offered his resignation.

In February, 1939, Rev. H. J. Beasley was called as pastor of the church. The highlight of his pastorate was the paying off of the church debt. On September 29, 1940, this building was dedicated to the Lord, debt free. Following is a copy of the program for the dedication service on September 29, 1940.

9:00 A.M. - Sunday School - J. G. Price, Superintendent Doxology - Choir and Congregation Invocation – Pastor

Hymn - Onward Christian Soldiers

Awakening Chorus – Choir

Dedicatory Sermon - Dr. John D. Freeman Presentation of Cancelled Notes - T. J. Stafford Receiving of Cancelled Notes - J. G. Price for Trustees Burning of notes – Mrs. R. E. Corum Hymn - Living for Jesus

Benediction

On October 5, 1939, the church celebrated its one hundred and fiftieth anniversary. Rev. H. J. Beasley, pastor, presided over this celebration. On Thursday night, the church was addressed by Rev. Albert S. Hale. On Friday night, Rev. J. Lacy Basham spoke and on Saturday night, Rev. S. M. McCarter gave an address. Each of these three was former pastors. On Sunday morning, Brother S. L. Atchley gave a talk on "Church Loyalty," after which, T. J. Stafford read "The Church History." The celebration concluded by an address by Dr. J. T. Warren of Carson Newman College.

Another Church Started

During this period, The First Baptist Church of Sevierville was instrumental in the establishment of another church in Sevier County. We find in the church record that: "The church having been informed of a request of Rev. H. W. Farris, that he be invested with authority to baptize a group to organize a church at Blowing Cave; said group to be known as the Blowing Cave Mission to First Baptist Church of Sevierville, Tennessee, until such organization is perfected."

The following motion was made and passed by the church:

"That Rev. H. W. Farris is hereby authorized to baptize the above mentioned group if found in order and in keeping with Baptist rules and faith; such candidates to be baptized into the fellowship of the First Baptist Church of Sevierville and to be known as the Blowing Cave Mission of the First Baptist Church of Sevierville, until such time as they may see fit to organize a church of their own at Blowing Cave." On Sunday afternoon, November 27, 1938, Brother John M. Whaley and T. J. Stafford met with the Blowing Cave Mission to help Rev. Farris approve a group for baptism.

Rev. H. J. Beasley served the church as pastor until December, 1945, 9:00 A.M. - Sunday School - J. G. Price, Superintendent Doxology - Choir and Congregation Invocation – Pastor

Hymn - Onward Christian Soldiers

Awakening Chorus – Choir

Dedicatory Sermon - Dr. John D. Freeman Presentation of Cancelled Notes - T. J. Stafford Receiving of Cancelled Notes - J. G. Price for Trustees Burning of notes – Mrs. R. E. Corum Hymn - Living for Jesus

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Mission of the First Baptist Church of Sevierville, until such time as they may see fit to organize a church of their own at Blowing Cave." On Sunday afternoon, November 27, 1938, Brother John M. Whaley and T. J. Stafford met with the Blowing Cave Mission to help Rev. Farris approve a group for baptism.

Rev. H. J. Beasley served the church as pastor until December, 1945, women, and children, who had come forward either accepting Christ :< their Saviour or coming to unite with the church, as a climaxing ice of the revival.

In June, 1956, the congregation voted to install the rotating system of deacons and proceeded to elect twelve men to begin the rotation system. The following men were elected: Ordained deacons: T. J. Stafford, James Turner, John E. Temple, Carl Ownby, William T. Atchley, and Allen Mayes, To be ordained: Frank Atchley, Herbert McMahan, Clifford Frost, Ralph Roberts, Gerald Hill, and Chandler McMahan. Four of these men were to serve 3 years, four to serve 2 years, and four to serve one year. At the end of the first year, in 1957, the church elected and ordained: John Douglass, Jack Hardin, Gene Kugley, and Harold Sluss to serve as deacons, replacing the first four men that rotated off.

Rev. Frazier resigned as pastor of the church on November 5, 1957, and the church was without a pastor until October of 1958, when Rev. Gordon Greenwell was called as pastor. Rev. Greenwell is a native of Bulls Gap, Tennessee. He is a graduate of Carson-Newman College and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. During the pastorate of Rev. Greenwell, the church paid off the debt of \$34,000.00, that was due on the educational building. In February, 1960, the church voted to install new furnaces and air conditioning in our auditorium at a cost of \$13,250.00.

In September, 1961, the opportunity came for the church to purchase the property of Earl Paine on the South side of Prince Street at a cost of \$65,000.00. The church voted to buy this property and by the end of Rev. Greenwell's pastorate in 1965 the property was paid.

An Outstanding Deacon

One of the outstanding deacons of our modern day was Brother T. J. Stafford. He was born September 24, 1883 in the Fair Garden Community of Sevier County. He was converted at the age of 14 in a revival at Cummings Chapel Methodist Church, after which he joined the Baptist Church at Rankin where he was ordained as a deacon. In 1910, he came to Sevierville, where he joined the First Baptist Church. As has been said in a previous chapter in this history concerning Brother Pleasant Stafford, an uncle of T. J. Stafford, he worked, paid, planned, prayed, and solicited funds for the building of our present sanctuary until it was built and free of debt. T. J. Stafford was a fervent supporter of the Cooperative Program and our Baptist Institutions, having served as a member of the Executive Board of both Carson-Newman College and the East Tennessee Baptist Hospital. We give him much credit for the Mission Program being what it is in our church today. On January 26, 1963, Brother T. J. Stafford was called home to be with his Heavenly Father.

In August, 1962, the church called Rev. Max Hardin as music and educational director to

lead us in this service. This was our first full time worker in this position.

In 1966, the church called as pastor, Rev. David C. Sharp, a native of LaFollette, Tennessee. Rev. Sharp is a graduate of Carson-Newman College and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. During the first year of Rev. Sharp's pastorate, the church voted to install a pipe organ at the cost of about \$45,000.00. The organ was installed and today we owe less than \$4,000.00 on the organ.

The First Baptist Church of Sevierville has made much progress under the leadership of Rev. David C. Sharp, especially in the financial program. In the last eleven years we have seen our budget increase from \$49,056.18 in 1957 to over \$107,000.00 in 1968. In 1968 we gave to the Cooperative Program over \$34,000.00, which is over four times our entire budget in 1951. Our total gifts to missions for this year was over \$40,000.00. Today we have a membership of over 1200, with a full church program, including all of the auxiliaries of the church.

In 1968 the church called as Minister of Music and Youth, Brother Don Campbell. During the last two years, he has developed a youth program in our church that we are all proud of. The climaxing result of this program, along with other church activities, has been to see three of our young men in 1968 give their lives to the preaching of the gospel, and to see them licensed by the church for this great purpose. These boys are Steve Ownby, Tony Roberts, and Larry Costner. These boys have already been preaching in many churches in Sevier County and other East Tennessee Counties.

Another Outstanding Layman

Another outstanding layman of the twentieth century in our church was Brother James H. Atchley. James H. Atchley was born in the Alder Branch community of Sevier County on January 3, 1889. In 1919, he came to Sevierville where he joined the First Baptist Church of Sevierville. For a period of almost 50 years, he served the church as a deacon. For many years, he served as church clerk and in the latter years of his life he taught the Adult Mens Bible Class. Mr. Atchley will be remembered in our church and in this community for high moral standards that he stood for during his lifetime. Brother James H. Atchley died February 26, 1969.

Other deacons elected and ordained in our church between the years of 1957 and 1969 are as follows: Harold Helton, Russell Hughes, Carroll King, Jack Fuson, Charles Ownby, Herbert Lawson, Jimmie Temple, Earl Lawson, Joe Williams, George Seaton, Claude Ownby, and Harold Ownby. Coming from other churches as ordained deacons and serving our church as active deacons are: Clyde Ownby, Clyde Baker, Paul Galyon, Ben Headrick, and James M. Atchley. Ordained deacons who have come into our church but have not served as active deacons are: Fred Atchley, Frank Mullendore, Amos McCarter, Clarence Eller, and Ben Black. Perhaps there are others that we do not call to mind or do not know about.

On December 15th, 1969 David Sharp resigned as pastor of the First Baptist Church. On June 24, 1970 Brother Grant Jones accepted the call as pastor of the church. Brother Jones comes from the Springfield Baptist Church, Springfield, Tennessee. He is a graduate of Carson-Newman College, and of The Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, where he graduated in

1949. He has been pastoring churches in Tennessee for the last 14 years.

First Baptist Church of Sevierville, Tennessee stands today with a history of one hundred and eighty years behind it - from a log house to a magnificent building -- from the spark that was born in Richard Wood's heart to a light house to those who wish to worship God. This church was built on a "Rock" and the future rests on what we do. We must keep the "faith." We must leave behind us "footprints on the sands of time."

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Sources Of Information For This History

1. "A History of the First Baptist Church, Sevierville, Tennessee," Prepared in 1939 by the Historical Committee: T. J. Stafford, Chairman, James H. Atchley, Victoria Wade, Ethel T. Chandler, and Mrs. Alice Welch.
2. Burnett, J. J., "Sketches of Tennessee's Pioneer Baptist Preachers," Marshall and Bruce and Company, 1919. 3. Church Minutes.
4. "First Baptist Church of Gatlinburg," Sevier County News Record, 1956.
5. "First Baptist Church of Sevierville," Sevier County News Record, 1956.
6. "Frazier Resigns Pastorate of First Baptist Church," Sevier County News Record, November 7, 1957.
7. "Greenwell Starts New Pastorate In Sevierville," The Knoxville News Sentinel, October 11, 1958.
8. "History of First Baptist Church, Sevierville, Tennessee," Sevier County Record Republican, 1939.
9. Information received in a letter from Mr. George Raleigh Jewell, Secretary-Treasurer of the Kentucky Baptist Historical Society.
10. Information received from a monument to Spencer Clack on the lawn of the Sevier County Courthouse.
11. Information received from: Mrs. James H. Atchley, Mr. T. J. Stafford, Mrs. T. J. Stafford, Mr. Milas Ownby, and Mr. J. A. Sharp.
12. "Presenting the Churches of Sevier County," The Tri-County News, October 10, 1958.
13. Program for Dedication service on September 29, 1940.

Pastors Of The Church

1. Richard Wood -- September 1 789 - February 1831
2. Elijah Rogers - November 1832 - May 1840
3. Eli Roberts - 1840- 1845
4. James Cannon - August 1846 - December 1848
5. Joseph Manning - May 1849 - January 1851
6. W. M. Burnett -- June 1851 - May 1854
7. Jonathan Quarles -- May 1 854 - April 1858
8. W. M. Burnett - 1876 - August 1878
9. E. Titsworth - May 1879 - 1880
10. John Russell - March 1881 - October 1883
11. P. B. McCarroll - March 1884 - August 1887
12. J. S. Maples - October 1887 -- 1888
13. D. F. Manley - June 1888 -- 1889
14. H. C. Hampstead - April 1889 - January 1 893
15. W. S. Bryan -- March 1893 - 1894
16. J. F. Hale - November 1894 - February 1899
17. Blackburn -- February 1899 - November 1899
18. H. B. Clapp - December 1 899 -- October 1902
19. W. A. Catlett -- November 1903 - January 1904
20. J. F. Hale - August 1904 - January 1916
21. S. M. McCarter 1916- 1917
22. A. W. D. Daniels -- 1917-1921
23. R. E. Corum - June 1922 - June 19 25
24. Albert S. Hale - January 1926 - September 1926
25. J. H. Sharp - February 1927 - September 1931
26. L. W. Clark - September 1931 - November 1933
27. J. Lacy Basham - February 1934 -- August 1938
28. H. J. Beasley - February 1939 - December 1946
29. J. C. Chapman - May 1946 - May 1951
30. I. C. Frazier - February 1951 - November 1957
31. Gordon T. Greenwell - October 1958 - August 1965
32. David C. Sharp - April 1966 - January 1970
33. Grant L. Jones - June 1970 -