

1914—A HINGE YEAR FOR TEXAS BAPTISTS

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Many Important Things Happened in 1914. For example:

- First commercial airline flight from St. Petersburg to Tampa, Florida
- Ford Motor Company announced an 8 hour work day for a \$5 wage
- Charlie Chaplin starred in his first film
- Dr. Thomas H. Curtin invented green beer for St. Patrick's Day
- A Belgian surgeon performed the first non direct blood transfusion
- Woodrow Wilson signed a proclamation establishing Mother's Day
- US Navy occupied Vera Cruz, Mexico for 6 months
- The assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria on June 28
- Due to the outbreak of war the NYSE closed August 1—Dec. 12
- Due to World War I, no Nobel Peace Prize was awarded
- Babe Ruth made his major league debut with the Boston Red Sox
- First electric traffic light was installed in Cleveland, Ohio
- The first ship went through the locks of the new Panama Canal
- Martha, the last known passenger pigeon, died in the Cincinnati Zoo
- The Federal Trade Commission was established
- The first Federal Reserve Bank opened
- Stainless steel housewares were introduced to the public
- Wrigley Field opened in Chicago
- Born in 1914 were Harry Caray, Sammy Baugh, Trammell Crow, Superman, the Lone Ranger, Jack LaLanne, Jonas Salk, and Joe Dimaggio.

And in 1914 Texas Baptists carried out some constitutional and organizational restructuring. They limited the President to three consecutive terms (so no more 20 year terms as R. C. Buckner had served). They also established a 45 member Executive Board as the one entity for all Convention business. Prior to 1914 the annual session of

the BGCT elected over a dozen boards including three with direct oversight of Convention work. These three were the Board of Directors, the Education Board, and a Board of Trustees of the Convention to hold funds and property. The duties of these three groups often overlapped and created confusion.

The newly created “large” Executive Board had broad responsibilities. Between annual sessions, they had control of all the work of the Convention, including missions, education and beneficence. This included the annual selection of the Corresponding Secretary [Executive Director] and any assistants deemed necessary. It also fixed salaries and made all financial arrangements.

What were the issues and circumstances that produced this innovative structure? Someone has said that history consists of “the lengthened shadow of great persons.” Texas Baptist history has some great shadows.

The territory of Texas controlled by Mexico did not enjoy religious liberty. During the years of Anglo settlement, it was illegal to form a non-Catholic church in Texas. Daniel Parker, a member of the Stephen F. Austin colony, understood that to mean that no church could be formed **in** Texas, so in the summer of 1833 he **formed** the Pilgrim Predestinarian Regular Baptist Church in Illinois and then moved the seven member congregation to Texas. This church was strongly Calvinistic and anti-missionary disliking the many societies for missions or Bible distribution. In East Texas these “hardshell” churches formed “anti-missionary associations” of churches. They were known as “do nothing associations” because they met, recorded that they had met, set the date for the next time to meet, and then adjourned.

The earliest missionary Baptist work in Texas is attributed to **Z. N. Morrell**. He was born in South Carolina but grew up in Tennessee. He was a Baptist pastor in Tennessee and spent much time fighting the views of Alexander Campbell. His doctor diagnosed him with “consumption of the lungs” (tuberculosis) and encouraged him to move to a drier

climate. With his family, he crossed the Sabine River entering Texas in April of 1835 when the bluebonnets were in full bloom. Morrell fell in love with Texas.

He found other Baptists from Tennessee in Texas and preached his first sermon to them on December 30, 1835. He selected his text from Isaiah 35:1—“the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.” Morrell tirelessly traveled across Texas establishing and strengthening churches, always traveling with two weapons, his “Jerusalem Blade” (or Bible) and his “carnal weapon” (or Tennessee long rifle).

Morrell was instrumental in forming the first missionary Baptist church in Texas at Washington-on-the-Brazos in November, 1837. One of the earliest actions of this church was to seek help from mission societies in the United States. They could not decide whether they should seek this help from the home mission or the foreign mission societies. They covered their bases and sent letters to both, the Foreign one in Boston and the Home one in New York.

The Home Mission Society responded by asking **James Huckins** to raise money to help the Baptists in Texas. Huckins prayed for Texas, raised money in Georgia for Texas, and in 1840 became the first home missionary to serve in Texas. Huckins was the founding pastor of both the FBCs of Galveston and Houston. In Galveston his first converts to be baptized in the Gulf of Mexico included Gail Borden, Jr. (the inventor of condensed milk), his wife Penelope, and her sister.

A group of about 25 (including 4 ministers) met at the Independence church in June of 1840 for the purpose of forming an association, but the division between missionary and anti-mission sentiment prevented its success. The host pastor, T. W. Cox, flatly refused any compromise with the “hardshells.” Cox summoned another group that met in October of that same year at the Travis church (south of Brenham). Morrell was sympathetic to this work but was ill and could not attend. Eleven messengers came from three churches—Travis, Independence, and LaGrange. Of these three churches, Cox had founded two of them and served as the pastor of all three of them. They voted

unanimously to form an association, and they elected as their moderator, you guessed it, T. W. Cox. This was the Union Baptist Association, today the largest association in the entire denomination.

One of the areas of interest for the Union Baptist Association was education. As a result, in their 1841 meeting, in addition to the creation of a Texas Baptist Mission Society, they formed a Texas Baptist Education Society. This Education Society began serious work planning a Baptist university to provide preparatory work and collegiate level work. The prime movers were William Tryon, Judge **R. E. B. Baylor**, Huckins, and Morrell. Their dream was realized in the chartering of Baylor University by the Republic of Texas on February 1, 1845. Although a few Methodist colleges were begun in Texas earlier than Baylor, Baylor University is the longest continuously operating university in our state. Baylor wanted it to be named in honor of Tryon, but the latter deferred since his was the loudest voice in favor of the new school. No name was inserted into the charter until the final draft was submitted to the Republic—Baylor.

Several communities (including Huntsville) desired to have the new university in their towns. Independence won the competition easily. Their bid included “one section of land, five head of cattle, one cow and calf, one bay mare, one bale of cotton, twenty days of hauling, and \$200 in cash.” How do you turn down an offer like that? They also threw in a building that housed previously a female academy that no longer existed. It was a Baptist university founded by Baptists but never narrowly sectarian. The charter did not require that all trustees had to be Baptist. The first teacher employed was Henry Gillette, an Episcopal layman.

STATEWIDE ORGANIZATION

1848 Baptist State Convention

The Baptist State Convention of Texas was the first statewide cooperative connection of Baptists. This entity was formed at a meeting held in Anderson on Sept. 8, 1848, attended by 55 men representing 22 churches. When several others declined, Z. N.

Morrell, preached the opening sermon from Isaiah 9:7, applying the phrase about the increase of his government having no end. He noted the growing number of churches and ministries when only a dozen years earlier he was the only missionary Baptist preacher in the state.

They planned for more increase as they already had a university, a Home Mission Society, an Educational Society, and expressed a desire to have a Baptist paper, a distribution of Christian literature, and aggressive mission work among new settlers, the black population, the Germans in central Texas, and the Mexicans in San Antonio and along the border. Leaders of the Baptist State Convention were Morrell, Tryon, R. E. B. Baylor and the first President, Henry Graves, the President of Baylor University.

1868 Baptist General Association of Texas

During this period of Texas Baptist history, East Texas was an area occupied by both the missionary sentiment and the anti-missionary (Parker) sentiment. In addition they felt sometimes overlooked by the BSC whose center of strength was south of East Texas. When the Baptist State Convention declined the request of G. G. Baggerly to help establish a female college in Tyler, he led a meeting in 1853 at Larissa to form a new “general association” of churches. In 1855 the name was changed to the Baptist Convention of Eastern Texas.

Meanwhile other things were happening to the north and the west of this new association (really convention) of churches. Robert Cooke Buckner, a preacher’s kid, Tennessee born and Kentucky educated, migrated to Lamar County, Texas in 1859. He would serve as the Pastor of the Paris Baptist Church for 14 years before moving to Dallas. He would become one of those “lengthened shadows.”

1861 was the year of the division of the country into an uncivil Civil War. It was also the year that Baylor University experienced a separation. For the first five years of her existence, men and women attended classes together at Independence. Baylor’s

second President, **Rufus C. Burleson**, however, was a militant opponent of coeducation. Under his administration the men and women were separated not only in the classes but also in the campus (one mile apart). He was responsible for the Male Department, and Horace Clark became the Principal of the Female Department.

A persistent power struggle between Burleson and Clark resulted in R. C. Burleson leaving Baylor to go to the newly organized Waco University, loosely affiliated with the General Association of north and east Texas. The entire male faculty went with their President as did the entire senior class and most of the underclassmen.

The churches of eastern and northern Texas reorganized as the Baptist General Association of Texas in 1868. Their leaders included Buckner, Burleson, and B. H. Carroll who became the pastor of the FBC of Waco in 1870, the largest and leading Baptist church west of the Mississippi River. The BGA became stronger than the BSC because it enjoyed a collegial relationship with institutions, Waco University and Buckner Orphans Home.

This strong Baptist General Association, however, had its most shameful moment in 1878-80. Shameful for them, but intriguing for us. J. B. Link was the editor of a Baptist newspaper, the *Texas Baptist Herald*. Buckner, who edited a rival newspaper, the *Texas Baptist*, was not just a competitor. Link and Buckner were bitter enemies. Link and his wife "Sister Ada" moved to Dallas in 1878 and joined the FBC of Dallas on a rainy Wednesday night. Buckner, also a member, was not present that night and was not happy that it happened. Buckner used his influence and, along with his supporters in the church, asked the church to rescind the action. FBC refused their request. The two factions had a loud, vigorous debate and even physically fought over the possession of the keys to the building. As a result, the church excluded Buckner from membership and requested that he relinquish his ministerial credentials.

This church fuss would have remained internally within that congregation except for the fact that at the time R. C. Buckner was the Corresponding Secretary of the Baptist

General Association. The BGA required that its officers be in good standing with their local church. They held a called meeting of the BGA at FBC Dallas and, after a controlled discussion (in which Link was not allowed to speak), essentially declared the action of the First Baptist Church of Dallas in excluding Buckner to be null and void.

In a protest and reaction to this action, more than a few member churches pulled out of the BGA and formed three new state conventions. Now Texas had five state conventions, hardly an efficient system of Kingdom proclamation. By the way later BGA expressed regret for its hasty action, though insisting it had done nothing wrong.

Conversation about unification began almost immediately. One important catalyst was the idea of the merging of Baylor University and Waco University. A committee of 10 men (5 from BSC and 5 from BGA) worked out the merger of the two major conventions. The first president was A. T. Spalding, a BSC man, while the first corresponding secretary was A. J. Holt, a BGA man. The one new state organization took a blended name and established its offices in Waco. The Baptist General Convention of Texas was born.

1886 Baptist General Convention of Texas

ORGANIZATIONAL COMPLEXITY (1886-1914)

If the metaphor of a wedding is used to articulate this joining together of two partners (with three institutional children), it was in Dr. McBeth's term a "shotgun wedding." The BSC came to the unification table reluctantly. It was decidedly the weaker of the two groups. Its leaders (Morrell, Tryon, Baylor, and Creath were all dead), and their successors were no match for Carroll, Buckner, and Burleson. The Baylor University charter and tradition was moved to Waco, but the real strength was in Waco University itself. Baylor Female College moved to Belton (today the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. The Orphans Home was in Dallas.

The new BGCT Constitution came almost verbatim from the BGA. Article V, however, calling for a Board of Directors was taken from the structure of the BSC. This provision anticipated the formation of the stronger Executive Board in 1914.

- **State Mission and Ministry**

By 1914 BGCT had appointed 482 persons to serve as missionaries in Texas. These missionaries held revivals, formed missions, planted new churches, helped churches obtain pastors, and promoted stewardship. The Convention launched a Church Building Department in 1901 to help the many “homeless” churches and to rebuild churches damaged by tornadoes and hurricanes.

One of the most innovative ministries was the “**chapel car ministry**” begun in New York. Railroad cars were refurbished as mobile chapels. These “churches on wheels” were complete with pews, hymnals, a small organ, and a pulpit as well as living quarters of the missionaries who led worship in them. “Good Will” was assigned to Texas.” John D. Rockefeller, a Baptist, guaranteed the cooperation of the railroads who added these “chapel cars” to their trains, mostly free of charge.

- **Educational Institutions (1845-1914)**

The new BGCT had educational unity around the consolidation of Baylor and Waco Universities in 1886 but not for long. Texas Baptists started many other colleges including:

- William Carey Crane in Independence
- Howard Payne College by the Pecan Valley Association through influence of J. D. Robnett, Pastor of FBC, Brownwood, and named for his brother in law, a pastor in Missouri Edward Howard Payne (1889)
- Abilene Baptist College by Sweetwater Association renamed Simmons College after big gift by James B. Simmons, a Baptist pastor in New York (1892)
- North Texas Baptist College at Jacksboro by five associations (1891)

- Northwest Texas Baptist College at Decatur by associations (1891, chartered)
- East Texas Baptist Institute by Cherokee Bap Assoc (1895)
- Burleson College in Greenville adopted by Hunt Assoc (1895)
- South Texas Baptist College in Waller (1898)
- Canadian Academy and Goodnight Academy (1905); Canadian to BGCT
- San Marcos Baptist Academy (1907 by Baptists of SW Texas), to BGCT in 1910
- Wayland Literary and Technical Institution at Plainview thru the major gift of physician James Henry Wayland (1908)
- Bryan Baptist Academy (1910), transferred to BGCT
- College of Marshall (1912), ETBU, accepted as junior college by BGCT in 1914

It was educational chaos. Any consortium of churches and associations could begin a college. The Convention was only consulted when the lack of funds threatened their very survival. The **Carroll** brothers, B. H. and **James Milton**, primarily the younger brother J. M., tried to bring order to this chaos. In 1897, BGCT met in San Antonio (Would you believe that they called it “The Gathering?” They didn’t. I just wondered if you would believe it.) and created an Education Commission. For the first time some Texas Baptist colleges/universities agreed to oversight by the Convention. These included Baylor, Baylor Female College, Howard Payne, the Baptist College at Decatur, and East Texas Baptist Institute at Rusk. Simmons College declined to participate.

- **Buckner Orphans Home (1879, 1914)**

One of the many passions of **R. C. Buckner**, of Paris and Dallas, was the care for orphan children. He shared his passion at a Deacon Convention in 1877. B. H. Carroll and J. R. Rogers of Dallas came alongside him in this passion. They began to raise money to turn this dream into a reality but fund raising methods that they disapproved of were “concerts, magic lantern shows and everything of like character.” Buckner wrote the charter for an orphans home, adopted in a meeting at FBC McKinney in 1879. In that same year the home opened in a rented cottage in Dallas with three children.

The next year Buckner bought 44 acres of land east of Dallas from, Josiah, an old friend that he had known in Kentucky before both of them came to Texas. His friend sold the 44 acres for \$500, less than half of the appraised price. Who but God could have orchestrated the fact that just over 100 years later, Josiah Pinson's great great grandson, Bill Pinson, would be elected as the Executive Director of the BGCT?

In her wonderful book, *Homeward Bound: The Heart and Heritage of Buckner*, Dr. Karen Bullock relates that Buckner personally went to the Gulf Coast of Texas when Galveston was ravaged by the nation's deadliest natural disaster, the hurricane of 1900, and transported more than 100 children from the Galveston/Rosenburg orphanage to his home in Dallas. When Buckner died in 1919, it was estimated that 12,000 children had been residents of his home.

Buckner began making reports to the BGCT annual meeting in 1889, and five years before he died, he surprised everyone. In Abilene at the 1914 annual meeting, he declined to be re-elected President, a post that he had held for 20 years, and he announced that he desired to give the property and control of his Orphans Home to the BGCT. The Convention accepted his offer. It became the Convention's first Human Care institution.

- **Relief for Aged Ministers (1886)**

Buckner was the energy behind this ministry as well. From its inception in 1886 BGCT took steps to care for the oldest servants of God in Texas. By 1914, 81 persons were receiving \$10 per month in assistance. Inspired by state conventions, in 1918, the Southern Baptist Convention created an agency to perform this ministry and located the office of the Annuity Board in Dallas, where as Guidestone it still serves us. But in 1914 this was a ministry of BGCT.

- **Medical Institutions (1903/1907)**

Baylor University began a medical school in Dallas in 1900, the Baylor College of Medicine, under the leadership of Dr. Charles Rosser and then requested a hospital to support the medical school. In 1903 Texas Baptists responded. **George W. Truett**, the legendary Pastor of FBC Dallas and Texas Baptist leader, was the most significant influence in the establishing of the Texas Baptist Memorial Sanatorium. The new hospital was chartered in October, and the BGCT in annual session in November affirmed Truett's resolution for them to offer sympathy and support. It is fitting that one of the principal buildings of the Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas is the Truett Hospital. The three officers of the corporation that established the first Baptist hospital in Dallas were R. C. Buckner, George W. Truett, and C. C. Slaughter.

Christopher Columbus Slaughter claimed to be the first male child born to parents who had the first marriage license issued by the Republic of Texas. He learned the cattle business from his father and partnered with him. He was a consummate cattle breeder known for his purebred shorthorn and Hereford stock. He helped organize the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association. He was nicknamed "the Cattle King of Texas" reflecting the fact that with a ranch of over one million acres and 40,000 head of cattle, he was one of the largest individual owners of cattle and land in the country. For more than a few years, he was the largest individual taxpayer in Texas. He also dabbled in the mercantile business buying goods in New York and selling them in Texas and was the founder of several banks in Dallas.

Praise God he was a Baptist by faith tradition. Truett was his pastor at the FBC of Dallas. He funded two thirds of the cost of one of his congregation's largest building ventures. It was his willingness to retire the debt of educational institutions that made possible the 1897 work of J. M. Carroll in establishing the Education Commission. He was also by far the largest initial donor to this first Baptist hospital in Texas. The founders toyed with the idea of honoring his gift with naming privileges, but he admitted that his name did not lend itself to that. How would you market the name "Slaughter

Hospital?" It would ultimately be named Baylor Hospital to reflect its strong tie with the Baylor College of Medicine.

Not wanting to be outdone by Dallas, leaders in Houston established a hospital four years later. The lead gift of \$1000 by Mrs. Rachel Stuart of FBC, Houston, was dwarfed by Slaughter's gift. The Baptist Sanatorium in Houston opened in 1907 and was given over to BGCT in 1910.

- **Baptist Newspapers (1840s, 1914)**

From the beginning of emerging denominational life in Texas, leaders had an interest in providing information about Baptist mission and ministry. For a number of years they looked to the states from which they had come for this information. When Texas Baptists began to publish their own newspapers, they were privately owned ventures. Multiple papers led to intense competition as well as the tendency to give the news from the editor's opinions. S. A. Hayden, editor of the *Texas Baptist and Herald*, was the poster child for the use of one's editorial position to make vicious attacks on the convention.

In December of 1888 a small paper known as the *Baptist News* was begun at Honey Grove. It moved to Dallas when absorbed into the *Western Baptist*. This paper was purchased in 1892 by a group led by **J. B. Cranfill** and renamed the *Texas Baptist Standard*. It was Cranfill and Hayden who happened to be on the same train traveling to Nashville in 1904 to attend the Southern Baptist Convention. They got into an argument. Cranfill pulled his pistol, and they fought over it. Shots were fired, but no one was injured. At the next stop in Texarkana, Cranfill was arraigned on a charge of attempted murder, posted bond, and continued on to the SB meeting. Another editor for two years was the always kind and compassionate J. Frank Norris. The *Texas Baptist Standard* was sold to the Baptist General Convention of Texas in, guess what year, 1914.

- **Southwestern Seminary (1908)**

Benajah Harvey Carroll was another preacher's kid. He was born near Carroll, Mississippi, in Carrollton County. He possessed his father's name, Benajah (God builds), his father's brilliant intellect, but not his father's faith. The Carroll family came to Texas in 1858, and B. H. Carroll entered Baylor University at age 16 as a college junior. He left school two months before graduation to join the Confederate Army. He was a fierce debater around army campfires, challenging anyone who dared to speak about God. Carroll's preacher daddy died with little hope for his namesake son's salvation. Carroll was injured in the war. It is said that had the bullet entered his body an inch in any direction the wound would have proved fatal.

When he returned from the war, at his mother's strong insistence, he attended a Methodist revival meeting, and God convicted him of his sin. He left the meeting and rode his horse into the woods for "a one on one" with God. He rode out of the woods not only a saved sinner but a saved sinner whom God had called to ministry.

He accepted the pastorate of the FBC of Waco in 1870 and served there for 20 years. During that time he also lived out his love for education by teaching in the Theological Department at Waco University and by creating a Department of Bible at Baylor University in 1893, for which he was the Department Chair. His dream was larger.

In 1905 God gave him the dream to establish a theological seminary in Texas. Carroll was not only the Chair of the Bible Department. He also served as the Chair of the Board of Trustees for Baylor. While the President was traveling in Europe, Carroll presented his dream of a seminary to the Board. They reluctantly approved his resolution, and the Baylor Theological Seminary was birthed.

The BGCT affirmed Carroll's dream and approved the charter of the new seminary, Two years after it began, the Seminary moved to Fort Worth in 1910. Carroll served as the

president until his death in November of 1914. In 1914 Texas Baptists had a seminary, one that they would not transfer to the Southern Baptist Convention until 1925.

- **Baptist Women Mission Workers (pre 1886)**

Women were important to the growth of Baptist work in Texas. The first Baptist convert in Texas was a woman, Lydia Allcorn. A woman, Massie Millard, held the first Baptist prayer meeting in Texas. Anne Luther (later Bagby) was appointed a missionary to Brazil awakening Texas to the challenge of global missions.

In fact one of the most interesting stories is that of Lucinda Williams. Will and Lou Williams moved to Dallas in 1867. They asked their Methodist landlady where the Baptist church was. She replied that there wasn't one and that she hoped there never would be. The Williams attended the Presbyterian church for a few weeks. Lucinda began visiting around and located a few Baptists. She was the prime mover for the eleven people who gathered at the Masonic Hall on Lamar Street on July 30, 1868, and formed the First Baptist Church of Dallas.

Baptist women, though not allowed active participation in denominational affairs, created their own structural avenues for doing ministry. The Woman's Missionary Union of the BSC and the Ladies' Aid Society of the BGA were blended into the Baptist Women Mission Workers of the new BGCT. Their first President was Fannie Breedlove Davis who represented Texas in establishing the National WMU in 1888. In 1914 the legendary **Mary Hill Davis** was in her 25 year Presidential tenure (1906-1931).

This exponentially increasing organizational complexity and institutional oversight catalyzed the conversation about restructuring. This conversation had two primary advocates, a pastor and a layperson. **J. B. Gambrell**, the minister, had pushed for it since he first became Corresponding Secretary in 1896. His mantra was "more religion in business." The layperson was **M. H. Wolfe**, of the Wolfe City family, a deacon at FBC

Dallas, who wanted “more business in religion.” He was one of the founders of the Cotton Exchange in Dallas.

A committee was appointed to study what should be done. A progress report was given in 1913, and the final report came in 1914 calling for the creation of a new Executive Board. The newly created Executive Board met for the first time in December. It elected or affirmed J. B. Gambrell (Uncle Gideon) to continue as the Corresponding Secretary. It elected M. H. Wolfe as its first Chair (or President).

How innovative was this? Several other state conventions soon did the same thing. It was M. H. Wolfe of Texas who made the recommendation to the Southern Baptist Convention to make this same structural change. His suggestion was rejected at first but then accepted. The SBC created its Executive Committee in 1917. M. H. Wolfe was one of the seven men chosen to serve on this new powerful committee.

And so we rejoice at the “whatever it takes” attitude of our leadership ancestors in Texas who had a passion to reach Texas for Jesus and a willingness to organize themselves in a new way to support their passion. May we be worthy recipients of their rich legacy, as we still stand today in their lengthened shadows.

While I consulted a number of sources in research for this presentation, the two prevalently used resources were the two books written by two distinguished Church History professors at Southwestern Seminary, whom I still value the privilege of having sat under their incredible instruction.

The Blossoming Desert. A Concise History of Texas Baptists by Robert A. Baker. Waco: Word Books, Publisher, 1970.

Texas Baptists. A Sesquicentennial History by Harry Leon McBeth. Dallas: BaptistWay Press, 1998.