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May 11, 1972

**SBC Pageant to Depict
Heritage of Denomination**

PHILADELPHIA (BP)--The Tuesday evening session of the Southern Baptist Convention here June 6 will feature a pageant depicting the heritage and history of the denomination which had its local and national beginnings here.

The 30-minute pageant will be sponsored and produced by the Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention as its report to the denomination.

"We feel we can do more to communicate our heritage to the people in this 30 minutes than we can in two years of writing and publishing materials on Baptist history," said Lynn E. May Jr., executive secretary of the SBC Historical Commission in Nashville.

The pageant, written by South Carolina Baptist Historian Louie Latimer Owens of Columbia, will depict Baptist beginnings in Philadelphia, and communicate the significant role Philadelphia has played in the life of the denomination, May said.

Scenes in the dramatic presentation will cover such historic events as the organization of the Philadelphia Baptist Association, the first association of churches in America, in 1707; Philadelphia's role in starting the second association in Charleston, S.C., in 1751; the founding of the first Baptist college, Rhode Island College, by the Philadelphia Association in 1764; the historic plea for religious liberty before the Continental Congress in 1774 by Baptists; the organization of the first national denomination of Baptists, the Triennial Convention, in Philadelphia in 1814; the beginnings of Baptist foreign missions efforts; and the last session of the Triennial Convention before the split between Northern and Southern Baptists in 1844-45.

A 30-piece orchestra and the 100-voice Centurymen, a choir of Southern Baptist ministers of music sponsored by the SBC Radio-Television Commission, will provide the music for the pageant. Buryl Red, a musician and composer-director from New York City, will direct the orchestra and the Centurymen.

A cast of characters enlisted from the Columbia, S.C., area, many of whom participated in a dramatic presentation last November commemorating the 125th anniversary of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, will present the pageant.

The same drama team which produced the South Carolina pageant, entitled "Saints of Clay," will direct the SBC pageant here.

Frank Z. Harris, from the sales staff of television station WNOK-TV, Columbia, who is active in amateur drama in the Columbia area, will direct the drama. Harris, a Jew, was also director for Saints of Clay.

The cast for the pageant has been enlisted by Mrs. Emily Rogers, minister of music and education for Belmont Baptist Church, Columbia.

Key characters in the drama include the following: Lonnie Shull, pastor of Northside Baptist Church, West Columbia, S.C.; will play the part of William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania.

Eddie Rickenbaker, pastor of Kathwood Baptist Church, Columbia, will play the role of Elias Keach, first pastor of the historic Pennepack Baptist Church of Philadelphia.

Tom Westmoreland, state music secretary for the South Carolina Baptist Convention, will portray Morgan Edwards, and George Turbeville, pastor of Bayview Baptist Church, Columbia, will play the role of Evan Morgan. Both were Philadelphia pastors instrumental in founding the Philadelphia Baptist Association.

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Harry Mashburn, a layman and engineer for McCrory-Sumwalt Co., Columbia, will play Oliver Hart, the first missionary of the Philadelphia Association who helped start the Charleston Baptist Association.

James Barrington, minister of music for the Park Street Baptist Church, Columbia, will depict Isaac Backus, who testified for religious liberty before members of the Continental Congress.

Luther Rice, the pioneer Baptist missionary instrumental in beginning Baptist foreign missions efforts, will be portrayed by Lewis W. Martin Jr., minister of education at First Baptist Church, Columbia.

Walter Jacobs, minister of education and music for North Trenholm Baptist Church, Columbia, will play the role of William Bullen Johnson, last president of the Triennial Convention meeting in 1844 and first president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845.

Copeland Whitmire, pastor of Spears Creek Baptist Church near Columbia, will depict Francis Wayland, elected in 1844 to succeed Johnson as president of the Triennial Convention.

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Southern Baptist Laymen Plan Pre-Convention Conference

PHILADELPHIA (BP)--Southern Baptist laymen will participate in a pre-convention conference here on Monday, June 5, one day before the start of the annual Southern Baptist Convention.

The conference is sponsored by the 1972 Laymen's Conference Committee and the SBC Brotherhood Commission.

The afternoon session, to be held at 2:30, will feature speeches by Carl Bates, president of the Southern Baptist Convention; Duke McCall, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville; and C. E. Price, president of the Pennsylvania Baptist Convention. Theme for the session will be "Being: My Spiritual Maturity."

The 7:30 evening session will feature an address by Ken Chafin, director of evangelism for the SBC Home Mission Board, on involving laymen in evangelism. Theme for the session will be "Doing: My Christian Actions."

The evening session will also emphasize denominational channels for laymen's service. Informing laymen about new channels of service will be Eugene Grubbs, consultant on laymen overseas for the SBC Foreign Mission Board; Ira Craft, director for Baptist Missions, which promotes home mission work; and W. J. Isbell Jr., director of the Baptist Men's Department of the Brotherhood Commission.

Fred Rhodes, deputy administrator of the Veterans Administration and prominent Baptist leader, will preside at the evening session.

Sessions will be held at the Sheraton Hotel, 1725 J. F. Kennedy Blvd.

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Allen Warns Against Trend "Toward Authoritarianism"

5/11/72

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--A warning against "a trend toward authoritarianism observable in our churches" was sounded at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary here by J. P. Allen of Fort Worth during the fourth annual H. I. Hester lectureship on preaching.

Allen, director of audience response for the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, said, however, that the "authoritarianism" is not coming from denominational leaders on high but from outspoken people in the local congregation.

"Strangely," he said, "it is not the case of the 'hierarchy' in Nashville trying to absorb the churches. To the contrary, it is more that the SBC Executive Committee has to try to protect the local congregations from themselves and their messengers."

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"The freedom of the local church and its members is being given away year by year by men who are either too immature or too fearful to manage their obligations in freedom and try to give it away to a giant denominational structure," he explained.

Allen warned preachers against letting business that ought to be handled by local churches, such as interpretation of the scriptures, to be "brought up for grabs by a majority vote of those who happen to be on the floor (of the convention) in the huddle between hamburgers every June.

"We can't run the church of Jesus Christ by majority vote on the floor in St. Louis or wherever," Allen charged.

Last year in St. Louis, the Southern Baptist Convention voted by a slim majority to ask the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board to obtain a new writer for Volume I of the Broadman Bible Commentary on Genesis and Exodus because, the motion said, the board had not followed the actions of the Denver convention calling for a rewriting of the commentary "from a conservative point of view."

Allen did not, however, refer in his speech to the specific actions of the St. Louis and Denver Conventions other than by implication.

He said he would be "distressed if and when I see the denomination try to become 'the church' and place its constituents under their authority." He added that "Baptist consensus is not authoritative."

Allen said that every time Southern Baptists agonize over some act of regulation or debate the rules of fellowship and relationships, "I cannot help but think of the old observation that the last act of a dying organization is to publish a new and enlarged edition of the rule book.

"I don't want my denomination to die," he declared. "I don't even want it to get sick.

"You young ministers don't let it happen," Allen told seminarians attending the lecture series. "Let the churches be the church, and free the denomination to get on with its missionary functions." The convention exists for joint mission enterprises, not for authoritarian statements, he said.

Allen spoke each of four days in the lecture series endowed by H. I. Hester, long-time professor at William Jewell College, Liberty, Mo., and former vice president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo.

The lecture series was held simultaneously with the annual Chaplains Conference at Golden Gate Seminary, sponsored by the Southern Baptist Chaplain's Commission. More than 70 chaplains attended.

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Tour of Historic Sites
Slated in Philadelphia

5/11/72

PHILADELPHIA (BP)--A guided tour of key historic sites in both American and Baptist history will be conducted by the Southern Baptist Historical Commission here on Wednesday, June 7, during the Southern Baptist Convention.

The tour will begin at the Sheraton Hotel here at 2:30 p.m., and will be led by Ronald Tonks, research director for the commission and former professor of history.

Sites tentatively scheduled for the tour include the First Baptist Church of Philadelphia and the Pennepack Baptist Church (now Lower Dublin Church) instrumental in founding the Philadelphia Baptist Association, plus several sites significant in American history.

The tour will visit Carpenters Hall, where Isaac Backus testified on behalf of religious liberty before members of the Continental Congress 1774; Independence Hall where the Constitution was signed; Congress Hall where the U. S. Congress met from 1790-1800; Christ Church where Benjamin Franklin and George Washington were members; and the Betsy Ross House where the American flag was designed and made.

Reservations for the tour may be made by writing the Historical Commission (127 Ninth Ave., North, Nashville, Tenn., 37203) or tickets (cost, \$2.75) may be purchased at the Historical Commission booth at the convention.