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### Personal Profile of the Original Members First Baptist Church, Arkadelphia, Arkansas 1851-1880

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Personal Profile of the Original Members  
First Baptist Church, Arkadelphia, Arkansas  
1851-1880

Gwen Moore

December 11, 1979

First Baptist Church Arkadelphia began on a hot evening in July 1851 when sixteen people decided they wanted to establish a church home in Arkadelphia.<sup>1</sup> Arkadelphia, a small unincorporated village at this time, had no Baptist Church. The people came from Mt. Bethel, a Baptist Church six miles out of town. These sixteen people founded what was later to become one of the most prosperous Arkadelphia Baptist Churches.

The original members are derived from the first twenty-nine years of church minutes. An examination of different aspects of these original members reveals certain commonalities. The aspects to explore are: Kinship groupings, political significances, church status, and church membership.<sup>2</sup> Charts and graphs help show these relationships and features. Also, there will be a look at the education received by these people. Each of the aspects mentioned will be explored to the deepest possible realm.

The first aspect investigation is kinship groupings.<sup>3</sup> Kinship grouping involves relationships among families. Marriages relate two people but also two families. This investigation divulges some very obvious family bonds and also some

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<sup>1</sup> Ray Granade, A Covenanted People: History of the First Baptist Church Arkadelphia, Arkansas 1851-1976 (Hand Distributed Pamphlet, 1976) p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> The kinship grouping, political significances, church status, and church membership charts are found in the Appendices, pp. ii-vi.

<sup>3</sup> The kinship grouping chart is found in Appendix A, p. ii.

not so obvious family bonds.

The first family under examination is the Heard family. This family is composed of Thomas A., David W. and Sabrina Heard Trigg, two brothers and a sister. All three Heards came from Georgia and helped constitute First Baptist Church Arkadelphia.

**Thomas owned Heard Drug Store of Arkadelphia. He married Catherine J. Anderson, also a Georgia native. Catherine also helped constitute the church. Shortly before Catherine's death in 1894, she called Thomas and her sister, Almeda H. Anderson to her bedside. She insisted they promise to marry upon her death. This marriage insured her children a mother.<sup>4</sup> Two other Andersons belonged to the church, William L. and Thomas. These Andersons also come from Georgia and are probably somehow related to Catherine and Almeda.**

Thomas Heard's brother David W. Heard, a Georgia farmer, married Mary Forbes. This marriage joined the Heard and Forbes families together. Mary Forbes was the daughter of W. A. and Sarah H. Forbes.<sup>5</sup> The Forbes came from Mississippi. David and Mary also served on the church constitution committee. Sabrina Heard Trigg remained a member of the Arkadelphia Church for sixty-five years. Sabrina married William A. Trigg, III.

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<sup>4</sup>"Top Arkadelphian of Long Ago," Southern Standard (Arkadelphia, Arkansas), 17 August 1961.

<sup>5</sup>Mary Forbes, headstone, Rose Hill Cemetery, Arkadelphia, Arkansas.



Fannie Trigg was their daughter.<sup>6</sup> Fannie joined the church in July 1873.<sup>7</sup>

Another kinship grouping joins the Marbury and Dale families together. Leonard W. and Cordelia E. Marbury were a part of the church constitution committee. Leonard, a North Carolinian, married Cordelia, a Georgian.<sup>9</sup> Mary Marbury Dale was apparently their daughter. This belief was derived from cemetery plots. Mary Marbury married David T. Dale.

The next family to explore is the Williams family. D. S. Williams, an elder and pastor of the church, married Lucy. D. S. and Lucy bore a daughter, Francis Williams McMillan.<sup>10</sup> Francis had two daughters, Estelle McMillan and Carrie McMillan.<sup>11</sup> Both these women were members of the church, Estelle joined in 1876, and Carrie joined after 1880. Also both women married. Estell married Theodore Blake, and Carrie married James C. Wallis.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>William A. Trigg III, Abstracts (held by the Trigg Family, DeGray, Arkansas).

<sup>7</sup>First Baptist Church Arkadelphia, Minutes, July 1873.

<sup>8</sup>L. C. Tedford, History of the First Baptist Church, Arkadelphia, Arkansas (Hand Distributed Pamphlet, 1951).

<sup>9</sup>Clark County Census 1850.

<sup>10</sup>L. C. Tedford, History of the First Baptist Church, Arkadelphia, Arkansas (Hand Distributed Pamphlet, 1951).

<sup>11</sup>J. S. Rogers, History of Arkansas Baptist (Little Rock: Arkansas Baptist State Convention, 1948) p. 269.

<sup>12</sup>Carrie McMillan, headstone, Rose Hill Cemetery, Arkadelphia, Arkansas.

Wallis joined the church in 1871. Williams had other descendants who were members of the church after 1880. These other descendants were granddaughters; Mrs. J. H. Crawford, and Messors Dougald and grandsons; John and Dave McMillan.<sup>13</sup>

There are two other families with children in the church that require taking a look at. These two families are the Crawleys and the Jarmans. William T. and Tinsey Crawley are natives of Georgia.<sup>14</sup> They had a daughter, Nancy. The Crawleys became members of the church 20 September 1862.<sup>15</sup> Trussey and Mary Jarman are natives of North and South Carolina respectively. Both Trussey and Mary helped constitute the church.<sup>16</sup> Trussey and Mary also had a daughter, Martha.<sup>17</sup>

The rest of the families investigated are simply husband--wife combinations. William C. and Mary S. Randle for the first of these families. The Randles, natives of Georgia, helped constitute the church.<sup>18</sup> Even though they assisted in constituting the church they did not actually join until 10 May 1853. Other Georgians are John T. and Lucy Greene. Nicholas and Harriet Dyer are natives of South Carolina.<sup>19</sup> James K.

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<sup>13</sup>L.C. Tedford, History of the First Baptist Church, Arkadelphia, Arkansas (Hand Distributed Pamphlets, 1951).

<sup>14</sup>Clark County Census 1850.

<sup>15</sup>First Baptist Church Arkadelphia, Minutes, 20 September 1862.

<sup>16</sup>L.C. Tedford, History of the First Baptist Church, Arkadelphia, Arkansas (Hand Distributed Pamphlet, 1951).

<sup>17</sup>Clark County Census 1850.

<sup>18</sup>Clark County Census 1850; L. C. Tedford, History of the First Baptist Church, Arkadelphia, Arkansas (Hand Distributed Pamphlet, 1951).

<sup>19</sup>Clark County Census 1850.

and Mary Whitfield joined the church 13 November 1852. Willis and Sarah A. Wilson joined the church March 1858 and September 1859 respectively. J. J. and Eliza Jackson joined the church July 1859.<sup>20</sup>

Data derived from the kinship grouping chart reveals some extended families. It shows some definite patterns. Many of the people came from Georgia. This could mean more undetectable relationships, such as distant cousins. Many families stayed together throughout this period moving across the country together. Perhaps this is the case with the members of the church. Possibly large families decided to move west and then terminated their journeys in Arkadelphia. Not only did it have to be families it could have been neighbors and friends traveling together. This would be a way of marrying their children into the family of your choice.

Political significances will be the next aspect explored. After looking at these people it was discovered that only seven percent of the church members from 1851-1880 held political office. At first glance this does not appear to be significant. Until the names are examined the significance does not become relevant. Those men holding political office were J. O. Browning, H. H. Coleman, J. C. Ray, Miles L. Langley, G. W. Wells, Thomas A. Heard, Willis Wilson, Nicholas Dyer, and Robert Mullins

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<sup>20</sup>First Baptist Church Arkadelphia, Minutes, 12 November, 1852, March 1858, September 1859, and July 1859.



Thrasher.<sup>21</sup> These men proved to be active church members.

Exploration of church status shows many of the same people holding more than one position. First, the Constitutional Committee reveals those sixteen people who wanted First Baptist Church Arkadelphia. The committee consisted of Catherine Heard, Thomas Heard, David Heard, Mary Heard, Sabrina Trigg, E. G. Thomas, William Randle, and Cordelia Marbury. These first eight people originally came from Georgia. Leonard Marbury and Trussey Jarman both came from North Carolina. Mary Jarman came from South Carolina. Two came from Virginia, Johnathon and Radford McCargo. Samuel Stevenson and James Gilkey originated in Pennsylvania. The last of the sixteen founders, Miles L. Langley, was born in Arkansas.<sup>22</sup>

Looking next at the Pastors shows eleven different men serving between 1851 and 1880. The founding members instigated the annual call and part-time status. Annual call simply meant an election was held each year for the purpose of choosing a new Pastor. This Pastor would serve in a part-time status which meant preaching on Sunday. During the week he would hold another job. Those eleven men were H. H. Coleman, Robert Mullins Thrasher, Samuel Stevenson, G. W. Wells, N. P. Moore, D. S. Williams, J. O. Browning, W. A. Forbes, J. B. Starks, Aaron

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<sup>21</sup> Refer to Political Significances chart in Appendix B, p. iii.

<sup>22</sup> L.C. Tedford, History of the First Baptist Church, Arkadelphia, Arkansas (Hand Distributed Pamphlet, 1951).



Yates and J. T. Jenkins.

H. H. Coleman served the first two years of the church's existence. Thrasher served in 1853 and was reelected to serve again in 1854. Stevenson served in 1855 and was also reelected to serve a second term in 1856. Wells served three consecutive terms from 1857 to 1860, and then he served one more term in 1861. Moore served in 1860 and then again from 1862 until 1867. Then Williams served one year in 1868. Following Williams, Browning served four years, 1869 until 1872. Forbes served in 1873 and then again from 1875 until 1878. Starks served in 1874, Yates in 1879, and finally Jenkins served as Pastor in 1880.<sup>23</sup>

The next position to look at is that of Elder. An Elder is one elected by the congregation to assist the Pastor with serving communion. The Elders serving were H. H. Coleman, T. H. Compere, J. T. Jenkins, Miles Langley, J. B. Starks, Samuel Stevenson, Thomas Whitton, D. S. Williams, and W. A. Forbes.<sup>24</sup> Coleman has been seen as Pastor and now Elder. Jenkins has also been seen as Pastor and Elder. Langley was on the church's constitution committee and now Elder. Starks served also as Pastor and Elder. Stevenson served on the church's constitution committee, was Elder and Pastor. Williams and Forbes both served as Pastor and Elder.

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<sup>23</sup>First Baptist Church Arkadelphia, Minutes, 1851-1880.

<sup>24</sup>L. C. Tedford, History of the First Baptist Church, Arkadelphia, Arkansas (Hand Distributed Pamphlet, 1951).

Position of Deacon shall be looked at next. A Deacon is a laymen elected by the church congregation to serve in worship, in pastoral care, and on administrative committees. Serving as Deacon were Leonard Marbury, William Randle, J. C. Ray, Thomas Denson, Nicholas Dyer, E. J. Bowland, John T. Greene, Joseph Saunders, and R. S. Wallace.<sup>25</sup> Out of the nine Deacons listed, only two served in any other capacity. These two men were Leonard Marbury and William Randle. Both served on the church's constitution committee.

The positions of church Clerk and Moderator are easily explained. Within the time period explored there were only two Church Clerks, Johnathon McCargo and Thomas Heard. McCargo served only the remainder of 1851. Heard began in 1852 and served for a period of thirty-eight years.<sup>26</sup> The position of Moderator was fulfilled by the Pastor.

Next two positions which changed leadership very little were Church Treasurer and Superintendent of Sunday Schools. Church Treasurer shows only one change for the time period. Leonard Marbury served from 1851 until 1869. In 1870, Joseph Saunders was elected and served until 1880.<sup>27</sup> Marbury and Saunders are both active in the church. The position of Treasurer is not the only position in which these men have served. Marbury as well as Saunders also acted as Deacons.

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<sup>25</sup>First Baptist Church Arkadelphia, Minutes, 12 August 1851, 1 August 1874, and 22 March 1867.

<sup>26</sup>L.C. Tedford, History of First Baptist Church, Arkadelphia, Arkansas (Hand Distributed Pamphlet, 1951).

<sup>27</sup>First Baptist Church Arkadelphia, Minutes, 13 August 1851 and 3 December 1870.

The other position of little change was held by one man throughout the period. J. C. Wallis held this position as Superintendent of Sunday Schools.<sup>28</sup>

The Building Committee of 1880, was the last post to investigate. The members of this committee were John W. Wilson, J. C. Wallis, J. T. Jenkins and T. J. Hall.<sup>29</sup> Wallis and Jenkins also held other positions as cited on the chart.<sup>30</sup>

Activity of a member can be seen from the number of positions held or length the position was held. From the church status chart many names seem to reappear in different categories. Heard is the prime example of an active member through holding one office for a long period of time. He held the office of Church Clerk for thirty-eight years.<sup>31</sup>

Church membership rose steadily between 1851 and 1870, phenomenally increased between 1870 and 1875, then reached a plateau.<sup>32</sup> Membership is tabulated by subtracting the number of people being dismissed or excluded from the number joining. People joined the church by letter from another church or

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<sup>28</sup> J. S. Rogers, History of Arkansas Baptist (Little Rock: Arkansas Baptist State Convention, 1948) p. 256.

<sup>29</sup> L. C. Tedford, History of First Baptist Church, Arkadelphia, Arkansas (Hand Distributed Pamphlet, 1951)

<sup>30</sup> Refer to church status chart, Appendix C, p. iv-v.

<sup>31</sup> L. C. Tedford, History of First Baptist Church, Arkadelphia, Arkansas (Hand Distributed Pamphlet, 1951).

<sup>32</sup> Refer to church membership graph, Appendix D, p. vi.



by affirmation of faith. Those dismissed left in good standing with the church. Most probably they moved away or joined a different Baptist church. Exclusion is a form of church discipline used when the congregation is faced with a member unrepentantly engaged in sinful activity--usually excessive drinking, using profanity, or not attending church regularly. An investigation committee decided the guilt or innocence.

The investigation committee forms each time there is a complaint registered against a member. The committee usually consists of three members in good standing. Investigating lasts anywhere from one week to a month. At the end of this time period the accused must appear to answer the charges. If denial occurs the charges must be proved. If the person does not repent or cannot prove innocence, he is immediately excluded.

Referring back to the membership chart it is noticed that from 1851 until 1853 membership rose to a high of thirty-nine members. From 1853-1855 it dipped slightly, leveled off then rose again until 1873. From 1873-1880 membership fluctuated little. The peak in 1873 totaled 138 members. In 1880, membership had dropped back to 135 people.

Out of the 135 member church only a very few had received any formal education. Therefore, education will be investigated also. Out of the members traced only nine have shown any mention of higher education being attained. Those nine people were Estelle Blake, J. O. Browning, H. H. Coleman, W. A. Forbes, J. C. Saunders, Thomas G. Smith, Samuel Stevenson,

Robert Mullins Thrasher, and D. S. Williams. Each of these people will be looked at individually.

Estelle Blake, daughter of Francis McMillan, received her formal education from five different schools. Blake first attended the School for Young Females in Arkadelphia. From the School of Young Females Blake went to the Methodist Female College, Little Rock. Blake then transferred back to Arkadelphia to Red River Baptist Academy. Sam Houston Normal, Huntsville, Texas was Blake's next school. After Sam Houston Normal, Blake went to Columbia University, New York. Blake became a faculty member of Ouachita College September 1886 and remained until January 1945. Blake's education was extensive and yielded fifty-one years of college faculty experience.<sup>33</sup>

The other eight people showing educational backgrounds are not as extensive as Estelle Blake's. J. O. Browning received his education at Oakland Academy. H. H. Coleman's education benefitted him with a degree in law and one in theology. Coleman also learned to speak five languages. W. A. Forbes attended Bethel College, Kentucky.<sup>34</sup> J. C. Saunders also attended Bethel College Kentucky. Thomas G. Smith was a graduate of law school.<sup>35</sup> Samuel Stevenson attended George-

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<sup>33</sup>J.S. Rogers, History of Arkansas Baptist (Little Rock: Arkansas Baptist State Convention, 1948) p. 269.

<sup>34</sup>L. C. Tedford, History of First Baptist Church, Arkadelphia, Arkansas (Hand Distributed Pam let, 1951).

<sup>35</sup>The Goodspeed Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Southern Arkansas (Southern Historical Press, 1978) p. 165 and 168.

town College, Kentucky. Stevenson established the Arkadelphia Female Institute which was considered the first Baptist school in Arkansas.<sup>36</sup> Robert Mullins Thrasher received two years instruction at the Military Institute in Tulip, Arkansas.<sup>37</sup> D. S. Williams attended Princeton College, New Jersey.<sup>38</sup>

The first conclusion involves distinct kinship relations among members. Other untraceable kinship groupings, probably existed. The kinship groupings traced show some of the chartered members' family lines. Certain names seem to consistently reappear. Some of the most active church members are also the more prominent members of the community. These people participate in more than one or two capacities of the church.

Political significances show one strong conclusion. The men who held political office definitely showed leadership abilities in many areas, not only political. Each of these men held important positions in the church. Four were known to be pastors. Two helped found the church. The others held positions as Elder and Deacon.

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<sup>36</sup>L. C. Tedford, History of First Baptist Church, Arkadelphia, Arkansas (Hand Distributed Pamphlet, 1951).

<sup>37</sup>Baptist Advance, 14 December 1911.

<sup>38</sup>J. S. Rogers, History of Arkansas Baptists (Little Rock: Arkansas Baptist State Convention, 1948) p. 211.



The gathered information implied oblique reference to each of the aspects explored. And that the original members of First Baptist Church Arkadelphia were from the upper echelon of society. These members were significant people of the community. They participated in community affairs as well as church affairs.

Appendices

Appendix A

Kinship Groupings

	Thomas A. Heard	(siblings)	Sabrina Heard Trigg
s i b l i n g s	Catherine J. (Anderson)*		Fannie+
	Almeda H. (Anderson)*		
	Thomas A., Jr.†	(siblings)	
	David W. Heard		W. A. Forbes
	Mary (Forbes)*	(same person)	Sarah H.*
			Mary (Heard)†

Leonard W. Marbury  
 Cordelia E.\*  
 Mary (Dale)†

D. S. Williams  
 Lucy\*  
 Francis (McMillan)†  
 Estelle McMillan Blake†

William T. Crawley  
 Tinsey\*  
 Nancy†

Nicholas Dyer  
 Harriet\*

J. J. Jackson  
 Eliza\*

Trussey Jarman  
 Mary\*  
 Martha †

William C. Randle  
 Mary S.\*

James K. Whitfield  
 Mary\*

Willie Wilson  
 Sarah A.\*

James M. Gilkey  
 Martha\*

John T. Greene  
 Lucy\*

W. B. Mauldin  
 Mary E.

David Meade  
 Mary\*

J. C. Ray  
 Cordelia H.\*

\*wife of man immediately preceding.

†child of person or people immediatly preceding.



Appendix B  
Political Significances

J. O. Browning	State Representative 1874-75
H. H. Coleman	State Representative 1877
Nicholas Dyer	Clark County Judge 1852-1864
Thomas A. Heard	County Clerk 1874
Miles L. Langley	Constitutional Convention Representative 1868
J. C. Ray	State Senator, Sevier Co. 1868-1869 State Senator, Clark Co. 1868-1869
Robert Mullins Thrasher	Hot Springs Co. Examiner
G. W. Wells	Sheriff, Clark Co. 1846-1848
Willis Wilson	Clark Co. Treasurer 1864-1864

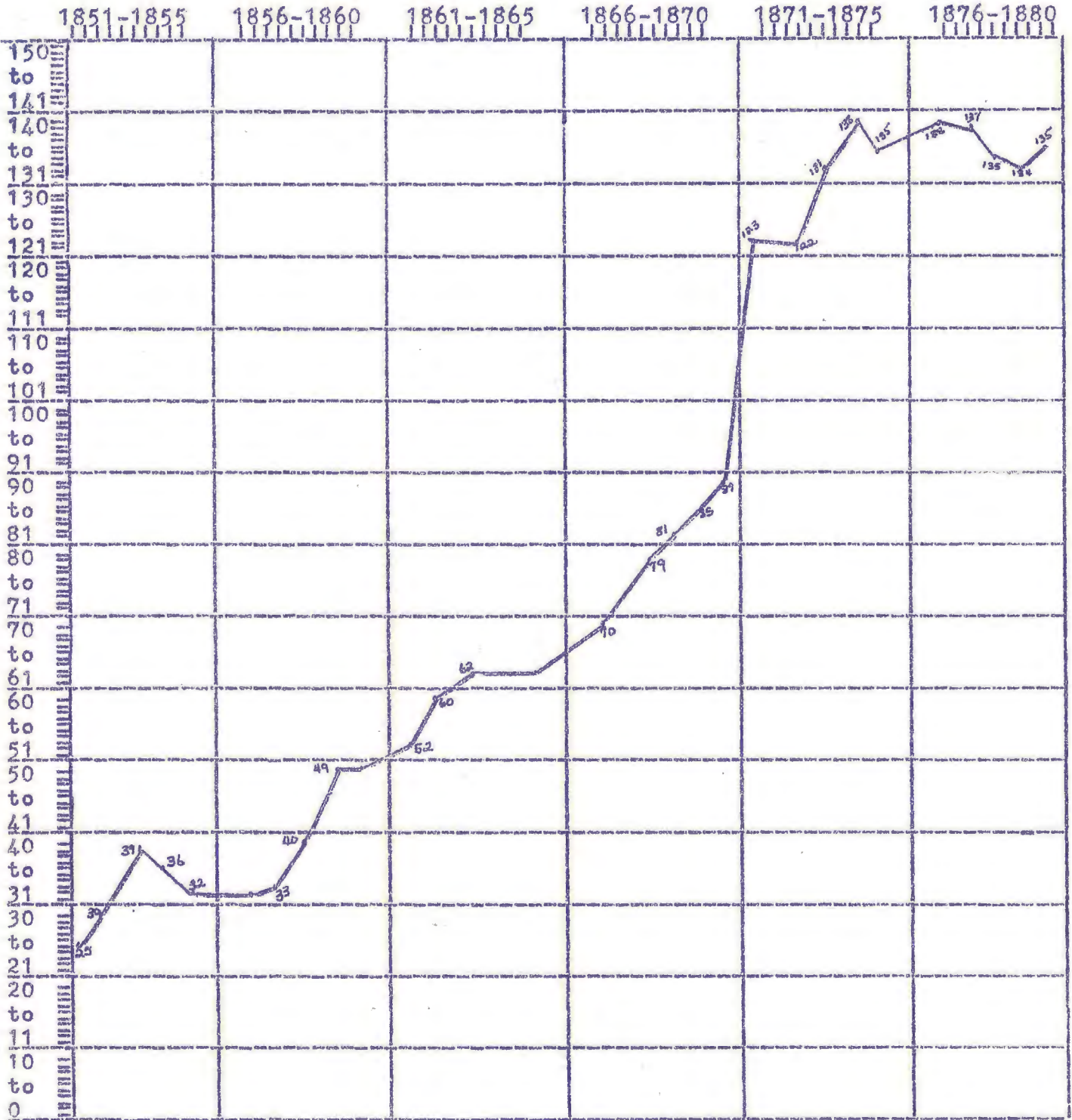
Appendix C  
Church Status:

Dates	Pastor	Elder (No Specific Dates)	Deacon (No Specific Dates)	Clerk
1851	H. H. Coleman	H. H. Coleman	L. W. Marbury	Johnathon McCargo
1852	H. H. Coleman	E. K. Compere	W. C. Randle	Thomas Heard
1853	Robt. Thrasher	J. T. Jenkins	J. C. Ray	T. A. Heard
1854	Robt. Thrasher	Isles Langley	Thomas Denson	T. A. Heard
1855	Samuel Stevenson	S. B. Starks	Nicholas Dyer	T. A. Heard
1856	S. Stevenson	S. Stevenson		T. A. Heard
1857	G. W. Wells	B. Whitton		T. A. Heard
1858	G. W. Wells	D. S. Williams		T. A. Heard
1859	G. W. Wells	W. A. Forbes		T. A. Heard
1860	N. P. Moore			T. A. Heard
1861	G. W. Wells		H. J. Rowland	T. A. Heard
1862	N. P. Moore			T. A. Heard
1863	N. P. Moore			T. A. Heard
1864	N. P. Moore			T. A. Heard
1865	N. P. Moore			T. A. Heard
1866	N. P. Moore			T. A. Heard
1867	N. P. Moore		John T. Greene	T. A. Heard
1868	D. S. Williams			T. A. Heard
1869	J. O. Browning			T. A. Heard
1870	J. O. Browning			T. A. Heard
1871	J. O. Browning			T. A. Heard
1872	J. O. Browning			T. A. Heard
1873	W. A. Forbes			T. A. Heard
1874	J. B. Starks			T. A. Heard
1875	W. A. Forbes		R. S. Wallace	T. A. Heard
1876	W. A. Forbes			T. A. Heard
1877	W. A. Forbes			T. A. Heard
1878	W. A. Forbes			T. A. Heard
1879	Aaron Yates			T. A. Heard
1880	J. T. Jenkins			T. A. Heard

Appendix C  
Church Status

<u>Constitutional Committee 1851</u>	<u>Building Committee 1880</u>	<u>Treasurer</u>	<u>Superintendent of Sunday Schools</u>
Catherine Heard	John W. Wilson	Leonard W. Marbury 1851-1869	J. C. Wallis
David W. Heard	J. C. Wallis	Joseph Saunders 1870-1880	
Mary Heard	J. T. Jenkins		
Trussey Jarman	T. J. Hall		
Mary Jarman			
Miles L. Langley			
Johnathon McCargo			
Radford McCargo			
Leonard Marbury			
Cordelia Marbury			
William Randle			
Samuel Stevenson			
E. G. Thomas			
Sabrina Trigg			
James Gilkey			
Thomas A. Heard			

Appendix D  
Church Membership





## Bibliography

- Arkansas Baptist (Arkansas), Selection issues 1859-1901.  
Limited information, somewhat helpful.
- Arkansas Evangel (Arkansas) Selected issues 1881-1883..
- Arkansas Gazette (Little Rock, Arkansas), 23 March 1831; 22 December 1907; 25 October 1936; and 5 January 1963.  
Some fairly informative articles and others very limited.
- Baptist Advance (Arkansas) Selected issues 1911-1912.  
Some helpful information.
- Benton Courier (Benton, Arkansas) 11 December 1913.  
Of very little assistance.
- Clark County Census, 1850, 1860 and 1870.  
Some helpful information concerning families, place of birth, and occupation.
- Dallas County Census, 1850, 1860 and 1870.  
Very limited information.
- First Baptist Church Arkadelphia, Arkansas. Minutes, August 1851-December 1880.  
Primary source of information helpful in many respects
- The Goodspeed Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Southern Arkansas. Southern Historical Press, 1978.  
Very helpful with certain people and limited on others.
- Granade, Ray. A Convenated People History of the First Baptist Church Arkadelphia, Arkansas 1851-1976. Hand Distributed Pamphlet, 1976.  
Helpful verification of previously found information.
- Gurdon Times (Gurdon, Arkansas) 1 October 1904; 12 November 1904; 19 November 1904.  
Only a few items of help.
- Rogers, J. S. History of Arkansas Baptist. Little Rock; Arkansas Baptist State Convention, 1948.  
Very helpful information on many different people.
- Southern Standard, (Arkadelphia, Arkansas) Selected issues 1851-1963.  
Many helpful articles.
- Tedford, L. C. History of the First Baptist Church, Arkadelphia, Arkansas. Hand Distributed Pamphlet, 1951.  
Very helpful also verification.