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# A history of Gwathmey Baptist Church

R Stuart Grizzard

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A HISTORY OF GWATHMEY BAPTIST CHURCH

Submitted as a major thesis to Dr. McDanel  
in History 318

by

R. Stuart Grizzard,

Applicant for B. A. degree in history

May 26, 1941

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## PREFACE.

It is a historical axiom that one can judge the future ~~only~~ by the past. If that is so, the church whose history is the subject of this paper is in for many more of the ups and downs that it has already experienced.

It is always interesting to know the history of institutions, even when they are not ancient and full of startling events. I am conscious of the fact that most church histories are similar. Each new one you read is reminiscent of others. Their interest for the reader is limited, I know; what makes them live is the personalities concerned.

This church has had such a short history that many of those who figured in its early days are still alive. I have been connected with the church as its pastor for almost two years. Need I say, then, that this was a work of love?

R. S. G.

## A HISTORY OF GWATHMEY BAPTIST CHURCH

1892-1941

Gwathmey Baptist Church is located one and one-half miles from Ashland in Hanover County, Virginia. It is within fifty feet of the R. F. & P. Railroad. The road that goes by it is known as the "Old Richmond Road." Since the Washington Highway that skirts Ashland is the most direct route to Richmond, the road passing by the church is not so much used as formerly.

When the church was founded in 1892, Gwathmey was a thriving village. Besides the homes that were there, some of which remain, there were a railroad station, a riding academy, and a girls' school. All of these have long since passed away; many people have moved from the community; yet the church remains, a reminder of the past and a hope for the future.

Next year the church will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary. The original building is still in use; there have been improvements, but the church has never been rebuilt or the site changed.

May I say in the beginning that all of the available records of Gwathmey Church are to be found in the minutes comprising one volume, which covers its history from 1892 to 1923. This volume is in the possession of the Virginia Baptist Historical Society, which keeps all its data in the basement of the chemistry building of the University of Richmond. Dr. Garnett Ryland has given me access to these minutes from time to time; information regarding the years since these minutes were written has come from members of the church who either remember the history or have private memoranda.

Gwathmey Baptist Church has had a somewhat checkered career. As pointed out heretofore, the community has withered away; and there have been periods

when the flame of existence all but petered out, only to be rekindled by some of the faithful, under the leadership of a man or woman who would take a deep interest in the church and devote patient effort and time to its resuscitation.

The church lot was given by C. B. Gwathmey (of Gwathmey) and he was one of its first members. The community and the church were named for him. There is now on the wall of the church, on the side nearest Ashland, a tablet scroll commemorating his service to the organization.

I  
J. R. Garlick, 1893-1896

The first entry in the minutes contains the following information: On August 3, 1892, "the following members of several different Baptist churches met at the village of Gwathmey to consider the propriety of organizing a regular Baptist church at said village: Rev. J. R. Garlick, C. B. Gwathmey, Mrs. C. B. Gwathmey, A. L. Holladay, Mrs. A. L. Holladay, Arthur C. Sinton, Mrs. A. C. Sinton, Dr. R. S. Vest, Mrs. R. S. Vest, R. Cecil Garlick, George B. Steel."<sup>1</sup>

At this meeting, with Dr. Garlick presiding, it was decided (on a motion by Judge A. L. Holladay) "to organize a church at the village to be known as the Gwathmey Baptist Church."<sup>2</sup> There was a committee appointed to draw up a covenant and some articles of faith. A. C. Sinton was made clerk and treasurer; C. B. Gwathmey, A. L. Holladay, and A. C. Sinton were elected trustees. "On motion, the trustees were instructed to secure a lot ... and to proceed ...<sup>3</sup> with erection of a suitable building for a house of worship."

1. Minutes of the Gwathmey Baptist Church, 1892-1923, p. 3.

2. Ibid. <sup>3</sup>

3. Ibid., p. 4.

On October 25, 1892, a called meeting at the home of A. C. Sinton brought forth the adoption of the following motion: "Resolved, that A. L. Holladay be and is hereby authorized to apply to the circuit court of Hanover County for that purpose [i. e., building permission] and to have Charles B. Gwathmey, Arthur C. Sinton, and A. L. Holladay appointed by the said court as trustees of the Gwathmey Baptist Church."<sup>4</sup>

On January 29, 1893, a called meeting was held at the home of C. B. Gwathmey. At this time the articles of faith were read; they were substantially the same as those of practically all other Baptist churches in the South, setting forth the traditional Baptist beliefs and being orthodox in all respects. They were unanimously adopted.

Judging from internal evidence of the minutes, the church building was finished between January and April, 1893; for we find the next meeting of the church held on April 2, in the church building. "A call to the pastorate of the church was extended to Dr. J. R. Garlick at a salary of \$275.00 per annum, to be paid monthly for three services in the month."<sup>5</sup> The selection of a church hymnal, and also that of the Sunday School lesson papers, were left in the hands of the pastor.

On April 16, in a special meeting held after the morning service, it was decided to observe the ordinance of the Lord's Supper on the third Sunday of each month. Later on this was amended to make it a bi-monthly observance.<sup>5</sup>

Dr. Garlick continued as pastor, and the church grew. Dr. Garlick was, in addition to his duties as pastor of the Gwathmey Church, also principal of the Hanover Female Institute, the aforementioned girls' school which was located near the church.

4. Ibid., p. 6.

5. Ibid., p. 8.

On June 18, 1893, "it was determined to present the application of the church for admission into the Dover Association, and the clerk was directed to prepare the necessary papers."<sup>6</sup>

Later we learn that at the Dover Associational Meeting, held at the Barton Heights Baptist Church of Richmond, July 18, 19, & 20, 1893, Dr. Theodore Whitfield presented the following report on Gwathmey's application: "Your committee, to whom was referred the application from Gwathmey Baptist Church, respectfully report that they have examined the articles of faith and covenant adopted by that church; that they believe these are in accord with the doctrines generally accepted by the Baptists of Virginia, and recommend that said church be admitted to membership in this body."<sup>7</sup> This motion was adopted, and an introductory sermon was preached by Dr. J. C. Hiden. The Moderator of the Association gave the hand of welcome to the representatives of the Gwathmey Church. So Gwathmey came into the Dover Association, receiving a membership that has continued with benefits until this moment.

On August 24, 1894, the church, saddened by the death of Charles B. Gwathmey, passed resolutions concerning his life in the church. In this set of resolutions, too long to be quoted here, was set forth his meritorious aid to the church, including his services in giving the lot on which the building was erected, helping in the actual building project, and furthering its aims at all times; his name was duly inscribed as the first name recorded in the organization of the church.

For a period of six years (from 1894 until November, 1900) the minutes of the church have been lost. We know, however, that Dr. Garlick served as pastor of the church until 1896. He resigned, and there was no regular pastor

6. Ibid., p. 11.

7. Minutes of the Dover Baptist Association, 1892-1900, p. 9 of '93 minutes.

until after the turn of the century. Preaching was intermittent; many of the members moved away, although each year a report was made to the Association.

II

H. L. Quarles, 1900-03, 1904-08

In 1900 an effort -- successful, too -- was made to bring the church back to the position it enjoyed prior to the resignation of Dr. Garlick. Dr. H. L. Quarles became pastor. On November 25, 1900, a business meeting was held, during which twenty-one people were admitted to fellowship in the church: nine by letters of dismissal from other churches, five by baptism, and seven on the basis of their Christian experience. The church was completely reorganized, with W. C. Smith and W. M. Hall made deacons, W. L. Carneal elected treasurer, and H. P. Johnson placed at the head of the committee on boards. W. L. Carneal was also elected to serve on the committee on premises and sextons. This was a significant meeting, in that it indicated the change that had come to Gwathmey. "A motion was made that the church adopt the same days for celebrating the Lord's Supper and regular church meetings for transactions of business as were observed under the old organization of the church, which motion was duly carried."<sup>8</sup>

In the period of six months which followed, nine people were added to the membership of the church. Dr. Quarles had been gradually building up the organization. There was a proportionate increase in the gifts to the Associational causes, as represented in the Dover Minutes for the year 1901-1902.

Meanwhile, Dr. Quarles and his family moved out of the community to live in Bowling Green in Caroline County. Dr. Quarles was serving another

8. Minutes of the Gwathmey Baptist Church, 1892-1923, pp. 13-14.

church and teaching school part of the time, and he laid before the church his decision to abide by their wish in the matter of continuing as their pastor on a half-time basis. A committee met with him and reported the result of their conference with the pastor as follows: "He was willing to continue to serve the church two Sundays a month at a salary of twenty dollars a month, and would do as much pastoral work as his school duties would admit."<sup>9</sup> After much discussion, it was agreed to accept this arrangement. The church continued to grow; for between September, 1901, and July, 1902, eleven members were added to the rolls.

For a short time in 1903 Dr. Quarles was not pastor. W. F. Dunaway served in that capacity. He stayed only a short while, however, and the demand for Dr. Quarles was so great that he became pastor again in 1904.

As was the custom in those days and, alas, is not any more among many of our churches, the members were strictly disciplined. If anyone was guilty of conduct that reflected seriously on the high calling of a Christian, he or she was severely reprimanded and admonished to mend his ways. Sometimes this warning went unheeded, in which case more severe punishment was forthcoming. Such an instance occurred at Gwathmey. Under the entry of May 3, 1903, we find this -- "Misses Mary Christians and Clara Dickenson were reported for immoral conduct unbecoming Christians, and were on motion duly excluded from the fellowship of the church."<sup>10</sup> This "immoral conduct," I was told on discreet inquiry, consisted of dancing, which was much frowned on in Baptist circles then.

In September, 1903, a revival swept the whole neighborhood. Only the bald

9. Ibid., p. 16.

10. Ibid., p. 18.

facts are stated in the minutes, and some of them are lacking; it is not clear just who did the preaching. There seems to be a difference of opinion among those who are there now and who remember the revival, as to who was the messenger. At any rate, seventeen people -- thirteen by baptism -- were received for membership. This seemed to be a period of growth and expansion for the church. New deacons were appointed; there were special services arranged for such occasions as "Arbor Day," harvest-time services, et cetera; and a regular monthly business-meeting plan was inaugurated. The minutes state the latter fact, but fail to say what date was decided upon for the meetings. By a comparison of dates, this was found to be the Wednesday night following the first Sunday in each month.

On October 2, 1904, the difficulty arising about the deed to the church property was cleared up by Judge A. L. Holladay, "very cheerfully and satisfactorily to all."<sup>11</sup> Another significant action of this meeting was the appointment of W. L. Carneal and J. F. Cobb "to have a suitable shelter built for protection of the horses of those attending church and Sunday School, the cost not to exceed \$25."<sup>12</sup> At the same time a church bell was to be erected. They are both still there; the shelter for horses is to the left of the entrance to the church. A door was cut out to permit the entrance of those who might drive up during a storm. The tower which contains the bell is on top of the shelter, and the bell is still in use every Sunday, although the shelter is now the haven of bicycles, rather than horses.

Still the church continued to grow. Sixteen members were received during the period from October, 1904, to May, 1905, indicating that Dr. Quarles was

11. Ibid., p. 20.

12. Ibid., p. 22.

a natural leader and that he was attracting many of those who had moved in from other communities and had not changed their church affiliations.

The first recorded mention of the Sunday School is found in the minutes for July, 1905, when the following report was sent with the church letter to the Dover Association Sunday School Chairman:

"Sunday School, Officers and Teachers, 14; Scholars, 123; Conversions, 6; Months in Service, 12; Volumes in Library, 55; Church Members in School, 61; Contributions, \$70. <sup>13</sup>  
H. P. Johnson, Superintendent."

Little out of the ordinary seems to have occurred for several years now. Dr. Quarles remains pastor; a few minor changes were made. J. Ashton Cobb (still a member of the church) was elected in 1905 to succeed W. M. Hall as clerk. In April, 1906, the church voted to raise \$35 for the purpose of sending Dr. Quarles to Chattanooga, Tennessee, for the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, which met early in May. This year was also important because the church gave a total of almost one thousand dollars (\$932, 15) for all purposes. This represented their high-water mark in benevolences.

At some time before January, 1907, a Ladies Aid Society had been started. The ladies received mention in the record of the meeting on January 6, 1907. "The members of the Ladies Aid Society were requested to formulate a plan as <sup>14</sup> to erecting a library in the church and report on same at the next meeting." At this time, too, we find that Otis Johnson was appointed sexton at the princely remuneration of \$3.00 per month.

13. Ibid., p. 24.

14. Ibid., p. 36.

In the reports made for the year 1906, it was revealed that under the tenure of his pastorate Dr. Quarles had received eighty-seven members into the church. In 1906 a Sunbeam Band with thirty-six members flourished; also, in addition to the Ladies Aid Society, a W. M. S? with twenty-five members had given \$84. 22 to missions.

In 1907 Gwathmey considered entering a field with North Run, Glen Allen and Taylorsville. In the midst of this discussion as to whether or not Gwathmey would enter the field, Dr. Quarles resigned. He offered the following at a called meeting just after preaching on the morning of June 16, 1907:

"To Gwathmey Baptist Church,

My beloved Brothers and Sisters:

Following the clear leadings of duty, and with very sincere regret, I most respectfully make request that at the end of July our relation as church and pastor shall cease.

Most fraternally yours,

15

H. L. Quarles."

This came as quite a shock to the members of the church. As it worked out, it was impractical for the four churches mentioned to form a field; Dr. Quarles' resignation was accepted June 26, 1907, and he accepted the pastorate of North Run and Glen Allen Churches.

### III

F. L. Hardy, 1908-1909

With the regret of all concerned Dr. Quarles left and, on the first Sunday in February, 1908, F. L. Hardy became pastor. During the first months of his pastorate, repairs were made on the church; the church roll was also

5. Ibid., p. 41.

revised. Many of those who had come in under the preceding minister had either moved away or drifted away. At any rate, on July 12, 1908, fifteen names were dropped from the membership of the church.

Mr. Hardy did not stay long, however; he resigned on August 9, 1908, the resignation to take effect October 1 of that year. But before he left, we find this entry, dated September 13, 1908: "After the morning services F. L. Hardy, pastor, baptized Mamie Tyson and Annie Cobb." <sup>16</sup> As far as I have been able to ascertain, no one had ever been baptized in the baptistry in the church before this. Since this was a separate and distinct entry, I am concluding that this was the first time the baptistry under the pulpit had been used.

On November 8, 1908, Mr. Marsh "reported that he and the pastor [Hardy] had visited Mrs. Brooks and had talked to her, urging her to confess her sins to the church and ask forgiveness." <sup>17</sup> There is never any more reference to this. Whether Mrs. Brooks complied or not we can not tell.

The year 1909 seems to be distinguished mainly because the church was painted at an expense of \$78. There were efforts to get a pastor or to form a field, either with Winns or with some other nearby church. In neither of these was there any degree of success.

IV  
J. M. Pilcher, 1910

On January 2, 1910, it has been reported that "Mr. Gary said that he was authorized by [a] committee to present the name of J. M. Pilcher, D. D." <sup>18</sup> for pastor. The matter was deferred until January 16, when Dr. Pilcher was called as pastor for six months, beginning the first Sunday in February, 1910. Also "it was decided to pay Dr. Pilcher at the rate of four hundred dollars

16. Ibid., p. 56.

17. Ibid., p. 57.

18. Ibid., p. 65.

per annum, provided he preach at said church twice a month, first and third Sundays, and he shall give half of his time to, and live on, the field."<sup>19</sup>

Dr. Pilcher agreed to these stipulations and entered on his duties at the time mentioned. We see later that he was received by letter into the church from the First Baptist Church of Petersburg.

On June 5, 1910, appears this -- "Committee on parsonage was requested to report plans and costs of house at next church meeting,"<sup>20</sup> which shows that there was a plan to build a "pastorium." This plan never did materialize.

About this time it was necessary to invoke again the church discipline. At the meeting on July 10, 1913, "Mrs. M. T. Brooks was excluded from the fellowship of the church on account of her immoral life.

"Hamilton Christian was excluded from the fellowship of the church on account of his unchristian conduct.

"The Lowery family, consisting of James Lowery, Mrs. Bettie Lowery, Miss Lucy Lowery, H. J. Lowery, Miss Ada Lowery, and Leslie Lowery, were excluded ... on account of their general neglect<sup>21</sup> of their church life."

The contributions of the church that year were creditable; members gave for all purposes a total of \$1093.63. This is revealed in the letter which was sent to the Dover Association.

Dr. Pilcher, from August 5 to August 14, inclusive, preached a series of evangelistic services which resulted in thirteen professions of faith and two coming under the watch care of the church until such time as their letters could be received. The thirteen were baptized on August 17, and received the

19. Ibid., p. 66.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., p. 68.

hand of fellowship the following Sunday.

Dr. Pilcher's call was to last only through September, and at that time he left to assume the pastorate at Phoebus, Virginia.

V

W. D. Bremner, 1911-1918

From the minutes it is not clear just when W. D. Bremner became pastor at Gwathmey. The next entry is dated July 2, 1911, and he was at that time pastor. He was much beloved by the people even in so short a time as he had served them; they resisted any effort of his to leave. It seems that Mr. Bremner had received a call from the Victoria Baptist Church; when Gwathmey heard of it, the congregation called a meeting and drafted a resolution, which follows in part.

"... Whereas this church feels that, together with the Taylorsville Baptist Church, it has the first claim upon him [Mr. Bremner] and that the growing and promising work of his present field needs and requires the continuation of his pastoral services,

1. Resolved, that the church is unwilling that the Rev. W. D. Bremner shall resign as its pastor, and now gives notice that it will decline to accept his resignation if tendered.<sup>22</sup> And they prevailed, for Mr. Bremner continued there until 1918.

By October of the year 1911, eleven new members had been added to the rolls; six of these came during the revival held the third week in October. At these services the Rev. Boudain of Barton Heights Church in Richmond did the preaching.

About this time there was much agitation on the part of some to break up the Dover Association; there was a feeling that it was too large and

22. Ibid., p. 75.

unwieldy. This naturally precipitated a controversy, into which Gwathmey was drawn. This was the pronouncement on the second Sunday in June --

"Resolved, that the Gwathmey Baptist Church would look with sorrow and regret upon the withdrawal from the Dover Association by the Richmond Baptist Churches or any other."<sup>23</sup>

On July 20, 1913, the church met in a business session to act upon a request that they entertain the Dover Association at its annual meeting. They decided that, since "the church house is too small to accomodate the Association, and there are so few families to entertain the delegates, it was thought not advisable to extend the invitation."<sup>24</sup>

At this time the church gave permission to the ladies of the choir to purchase a piano to be used for Church and Sunday School services.

On March 15, 1914, there was a called meeting of the church to take action a second time on the resignation of Mr. Bremner. This resignation was made, Brother Bremner explained, because he felt that his teaching might interfere with his work as pastor. The church dedided thay "would relinquish the night services while the teaching lasted, and requested Brother Bremner to withdraw his resignation."<sup>25</sup> The resignation was accordingly withdrawn.

Two new deacons were elected at this same session -- G. B. Montcastle and A. B. Tyson.

The minutes are quiet until June 20, 1915. Here is recorded a motion offered by Judge Holladay and seconded by A. B. Tyson, that a committee of three be appointed to furnish the church with a church covenant, articles of faith, and rules of decorum or discipline. W. L. Carneal, Cyrus Marsh, and

23. Ibid., p. 85.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., p. 89.

W. D. Bremner were appointed on said committee. If these men functioned in the capacity for which they were appointed, there is no record of it in the minutes.

The gifts for the year 1916-17 were \$1064.37, which compared well with the previous years in which reports were made. The next year the total given fell to \$1059.18.

In 1918 Brother Bremner really resigned. He had served the church for almost eight years. There is no official resignation in the minutes, but Cyrus Marsh, the clerk of the church, makes a citation therein of the fact that Mr. Bremner has gone. In this unofficial note Mr. Marsh is explaining his resignation as clerk and Sunday School teacher. Increasing age and infirmity are the reasons given, and he makes this comment, which also introduces the next pastor to the minute-book -- "Since Brother Bremner quit there has been supply by different ones. Now that Brother M. M. Bloxom has been called to the field composed of Winns, Gwathmey and Taylor's Crossing [now Hunton] ... I believe we have a consecrated pastor. Unless the church becomes consecrated and attends to the Lord's business, all will be in vain." <sup>26</sup>

## VI

M. M. Bloxom, 1918-1924

In a note put on page 104, it is stated in effect that the church, with Taylor's Crossing and Winns Churches, had called Mr. Bloxom, who moved with his family to Ashland.

In September of that year (1918) -- the exact date is not given -- we are appraised of the fact that Dr. C. C. Cox of Newport News held a revival in the church, and as a result twelve people were received for baptism.

On April 6, 1919, the church spread upon the minutes of the church a set of resolutions about the life of Cyrus Marsh, who had been so active in the work of the church, having served as clerk for some years. He had died on the fourth of February, 1919, in his ninetieth year. His had been a long and distinguished career as a Christian and a citizen. He was the senior deacon, Church clerk, and a Sunday School teacher. To fill the vacancy caused by his death, John M. Terrel was elected Churchclerk.

Under the ministry of Mr. Bloxom there was a great deal of progress made. In less than a year fourteen people came into the church. In the minutes of the business meeting of the church dated July 6, 1919, we find this -- "The spiritual condition of the church is greatly improved, financial condition good, missionary and Sunbeam societies doing well." <sup>27</sup> The membership totalled eighty-five, which was a substantial increase. That year the church gave for all purposes \$2523.77, a new high in this respect.

On the twentieth of June, 1920, we are told that Leslie Davis, W. L. Carneal, and A. B. Tyson were made trustees of the church, to serve with Judge A. L. Holladay. The other trustees had either died or moved away.

The third day of October, 1920, saw eight people received into the membership of the church and given the right hand of fellowship.

On March 6, 1921, the church adopted resolutions of respect to the memory of Mrs. Caroline Binford Gwathmey, the widow of C. B. Gwathmey, who was one of the founders of the church. These set forth her splendid Christian character and her faithfulness to her church.

Eleven members were received in October, 1921. There is no record as to

27. Ibid., p. 109.

whether or not this was the result of an evangelistic series. That the church was still growing is, nevertheless, evidenced by this statement. "The church letter (1922) for the Association showed an increase in church membership, Sunday School, and contributions over the previous year."<sup>28</sup> The week of September 3, 1922, was one of special services, with the Rev. W. Thorburn Clark of Richmond assisting the pastor. Five were received for baptism.

From here on, the minutes are at best fragmentary. The year 1923 seems to have been distinguished only for two things. The first mention of an important happening comes on "Sunday, May 15. Brother Edgar Terrell was appointed temporary committee to see Mr. Shaw at Ashland relative to lights and the expense of same, and report to the church."<sup>29</sup> There is no record of any such report having been made to the church, for this volume of minutes ends with one more entry, dated October 30, 1923. "On the first Sunday in October, a week's protracted service was begun, with the Rev. R. A. Williams, pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Church, Richmond, as the preacher. The people were helped by Mr. Williams' strong gospel sermons."<sup>30</sup> Six members were received by the close of this meeting.

## VII

### Bernard Mullin, 1924-1928

Mr. Bloxom resigned his field in 1924, after a successful pastorate, and Mr. Bernard Mullin came as pastor. He finished Richmond College about the time of his acceptance of the work here. He attended the Union Theological Seminary while he served Gwathmey and Winns Churches. The members remember him as popular, well-liked, and a good preacher. During part of his stay here he and his family

28. Ibid., p. 115.

29. Ibid., p. 120.

30. Ibid., p. 121.

lived in the home of Judge A. L. Holladay at Gwathmey. In 1928 or early 1929 he left for other work.

There begins now a period of decline in the church. Years went by, and there was no regular pastor procured. Supply preachers, students from Richmond College and, more particularly, Randolph-Macon College, served as Sunday School teachers and preachers. By this time a large exodus had taken place from the village. Old families moved away; new families moved in with church affiliations in Ashland, Richmond or elsewhere, and the possession of automobiles made it practical to worship at their old churches. The Randolph-Macon boys did good work in the church, however, and are recalled with affection. Brother E. L. Davis, among others, was insistent upon the maintenance of a Sunday School. It has been said that the Randolph-Macon boys came to regard Gwathmey as their own and thought it a good Methodist Church, so that they were surprised when the people decided to call a Baptist boy as pastor.

It was during this period (1929-1934) that Judge A. L. Holladay, a charter member of the church and well known throughout the state in legal circles, died. From the founding of the church in 1892 until his death in 1931, he was prominent in all church activities. He was the last surviving charter member of the church to remain in the church. Time and again his name would appear in the minutes. He was a splendid parliamentarian, and I counted this sentence twenty-eight times in the minutes -- "And upon motion  
31  
Judge Holladay was called to the chair" to preside at business meetings. He was an eminent jurist and a useful Christian layman, a man of wide charities and great intellect.

31. Ibid., Passim.

VIII  
Fred Laughon, 1934-1936

Among the students who had come out to help with the work, there was one, a junior at the University of Richmond, who was particularly liked. It was decided to abandon the policy held since Mr. Mullin's departure, and so Gwathmey called this nineteen-year-old Portsmouth boy, Fred Laughon, as her pastor in December, 1934. Never has there been a more beloved or popular pastor of this church. He was a splendid minister, diplomatic, friendly and a hustler. He did a great work in bringing back to the church the old members who had been absent so long. He broke up the stiffness that used to be present in the church and Sunday School. People began to linger after services to chat. Other church organizations began to function. He loved parties and socials; while he was pastor there were many of these. He endeared himself to the people by his ease and friendliness in their homes.

Due directly to him was the coming into the church of H. Irving Davis and his family. Mr. Davis has proved a consecrated and efficient worker. He is at present Superintendent of the Sunday School, organist, Treasurer of the Church, and a deacon.

So great was the devotion of the people to Mr. Laughon that, when he left in 1936, the church was full as a final testimonial to him. To show their appreciation of him they drafted and published a set of resolutions about him and his work. I quote in part from this. "Words are feeble when we come to express our love for him. It is not our purpose to conceal what we want to say in a set of formal whereases.... We are deeply grateful for his ministry among us because (1) of his friendliness. The youngest and humblest man always found a ready approach to him. In the second place, we appreciate his ministry of

the word of God.... In the third place, we appreciate his fine pastoral work. During the years of his ministry our Sunday School has grown, our young people have been enlisted, our entire church has been blessed because of his untiring service.

"Now that he is leaving us, we commend him to the brotherhood of Christians and bid him Godspeed."

Among his other attributes, not mentioned in the above, was a good singing voice, which he used unsparingly in the services. Elizabeth Carter of Gwathmey was married in the church while Fred was pastor, and he sang at the wedding. The church felt proud when Fred was called as Assistant Pastor of the Second Baptist Church of Richmond. In addition to his varied ministerial duties, he had revised the church roll, thereby getting rid of much "dead wood." For all of these things Fred Laughon will be remembered by Gwathmey Church.

#### IX

Paul Wiley, 1936-1938

When Fred Laughon went to Second Church, Paul Wiley, a student at Richmond College, was the next pastor. When he graduated in 1937, the Gwathmey people liked him so much that he was prevailed upon to remain another year and attend the Union Theological Seminary in Richmond.

Paul's outstanding monument is the splendid work he did among the young people. Despite a shaking of heads and a clucking of tongues, he proceeded to organize a B. Y. P. U., the first in the history of the church. It had three unions and, at one time, a story hour. He was tireless in his efforts to promote the work among the young people. His heart was in this effort, and he succeeded to a degree that amazed everyone. The secret of his power over the young people was the bond of sympathy that existed between him and them. He

seemed to understand them; he was patient with them. Whenever one of them would come into the church, he would present him with a nice Bible. His forte was teaching, and he held a series of orientation lessons for those taking on themselves the responsibilities of church membership, often driving out to the church from Richmond when there were only two or three to come to his classes.

His hold on the people was due to his deep spirituality, consecration, and otherworldliness. He seemed to be able to bring the people into the presence of God.

X

Clyde Francisco, 1938-1939

In September, 1938, Paul Wiley went to Louisville to attend the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, "the School of the Prophets." In October the church called Clyde Francisco as pastor; Clyde was then a senior at Richmond College. He was a powerful preacher, and he made a profound impression upon the community. He has the distinction of being the only student in the history of his University to graduate with a straight "A" record. Under him, for the first time, every-Sunday preaching was inaugurated. He preached on the first and third Sunday mornings, and the second and fourth Sunday nights. His fiery, stirring messages are still remembered.

XI

Stuart Grizzard, 1939-?

Francisco resigned from the church in June, 1939, and in July of the same year Stuart Grizzard became pastor and is serving in that capacity as this is written. Grizzard, also a student at Richmond College, is a late-comer to the ministry, having spent some years in preparation for a career at law. The only thing of historical value in his ministry is that the first Daily Vacation Bible School in Gwathmey's history was held successfully in August of 1939. There

was widespread interest, and twenty-eight diplomas were awarded on commencement night. The success of this school was due primarily to the excellent teachers -- Misses Edith Watkins, Barbara Eckles, and Margaret Harris, all of Richmond -- and the spirit of co-operation that existed in the church. The pastor served as principal of the school.

No history of Gwathmey Baptist Church would be complete without some mention of Miss Caroline Holladay. She is the daughter of Judge A. L. Holladay and the grand-daughter of C. B. Gwathmey, both of whom, with their wives, were charter members of the church. Throughout her life she has maintained a deep interest in the church. No one, whether a member of that church or not, who lives in the community, is going to languish long on a sick bed before Miss Caroline comes to visit.

If there is any good, constructive work being done in the church now, it is, I believe, done in the opening exercises of the Sunday School when Miss Caroline leads the children of the Sunday School. She teaches them by songs and by object lessons that seem to have absorbing interest for them. She can do more with the children than anyone else, for they are all devoted to her. Her home, the ancestral Gwathmey place, is their Macca on Sunday afternoons, a place where they are always assured of a welcome and, generally, games and refreshments. Her high ideals of Christian service have served as inspiration for everyone in the church. She gives unsparingly of her time and means to the work of the church. She maintains a warm, personal friendship for every person in the community. Since the church has had student pastors for seven years, her keen insight has helped guide their inexperienced feet in the right roads. Her wisdom has been vindicated time and again. And when the young preachers go off to school she maintains her interest in them, as does everybody in the church.

What does the future hold for Gwathmey? The church has done a good work, and I believe it has a work to do. There are ~~a~~ promising young people in the church, young people of ability and consecration. I believe, however, that the best interest of the church will be served by joining with some other church or churches to form a field. However sincere the college boys may be, however earnest, their time and experience is limited. The church suffers in some area of necessary pastoral work, whereas it might fit into the Baptist program better if it were part of a field with a full-time pastor whose duty it is to see that no one of his churches gets more of his time and effort than another. A pastor on a field would have a car that would enable him to do better work. The present pastor has not been financially able to support an automobile, although the members have been kind in permitting him to use theirs.

The future may not be bright, but it is promising.

In the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Let the church roll on!"

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On my honor as a gentleman  
I have done this paper according to  
the specifications provided for by "Instructions for  
Bern Papers" as near as I could  
Stuart Guzzard