

Iowa Baptist Women's Work

Though all the early Iowa Baptist congregations included women there was no separately organized women's work for another generation. In 1874 a note about them appeared in the Convention *Minutes*: "A paper written by Mrs. N. S. Burton of Davenport, and read by her husband, Dr. N. S. Burton. No discussion." Meanwhile, however, Iowa Baptist women folk were by no means inactive. By 1873 sixty-six women had become life members of the Iowa Baptist Convention; their dues, no doubt, had been paid by their husbands.

The work was mostly missionary in character, Iowa following closely the national pattern. In 1872 Mrs. E. C. Spinney of Pella became the first state secretary for the national Women's Baptist Foreign Missionary Society. The Iowa state society was not organized until 1880. During the 1870's and 1880's the missionary emphasis was vigorously promoted by Miss Jennie Peck of Keokuk, and by Mrs. E. P. Bartlett, Mrs. Mary McGonegal, and Mrs. Herbert Stetson, all of Des Moines. Mrs. W. S. Goodell of Emerson was also actively engaged in the state women's organizations. The packing of missionary boxes for

workers overseas as well as in Iowa was undertaken in 1889. So well was this done that the women's circles actually gave more for home missions than did all the Iowa Baptist churches put together. Accordingly, from 1908 to 1910, Iowa became the "banner state" in the Northern Baptist Convention.

When the joint Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Society was organized in 1910, Mrs. S. E. Wilcox of Des Moines was elected its first president. In 1911 the first World Wide Guild was organized, in the home of Dr. and Mrs. G. P. Mitchell at Shenandoah. Dr. Mitchell then served for thirteen years as state secretary in Des Moines, and in 1934 edited the Centennial historical sketch. Mrs. Jay A. Lapham, also of Des Moines, later served as Iowa women's president. One who gave to this work great devotion as well as length of service — thirteen years as state president — was Mrs. F. R. Asquith of Waterloo.

After meeting in Des Moines in 1912, the Northern Baptist Convention returned to Iowa's capital city for the Golden Jubilee Celebration of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society in 1921. At that time a distinguished Baptist was elected president of the Convention — Mrs. Helen Barrett Montgomery of Rochester, New York, whose internationally famous *Centenary Translation of the New Testament* was published in 1924.

The furnishing of the Baptist Student Center

in Iowa City has been partly the responsibility of Iowa Baptist Women, and in 1926 they also contributed to the erection of the auditorium on the Assembly grounds at Iowa Falls. Their part in the work of White Cross — the shipment of supplies to workers overseas and at home — has been a notable one, with Mrs. K. W. Brown of Ames, Mrs. J. F. Pavlis of Cedar Rapids, Mrs. W. O. Hatton of Council Bluffs, and Mrs. O. E. Wheeler of Iowa Falls serving as its state directors. Americanization programs have also been important. Most children's and young people's work is still cared for by the women acting as sponsors and teachers, and recently the wives of Iowa's Baptist clergy have organized. In 1955 Mrs. Wallace Stark of Des Moines is the president of the Iowa Baptist Ministers' Wives Fellowship. The Sioux Falls College guest room project of \$325 having been recently completed, the Iowa women are now providing for a new speaker system in the Iowa Falls Assembly. This is where the Baptist Women hold their House-party annually in June. The attendance in 1955 was approximately 375. Mrs. H. H. Tolliver of Charles City was elected the new state president of Iowa Baptist Women, succeeding Mrs. Howard Roach of Plainfield. At their 1955 national Convention, American Baptists elected Mrs. Roach president of the National Council of American Baptist Women, while Mrs. Victor O. Wik

of Des Moines was made vice-president of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society — both well-earned honors to gifted Iowa women.

In all their work Iowa Baptist women are aided by the Convention staff: Rev. Paul Smith, Executive Secretary; Rev. Victor O. Wik, Director of Christian Education, and Rev. Charles R. Martin, Director of Town and Country work. Dr. Vernon P. Pearson is Director of Evangelism. Miss Mate Goodell has served as Office Manager for over thirty-five years, and her fine example was observed early in 1955 with well-deserved testimonials. The many officers, departmental and committee chairmen, and church members generally respond as loyal Iowa Baptists.

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