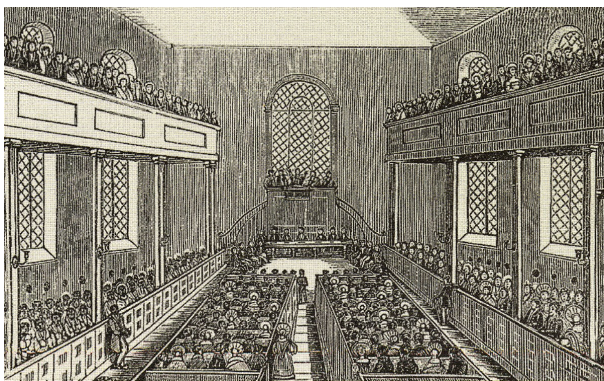


## Baptist Heritage

# Baptists Organize For Missions

In 1814 supporters of the Judson mission to Burma formed the General Missionary Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States of America for Foreign Missions. Meeting every third year, this first national organization of American Baptists was known as the Triennial convention. Organized by Luther Rice, one of the first class of missionaries commissioned by the Congregational Board, the convention in 1845 renamed itself the American Baptist Missionary Union, after Baptists in the South broke off over the issue of slavery. The direct descendent of the Triennial Convention and then the



First Baptist Church of Richmond, VA, during the 1835 Triennial Convention

Missionary Union is the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society and the American Baptist Churches in the USA, formerly the Northern (later American) Baptist Convention. Rice had returned to the United States to inform Congregationalists that Ann and Adoniram Judson had become Baptists—the result of their studying scripture passages about baptism during their voyage to India. The Judsons concluded that adult baptism as taught by British missionary William Carey was correct, not the infant baptism practiced by Congregationalists. Rice visited Baptist churches and women’s societies throughout the United States, seeking support for the Judson mission.

Through publications, educational programs, and numerous meetings, Rice built the infrastructure for a national Baptist movement. His co-workers and leaders in this work of nurturing a national Baptist movement were William Staughton of Philadelphia, PA, Richard Furman of Charleston, SC, and Thomas Baldwin and Lucius Bolles of Massachusetts.

Initially the Baptist board sponsored mission everywhere, including in the western settlements of St. Louis and Michigan. But limited finances soon caused the convention leaders to focus just on foreign missions.

Throughout the nineteenth century Ann and Adoniram Judson remained the best known ambassadors of the new global mission. But critical to the spread of this new gospel of missions was the ministerial leaders who organized the Triennial Convention. They established the infrastructure needed to sustain and grow the mission into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Among the youngest of those Triennial leaders was a Massachusetts minister, Howard Malcom, whom the Baptist mission board sent in 1835 to review the first decade of work in Burma and India. Malcom’s role in accessing, refining, and publicizing mission work was critical, and his published report on his travels to Asia became the handbook for mission education in the nineteenth century. After his retirement as President of the Baptist college in Lewisburg, PA (now Bucknell), he became the curator of the American Baptist Historical Society, insuring that missionary letters and reports would be at the core of the historical collections.



Ann Judson



Adoniram Judson

American Baptist  
**HISTORICAL**  
**SOCIETY**  
Bringing our legacy to light

*www.abhsarchives.org*  
E-mail: *abhsoffice@abhsarchives.org*  
Phone: 678-546-6680