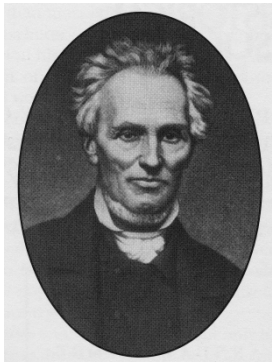




The Society's Beginnings



The American Baptist Historical Society (ABHS) is the oldest Baptist historical society in the United States and holds the largest and most diverse collection of Baptist materials in the world.

It was established in 1853 at a meeting of the American Baptist Publication Society. The motion to organize was offered by John Mason Peck, pioneer Baptist home missionary. Those present resolved "That the eminent labors of the early Baptists of

this country, their self-sacrifices and their noble devotion to the cause of truth, and the important principles which have always distinguished the denomination, make it sacredly incumbent on us to associate for the preservation of all documents which can furnish to us and to posterity, the fullest possible record of their sentiments, their sufferings, and their success." In 1862, ABHS was chartered under the laws of Pennsylvania.

Out of the Ashes

The resilience of the Historical Society was demonstrated on February 2, 1896, when a fire destroyed the ABHS collection, then housed in the office building of the Publication Society in Philadelphia. Many responded to the Society's appeals for



replacement materials, and soon the collection was larger than ever. Meanwhile, Samuel B. Colgate, a Baptist layman and successful businessman, and former president of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, had begun to worry about the danger of fire to his extensive personal collection of Baptist materials. In 1896 he gave this collection of Baptist historical documents to Colgate University, and it was later moved to Colgate Rochester Divinity School in Rochester, NY, in 1948. When the Historical Society moved to Rochester in 1955, the Samuel Colgate and Historical Society collections were united in the custody of the Historical Society and remain with the combined custody in the 2008 consolidation in Atlanta.



Bringing our Legacy to Light

Now, more than a century after the 1896 conflagration, and more than 50 years after the merging of the two great collections of Baptist materials, the American Baptist Historical Society (ABHS) is housed at Mercer University's Cecil B. Day Campus in Atlanta, GA, after being housed in the American Baptist Archives Center at the American Baptist Mission Center in Valley Forge, PA, and the American Baptist-Samuel Colgate Historical Library at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School in Rochester, NY. These longstanding partnerships have been mutually beneficial, resulting in special publications, conferences and educational initiatives and will continue.

To learn more about ABHS, its collections and its opportunities for volunteers and other support, contact us at 3001 Mercer University Dr., Atlanta, GA 30341; Phone 678/547-6680; www.abhsarchives.org.