A Series of Judson Journeys
By Deborah Van Broekhoven

Traveling has become a key part of bicentennial celebrations of the Judson journey from Salem, MA to Burma. This summer Baptists from Burma, Georgia, Maryland, and Florida traveled to Atlanta to visit the Historical Society. And this summer and fall I journeyed to Seattle, WA and Peoria, IL in pursuit of the Judson legacy.

The Judsons never glimpsed Atlanta, Seattle, or Peoria. In 1846 on his final visit to the states, Adoniram traveled as far South as Virginia so he could meet with leaders of the new Southern Baptist Convention. Only his missionary associates, led by Luther Rice and John Mason Peck, ventured west of the Appalachian Mountains.

Rice ventured into the Ohio River Valley and Peck went farther, to St. Louis and Illinois territory. None in this generation of missionaries, however, made it as far as Seattle, then the largest settlement on the west coast. A convert influenced by Judson and Peck planted a church near Portland, Oregon—the first Baptist congregation organized west of the Rocky Mountains.

Seattle in July
When a wedding brought me to the northwest, I phoned Yosh Nakagawa to see if I could visit his church, Japanese Baptist Church in Seattle—an important place in our home mission history. Yosh responded quickly with, “How many days can I have?” and excitedly explained some links between the Historical Society’s Judson200 projects and his congregation.

The largest group of new members at Japanese Baptist, he noted, were immigrants from Burma. Those new families were the reason the congregation has a lively Sunday School.

My days in Seattle included learning about First Baptist Church, parent congregation to Japanese Baptist, and now enjoying its own influx of Burmese. Yosh also brought me to the Japanese Language & Cultural Center for a conversation and to see the new exhibit “Behind Barbed Wire.” We visited the Nisei Military Memorial and War Museum, where he pointed out the anomaly of one “Anglo,” the Rev. Emery Andrews, wartime pastor of the Japanese Baptist Church, being listed among the hundreds of Nisei veterans honored there.

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We toured the Wing Luke Museum and historical sites on Bainbridge Island, including the spot from which Japanese Americans were first removed and forced into internment camps. Each visit included conversations about collaborations that helped preserve history in libraries and museums and that in turn allow people to bring history out of the archives and into the lives of the next generation. Among those in the next generation, the young owner of a nursery and garden center shared her story including how the family business closed when her parents were incarcerated.

Sometimes that next generation shows up at Japanese Baptist Church, as happened on July 1st, the Sunday when Pastor Brooks Andrews dedicated the baby of a Burmese couple. In his sermon Rev. Andrews spoke movingly of the home missionaries who had joined their Japanese-American parishioners in their Idaho exile; Virginia McCollough, May Herd Katayama, Florence Rumsey, and Rev. Emery Andrews—his father. The full text of that sermon is being published in the next issue of the American Baptist Quarterly, volume XXX.

July 11th in Atlanta

Invited by Rev. Saw Ler Htoo and Archivist Jan Ballard, a dozen church leaders from various Chin, Karen, and Kachin groups gathered at the Historical Society on July 11—as close to July 14 as possible. July 14 is Judson Day, the date in 1814 when the Judsons arrived in Burma, and consequently a date celebrated annually in Burma and among Baptists in the Burmese diaspora. Rev. Htoo and the other leaders wanted to honor Judson by visiting the archives. There they saw his papers and memorabilia, and advised Historical Society staff about rare materials in Burmese, Karen, Chin, and Kachin that would be of use to them as pastors and church leaders—both in this country and in Myanmar. Gathering in the Reading Room and touring the Archives, these enthusiastic American Baptists celebrated the documentary trail of their own culture and history. A video of these visitors is available at judson200.org in the exhibit titled “Burma Baptists in America Today.”

Judson in Illinois

Baptists in Illinois gathered in September for an annual conference with the theme, “God’s Mission, Our Passion.” Mission banquet attendees were eager to learn something new about the Judson mission. While neither Adoniram nor Ann Judson visited the west, their contemporaries John and Sallie Peck brought to the settlements of Illinois Territory a similar passion for mission. Both couples were dedicated to reaching people and places destitute of the gospel. Like the Judsons, the Pecks ministered to all sorts, regardless of thecrudeness of the living conditions.

Luther Rice was the crucial connector between Judson and Peck, with Rice assigned to...
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raise money and consciousness about the Judson mission among Baptists in the United States. As part of that deputation work, Rice visited Peck in upstate New York, persuading him to study in Philadelphia with Dr. William Staughton, leader of the new triennial convention of American Baptists. After his studies, Peck was commissioned, like Judson, as a missionary.

Peck’s mission was to the new American west, not Burma, but his indefatigable and successful efforts to organize churches, mission and tract societies, Sunday Schools and training for mission work, largely in Illinois, created a solid base of local congregations and associations, each supporting both home and foreign missions.

Bicentennial Celebrations

The first Judson journey from Massachusetts to India and Burma happened two hundred years ago in 1812 and 1813. This journey is one that Baptists are remembering during this 200th anniversary. Other missionary journeys followed, including the more recent journeys of Myanmar (Burma) Baptists who have come to the United States over the past decade.

In addition to the refugee communities of Baptists, leaders of the Myanmar (Burma) Baptist Convention are also visiting in the United States, drawing additional attention to the Judson anniversary they will be celebrating in December 2013. This anniversary has also meant increased number of visitors to the American Baptist Historical Society, with interest high in seeing books, minutes, and letters documenting early Baptist church life in Burma.

Through vivid accounts of their trials and work, the Judsons drew tens of thousands to embrace a new understanding of the scripture, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel.” This mandated an organized and global mission effort—a concept that was brand new among Protestants, who more often associated mission efforts with the zeal of the Jesuit order of Roman Catholics.

The year 2014 marks the bicentennial of the first American Baptist mission organization inspired by Ann and Adoniram Judson and inaugurating a revolution that broadened Protestant attention to a world that included Asia and Africa. So remembering the Judsons and the continuing legacy in America and Burma is a central theme for the upcoming biennial convention of American Baptist Churches in the USA, scheduled for June 21-23, 2013 in Overland Park, KS.

Early estimates suggest that hundreds of Burma Baptists will be part of the meetings. On June 22 the special emphasis will be on the Judsons and their legacy, making Judson Day 2013 come just a bit early.

Perhaps the most significant commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the Judson mission and of the Judson contribution down to the present is being led by enthusiastic, grateful and very mission-minded immigrants from Burma.

From the Archives

**Georgia Chin Baptist Church Assists with Judson200 Project**

J. Herbert Cope loved the Chin people and considered the Haka hills in which they lived “the garden spot of Burma.” He came to work as a missionary among the Chin in 1908 after the death of Arthur Carson, who, along with his wife Laura, began American Baptist mission work to the Haka Chin in 1899. Of the Chins’ many gifts, Cope most admired their ability to sing. In a missionary letter dated April 4, 1918, he boasted:

> You folks who think all that talk about singing forever in heaven is only figurative, just wait until you get there and see our Chins. I have a preacher who can sing twenty-five hours of the day, stopping only for food. And at these Associations they sing until one gets nervous wondering what will become of their voices. Perhaps the Anglo Saxon will not sing in heaven, they will be too busy making money for that, but watch the Chins. They were singing during Association in three and four dialects all at once in different houses and the ensemble was striking. I do not know when they slept. It was the last thing at night and the first sound on waking in the morning.

Over a century later, on June 23, 2012, a group of Haka Chin visiting the American Baptist Historical Society lived up to their reputation as heaven’s own choir. They were congregants of the Georgia Chin Baptist Church (Decatur, GA), pastored by Rev. Z. Hrang Kam. Theirs was one of several groups—a grand total of over 50 individuals with roots in Myanmar (Burma)—who came this summer to assist staff with choosing materials from ABHS’s extensive collection of foreign language publications to include on Judson200 website as resources for Burma Baptists, both in America and abroad. The Georgia Chin congregation, like our other Judson200 project visitors, was treated to a tour of the archives; a favorite stop was the Judson Room, which features artifacts such as Judson’s travel trunk and desk. They viewed an exhibit of Chin-related mission materials prepared especially for them, and their faces lit brightly when they saw early photographs of their Haka village in a scrapbook created by Laura Carson. They perused early religious tracts, educational texts, and scripture in Haka Chin.

But the historical item that created the greatest stir was a Chin hymnal: *Krifa Hla Bu*. Titles of the hymns were written in English and Chin, but lyrics were written only in Chin, with tunes indicated by Tonic Sol-fa notation. Eagerly, they turned the pages, singing a stanza or two of a favorite hymn before moving on to another. At the request of archivist Jan Ballard, they agreed to sing together one hymn for inclusion on the Judson200 web site. They chose to sing *Keimah Khantu Pa* – “My Redeemer.”
The thirty-five congregants gathered in the reading room and they began to sing. One man held the hymnal and acted as the caller, calling out the lines of lyrics as the Chin sang in harmony. It is not possible to describe fully the Spirit in which they sang. To do so would be rather like trying to capture the full effect of a panoramic mountain scene in a little snapshot photograph. These people – several of whom had made the trip to America under terribly difficult and often lonely circumstances – sang with full-bodied voices to the Redeemer whose love had seen them through. And, as did their ancestors before them, the Chins struck heaven’s chord with their singing, magnificently blessing their ABHS listeners, even though we couldn’t understand a word.

A video of the Georgia Chin Baptist Church’s visit to ABHS, including audio of their singing, is available at judson200.org in the exhibit titled “Burma Baptists in America Today.”

**BURMA BAPTISTS AT ABHS**

This summer special visitors helped select which of the Society’s rare materials should be on the judson200.org site as resources, especially for immigrant and refugee congregations. On July 11, Rev. Saw Ler Htoo brought together a delegation of six pastors and missionaries representing Karen, Chin, Kachin, Shan, and Lisu Baptist groups in the United States, Myanmar and Thailand. Learn of their ministries by clicking on the Burma Baptist Delegation at ABHS link at www.judson200.org.
On September 11, Rev. Dr. Al Brinson led the McAfee School of Theology in a chapel service to start the 2012 school year and his term as Minister in Residence at ABHS. Following the service, students and faculty talked with Rev. Brinson at a reception and viewed an ABHS exhibit on his life and ministry.

A key denominational leader who worked tirelessly to fulfill his vision of a multi-racial, multi-ethnic denomination, Brinson has been a bridge builder among congregations and has been responsible for leadership training for ministers.

Following his graduation from seminary, Brinson was ordained at historic Ebenezer Baptist Church by co-pastors Martin Luther King, Sr., and Martin Luther King, Jr. He also received a BA degree from Morehouse College and an D.Min from United Theological Seminary in Dayton, OH.

As Minister in Residence, Dr. Brinson is available to seminary students for advice and conversation as he writes his personal memoir.
Wish List

Equipment that will make it easier for researchers to work with the collection and for staff to work with researchers and process new collections:

Library Carts: For moving archival boxes and books. Three carts needed. $400 each

Laptop computers: Three needed, loaded with Windows 7 professional software. $1500 each

Café Chair: For researchers checking databases on the reading room computer. $150

Summer Processing Intern: To assist with processing archival and photograph collections. $3000

Reading Room Lamps: Four needed. $100 each

Reading Room Chairs: For conference table (8 chairs). $2400

Shelving: Units needed for processing. $500 - $3000

Discussion Guide Available

Bless God and Take Courage

Archivist Jan Ballard has prepared a study and discussion guide for Rosalie Hall Hunt’s Bless God and Take Courage: The Judson History and Legacy, which has been chosen as the Judson Press ABC Reads selection for 2012-2013. The study guide, which includes an author interview, encourages small-group discussion and personal reflection on the Judson legacy of Baptist missions and missionaries both past and present. The guide is available on Judson200.org and through Judson Press at http://www.judsonpress.com/abcreads.cfm.

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Save the Date
June 21-23, 2013

The American Baptist Historical Society will play a major role in preparing for the biennial convention of American Baptist Churches in Overland Park, KS, June 21—23, 2013. Founded in 1853, the American Baptist Historical Society preserves and shares its collections documenting the work of the national mission societies of the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. Material in the archives narrates the story of the Judsons and other early mission work in Myanmar (Burma). Holdings for the American Baptist Home Mission Societies include records of extensive work among freedpeople following the Emancipation Proclamation—the 150th anniversary of which will be celebrated at this convention.

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