

A Living Legacy: Chin Baptists and the Missionary Service of J. Herbert & Elizabeth Cope

When people speak of a person's legacy, they often mean money or property that has been handed down by an ancestor.

ABHS recently celebrated a different kind of legacy. J. Herbert and Elizabeth Cope served in the Chin Hills of northwest Burma, 1908-1938, as missionaries of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (now known as International Ministries). The Copes are credited with bringing the gospel to the most remote parts of the Chin Hills; Herbert worked on the first translation of the Bible into the Tedim Chin language. A large collection of artifacts, photos, and family letters was donated to ABHS. On October 12, ABHS welcomed descendants of the Copes to the official opening of the Cope archival collection. The Copes' grandson-in-law, Bill Cutler, lectured on the history of the Cope family materials and what he learned by reading through the letters.

Also invited were leaders from Chin Baptist communities. Over the past 20 years many Chin people have left Myanmar (Burma) to avoid



Rev. Dr. Hau Za Chin Suante presents a Tedim Chin Bible to ABHS (above).



Rev. Dr. Ceu Lian Thang brings greetings from Chin Baptist Churches, USA (above).



An occasion to make and renew friendships! (above) Jim Bell brings greetings from International Ministries (left).

persecution. As Baptists, most of them trace their spiritual roots to the Copes. In the US, Chin Baptists organized into denominations: Chin Baptist Churches USA, Chin Baptist Association of North America, and Zomi Baptist Churches of America, each serving a different ethnic/language group. In many towns these Baptist sisters and brothers have revitalized Baptist churches in the US. ABHS was honored to host



Descendants of Herbert & Elizabeth Cope gather for the opening of the Cope Collection; photos courtesy of Terry Dudley

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Church Anniversaries

October – December

We celebrate the faithful ministry of American Baptist congregations and their pastors! The following churches notified ABHS that they are celebrating anniversaries this quarter:

385 Years

First Baptist Church in America, Providence, RI;
Rev. Dr. Jamie Washam, pastor

250 Years

North Ten Mile Baptist Church, Amity, PA

200 Years

First Baptist Church of South Berwick, South Berwick, ME; Scott W. McPhedran, pastor
Mt. Moriah Baptist Church, Greensburg, IN;
Rev. William R. Cordes, pastor

190 Years

First Baptist Church of Chicago, Chicago, IL;
Rev. Dr. Jesse M. Brown, pastor
First Baptist Church of Greater St. Louis, Richmond Heights, MO; Rev. Steve Mechem, pastor

185 Years

First Baptist Church, Seymour, IN; Rev. Dr. Jeremy Myers, lead pastor

180 Years

First Baptist Church, Somerville, NJ; Loreno R. Flemmings, pastor

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175 Years

Madison Avenue Baptist Church, New York, NY;
Rev. Susan G. Sparks, pastor
Picture Rocks Baptist Church, Picture Rocks, PA;
Jerry Uppling, pastor
Stepney Baptist Church, Monroe, CT; Kevin Merritt,
pastor

170 Years

Wyocena Community Church, Wyocena, WI;
Rev. Mark Brandel, pastor

150 Years

Corinth Missionary Baptist Church, Martinsville, IN;
Rev. Jeffrey L. Brewer, pastor
First Baptist Church, Greensburg, PA; Rev. Scott
Jones, pastor
First Baptist Church of Oak Park, Oak Park, IL;
Dr. David John Hailey, Jr., pastor
Lebanon First Baptist Church, Lebanon, IN;
Revs. David J. Wright & Tim Stonecipher, pastors
Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church, Altoona,
PA; Rev. Keith R. Moore, lead pastor

125 Years

First Baptist Church, Billings, MT; Rev. Ross
Lieuellen, pastor
Watonga Indian Baptist Church, Watonga, OK;
Joshua Osage, pastor

100 Years

Aenon Missionary Baptist Church, Rochester, NY;
Rev. Herman Alston, Jr., interim pastor
First Baptist Church of Holloway Terrace, New
Castle, DE; Edward Emmell, pastor
First Baptist Church, Astoria, OR; Rev. Robert
Sturdivant, pastor
Mount Aery Baptist Church, Bridgeport, CT;
Anthony L. Bennett, pastor

75 Years

Federated Church of Green Lake, Green Lake, WI;
Rev. Karen Gyga Rodriguez, pastor
Highlawn Baptist Church, St. Albans, WV;
Rev. Jason Robbins, pastor
Salinas River Community Church, Salinas, CA;
Rogelio Perez, pastor

70 Years

St. James Baptist Church, Woonsocket, RI;
Rev. Jeffrey C. Thomas, pastor

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New Collections Online

Jenny Manasco, Digital Collections Specialist



With all the various technological components finally working together properly, we are rapidly expanding the number of archival items available online.

Crow Indian films

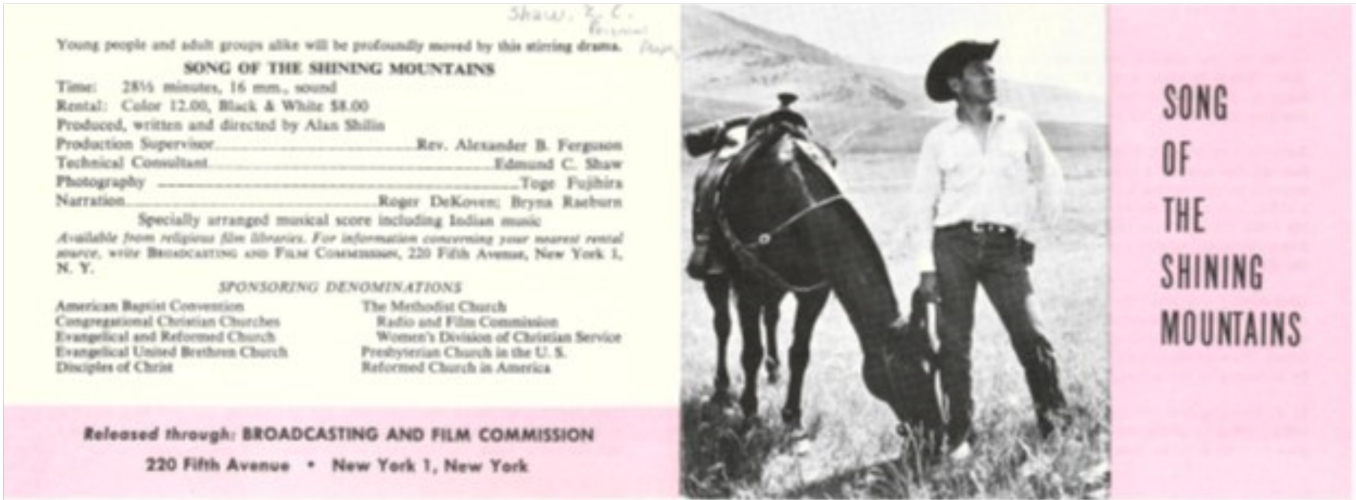
New offerings include two films from the Edmund Chase Shaw Papers, *Crow Indians on the Jesus Trail* and *Song of the Shining Mountains*. Edmund Shaw worked in the communications division of the Northern Baptist Convention/American Baptist Churches, USA for thirty-seven years. Under his leadership, American Baptist Films produced more than 250 films and filmstrips telling the stories of American Baptist missions and missionaries. The two films newly available online document American Baptist work among the Crow people in Montana in the mid-20th century. ABHS digitized the films in 2015 with funding from a grant from the National Film Preservation Foundation and contributions from ABHS supporters. Those digitized copies are now accessible through the ABHS online preservation platform.

Other collections you can find online include audio recordings of Northern Baptist Convention meetings from 1953-1971, digitized through a grant from the Council on Library & Information Resources; some of the nearly 100 reels of microfilmed missionary correspondence digitized by ABHS; and issues of *The Baptist Banner* and *The West Virginia Baptist* digitized by ABHS in cooperation with the West Virginia Baptist Historical Society. Browse these and other collections at <https://abhs.access.preservica.com/>

Japanese American Confinement Sites project

We are also in the initial stages of work related to the Japanese American Confinement Sites grant we have been awarded from the National Park Service, having set up a new scanning station and hired a project archivist. This project will digitize records that document the experience of Japanese American Baptists and the work of Northern Baptists who assisted those who were forcibly removed from their communities and incarcerated.

How can you participate? ABHS would like to include the stories of American Baptist families and congregations. If you know anyone willing to share letters, photos, or other items related to the Japanese American experience in WWII, please let us know. In 2024 we will hold “Community Scanning Days” in Washington and California where we will set up equipment to scan personal collections.



Your “At Your Fingertips” donation \$\$\$ at work

From the Archives: 500 Years Old!

Mariah Hamby, Head of Archives and
Special Collections

People often ask, "What's the oldest thing in the archives?"

Here it is, five centuries old and in good condition! The 1523 pamphlet "Von ordenung gottis dienst yn der gemeyne" by Martin Luther is the oldest item held by ABHS.

The oldest Baptist historical society in the United States, ABHS has been cultivating our collections of historical records for 170 years, since 1853.

But, Martin Luther? Wasn't he Lutheran? Why is his writing in a Baptist archives?

In the 1880s, businessman and Baptist lay leader Samuel Colgate began collecting historical religious pamphlets, volumes, and Baptist associational records. By 1892, Colgate's personal collection of religious materials consisted of over 25,00 pamphlets and 8,000 bound volumes, ranging from the early 1500s to the 1890s. Eager to share the riches of Protestant history with others, Colgate donated this collection to Colgate University in 1896. By the 1950s, Colgate Rochester Divinity School would transfer the Samuel Colgate Baptist Historical Library into the care of the American Baptist Historical Society.

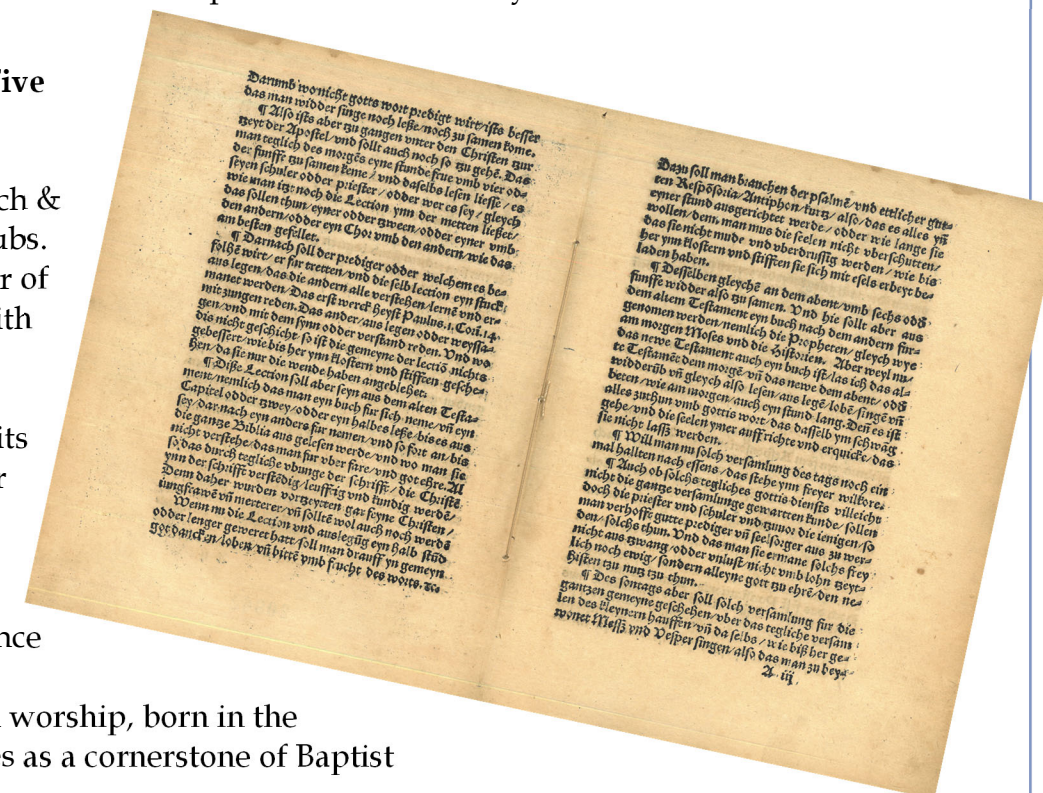
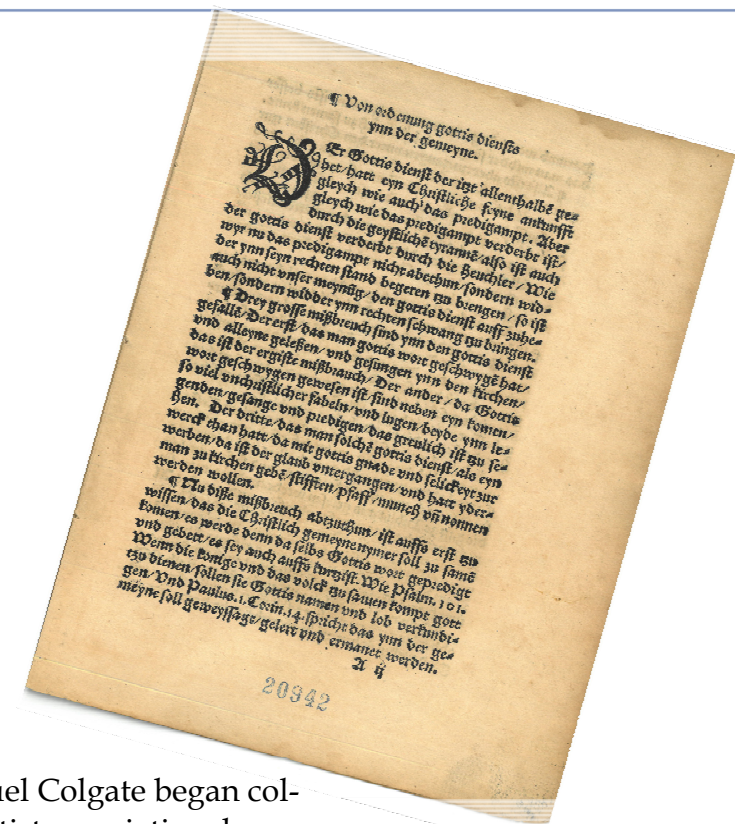


What's special about this pamphlet, other than that it's five centuries old?

Part of the Colgate Historical Library, this seven page pamphlet was printed in Wittenberg, Germany, by Cranach & Döring and features a decorative woodcut border of cherubs.

In English, the pamphlet's title is "Concerning the Order of Public Worship." Luther addresses the town of Leisnig with new emphases and methods for Sunday and weekday worship, including daily Matins and Vespers. Central to Luther's argument is a restoration of the biblical text and its exposition as the foundation of Christian worship. Luther provides examples for selecting Scripture passages for lessons, hymns, psalms, and collective prayers for the various services, emphasizing the role of the preacher in curating an appropriate and informative worship experience for the congregation.

The conviction of the centrality of Scripture in Christian worship, born in the Protestant Reformation, would endure across the centuries as a cornerstone of Baptist theological identity.



Cope Collection Opening
(Continued from page 1)
representatives from all of these groups; people came from as far away as Indianapolis, Oklahoma, and Florida. As we gathered to honor the Copes' lives and ministry, it was clear that those present represent the living legacy of Herbert and Elizabeth Cope.



Mr. Khupkhan Thang Taithul speaks about his family's experience with Herbert Cope (left). Dr. Jeff Woods, ABCUSA General Secretary, Rev. Henry Lyan, Chin College Committee Executive Director, Dr. Ceu Lian Thang, CBCUSA General Secretary, and Dr. William Cutler from the Cope family (below). Photos: Terry Dudley

Left to Right: Rev. Dr. Stephen Kio (Indiana Chin Baptist Church), Rev. Dr. Ceu Lian Thang (CBCUSA General Secretary), Dr. William W. Cutler (Cope family), Rev. Dr. Jeff Woods (ABCUSA General Secretary), Rev. Dr. Priscilla Eppinger (ABHS Executive Director), Rev. Dr. Hau Za Chin Suante (Zomi Community Church, Ft. Lauderdale, FL), Rev. Dr. Jonathan Malone (ABHS president), Rev. Jim Bell (International Ministries), Rev. Ceu Lian, Georgia Chin Baptist Church Association. Photo: Heidi Holmstrom

Research Snapshot – Luis Rivera

Dr. Luis Rivera, retired Professor and Academic Dean from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, IL, came to do research for a book he is writing on the history and impact of the Protestant Latino theological movement in the academy. Dr. Rivera sought information on the Spanish American Baptist Seminary (SABS), a theological school in California, 1921-1964. Dr. Rivera counts SABS as the predecessor to theological programs for Latino students that were established at seminaries in the 1970s. Dr. Rivera also looked into the origins and development of the American Baptist Hispanic Caucus, believing that the emergence of Hispanic caucuses in denominations fostered the movement to open academic programs for Latino pastors and leaders.

One surprise was finding his own name in the 1975 minutes of a committee granting scholarships for Latinos; Dr. Rivera received that scholarship for his own studies.



Church Anniversaries
(Continued from page 2)

25 Years
New Horizon Baptist Church, Manchester, CT; Withel Simpson, pastor

10 Years
Iglesia Cristiana Hispana Americana, Orange, TX; Rev. Dr. Alberto Martinez, pastor

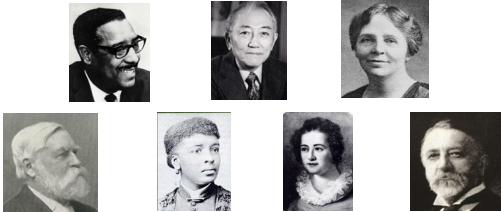
If your church is celebrating a significant anniversary, notify ABHS and request a certificate. We want to celebrate with you!



Elizabeth Cope en route to Tiddim, 1912
Cope Family Collection, MP 091

Join the Historical Society
and Become a Time Traveler

American Baptist Historical Society membership circles are named for some of our significant Baptist forebears.



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Henry Lyman Morehouse Circle	\$51-125
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Louise "Lulu" Cecilia Fleming Circle	\$126-250
★ benefits listed above, plus ★ 1 hour of "Research-by-mail" discounted by 50% ★ listing as donor in annual report	
Jitsuo Morikawa Circle	\$251-500
★ benefits listed above, plus ★ pair of tickets to ABHS Biennial event	
Samuel DeWitt Proctor Circle	\$501-1000
★ benefits listed above, plus ★ Baptist history publication -- potluck! ★ subscription to <i>American Baptist Quarterly</i> discounted by 50%	
Helen Barrett Montgomery Circle	\$1001-5000
★ benefits listed above, plus ★ private archives tour (subject to staff availability)	
Samuel Colgate Donors	\$5001 & above
★ benefits listed above, plus ★ 2 hours free consultation with staff archivist	
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To use a credit card, use this QR code or go to our secure website:
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INSIDE: What's the oldest
item in the archives?

American Baptist Quarterly Call for Papers

ABQ is the scholarly journal published by ABHS. Both established and emerging scholars are invited to propose papers written from original research. Articles and essays should be between 6,000 and 10,000 words. If you are interested in proposing a paper for one of the upcoming issues, please contact editor Curtis Freeman (CFreeman@div.duke.edu) as soon as possible.

Upcoming Themes	Deadline for submission
Isaac Backus and his impact, on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of his birth	1 Feb 2024
Baptists, Evolution, & Creationism	1 Feb 2024

Our Vision
The American Baptist Historical Society, a premier religious historical society, advances Baptist identity, promotes historical literacy, and thereby inspires spiritual and social transformation.