



Foundation  
Blocks  
in  
History

J.D. Berry		J.W. Berry	
Mrs. C.R. Brown	Miss Nannie Beasley	Miss Metta Ballance	J.S. Barron
J.W. Beasley	Miss Naomi Beasley	J.P. Downing	Miss Dinnie Harrell
Thomas Hallows	Mrs. Thomas Hallows	Charles I. Hallows	James Johnson
Mrs. Julia Johnson	Miss Clara Johnson	Miss Annie Johnson	Mrs. M.E. Keeter
Timothy Keeter	Mrs. Susan E. Knox	A.J. Madra	Miss Alice McHorney
William McPherson	Miss Kate Simmons	Miss Mary Shultz	Mrs. Annie D. Shultz
Miss Hattie Spence	A.W. Taylor	Mrs. A.W. Taylor	Mrs. Annie Walker

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CHARTER MEMBERS  
OF SOUTH NORFOLK BAPTIST CHURCH  
1893

**FOUNDATION**

**BLOCKS**

**IN**

**HISTORY**

Members interviewed by  
Rev. Frank Hughes, Jr. - Pastor Emeritus

Published by the South Norfolk Baptist Church  
November 1992

**South Norfolk Baptist Church**  
1101 Chesapeake Avenue  
Chesapeake, Virginia #23324  
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## PREFACE

The History Committee of South Norfolk Baptist Church (SNBC) requested that I visit some of the older members of our church for the purpose of getting in an oral interview some of their memories of early life in South Norfolk and SNBC. These dear people I have called "Foundation Blocks In History".

Let me tell you, this "old stuff" is something! It's just amazing how it advances our appreciation of history. "What mean ye by these stones?" Jos. 4:6.

### PATRIARCHS:

The record of the Biblical patriarch is an essential part of the inspired revelation of God. Today we are provided twentieth century illustrations of good and saintly living, also great heroism. They are men and women of heroic stature. "And now you have become living building stones for God's use in building His spiritual house." I Peter 2:5.

When you read this, you are brought into fellowship with a people at worship and receiving instruction in faith. None of these would claim idealism; nor are these stories the inventions of accounts and customs that never existed. They are related to quicken an awareness of God's active rule in human life and saving purpose through His church. "The foundation of God standeth sure." 2 Timothy 2:19.

The roads of the village intersected the towns of Berkley and Norfolk, before the entrance of churches. The roads were full of many ruts and too much mud. A man had to buckle the trace on the horse cart or wagon to get to the market places. Some may think of this in terms of fables or humor. However, in the early days ice, wood, coal, vegetables, and milk were delivered by gray or black horses hitched to wagons. Directly behind the church on Seaboard Avenue was a freight station operated by the Norfolk-Western Railroad. With the advent of the street car public transportation arrived. From Berkley the tracks passed in front of the church on Chesapeake Avenue. For years Chesapeake Avenue was lined with large tall elm trees providing a tunnel of magnificent beauty as the huge limbs met over the center. Disease and hurricanes have destroyed these giants.

## PRESERVATION:

This is by no means a recital of all the senior members of the church, which would have presented an impossible task. (For example, Annie Lassiter, also a large number who reached beyond ninety-five: Britt Babb, R. C. Lynch, Trustee, and Mrs. Elizabeth Mizelle, one hundred.) Keep in mind the stories were taken from memory and transcribed into organized accounts. The effort is to preserve some personal SNBC history and present the next generation a communication of accurate material. These "Foundation Blocks" are interpreters of the signs of the times. They were and are devoted people of God and belong in the present and future. Ancient stories give depth and meaning for the enlightened nineties.

## PILGRIMS:

We all have a proper interest in the living background from the little one-room church. Many things about a nation are revealed by the memorials that it erects. Tourists enjoy visiting The Washington Monument, The Jefferson and The Lincoln Memorials. They represent great men and ideals upon which our country is founded.

There are many things about South Norfolk Baptist Church that prove an attraction for the city. It is more than a memorial of stone and brick. Pilgrims have found that we depend solely upon God, we come to enjoy daily His favor, and we come to solve our problems through His presence.

Handle these "Foundation Blocks" with love and care; they sacrificed and found joy and gratitude in giving themselves. They have shared many beliefs of their contemporaries - pick up the torch with confidence as we launch the next one hundred years!

You are a part of the story in God's formula in the family of South Norfolk Baptist Church. We know God is at work and we are inescapably bound up with these "Foundation Blocks" in the 'House of God'.

## PANORAMIC:

Great unity was found in the stories told me by these various "Blocks" in SNBC history. There was no variation in hardships and pleasure in God's help

through situations. In panoramic fashion this brief recital established a kinship of family relationship. It is possible to recognize the weaving together of various strands of the story as we now have it. As some one has said, "looking ahead is a good way to keep from falling behind". Some people make a stand for Christ and never move again.

These ancestor people of God had no heroic figure of a man as ideal, only the Lordship of Christ, head of the church! "For no one can ever lay any other real foundation than that one we already have - Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 3:11.

"So my dear brothers, since future victory is sure, be strong and steady, always abounding in The Lord's work, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever wasted as it would be if there were no resurrection". 1 Corinthians 15:58.

With Paul -- "How we thank God for all of this!"

Frank Hughes, Jr.  
Pastor Emeritus

## HISTORY COMMITTEE

D. M. (Mac) Brunson, Jr.  
Bessie Briggs  
Billy Bryant  
Helen Caboon  
Ray and Louise Curling  
Mutt Harrell  
Frank and Katharine Hughes  
Artwell and Stella Pierce  
Virgie Scott  
Earl and Billie Todd  
Walter VanDavier

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MATTIE  
FOREHAND  
ALEXANDER



Foundation Block In History

Date of birth December 5, 1903.

R. L. Sharp wrote:

*"Isn't it strange that Princes and Kings  
And clowns that caper in sawdust rings  
Are common people like you and me  
Are builders for eternity?"*

*"Each is given a bag of tools,  
A shapeless mass, a book of rules  
And each must make --  
Ere life has flown  
A stumbling block  
Or a stepping stone."*

The poet declares the mission of the Alexander and Forehand families! They were builders in the church and community. The account includes a Southern Baptist Convention Foreign missionary.

The writer plans to give limited sketches, and for brevity, many vital experiences are not emphasized. "The fountain of youth is more than elusive. It is non-existent." David Fyten stated in "The Limits of Life". With this in mind, I have found that some of my friends have lost a few of the pages of history and are unable to bring them back for a fresh look.

## Family

Father, James Thomas (J. T.) Forehand (December 19, 1874 - April 28, 1962) had four brothers (George "Wash" Washington, John, Charlie, Billy) and two sisters (Elizabeth and Lottie) born at South Mills, N. C.

J. T. married Mary Irene Gard. Some of the Gard family had native American ancestry. The father of Irene was from Frying Pan, N. C.

J. T. and Irene had eight children to reach adulthood: Willie, Paul, Eddie, Robert, Bertha, Ernest, Lillie Belle, and Mattie.

J. T. was a storekeeper, and the family rode to SNBC in a surrey from the store -- home on Providence Road near the DeBaun farm.

From that location Mattie rode the school "bus" drawn by mules to Rena B. Wright, driver being "Captain" John DeBaun Curling.

In the early 1900's J. T. was a faithful supporter of SNBC. He was acquainted with pastors Q. C. Davis, P. S. C. Davis, Pierce, Black, Sawyer, and Hughes; he was a friend to all of them.

J. T., well on in years, served as deacon when I was called as pastor in 1947. I remember meeting with the deacons around a pot-bellied stove in the basement of the church. Brother J. T. was a real friend to me, and he never missed Sunday School or worship. As his hearing was a problem, he always used one of the pew aids. I found him very conservative with money. At the same time, Forehand served on the South Norfolk City Council, other SNBC members on the Council were Joe James Davis (attorney) and Herman White (Judge). White taught our Men's Bible Class.

## Cousin Virgie

Let me digress on the story of Mattie Forehand Alexander to inject a human interest story about her cousin Virgie Forehand Scott.

Virgie was the daughter of Billy and Annie Sue Daniel Forehand. They lived at 43 Chesapeake Avenue, three doors from the church. Baptized by pastor Clyde S. Sawyer, Virgie started working in the Sunday School at age 16. Virgie married Jimmie Scott and they now live on Stewart Street in the same house where Jimmie was born in 1912.

In the years of pastor Mac Brunson, the deacons elected on a rotating plan, made a change in banking. A new financial institution was selected.

Not aware of this fact, Cousin Virgie's husband Jimmie was elected to another term, having been off for some time. At the first deacons' meeting, he was appointed officer in charge of getting the Sunday offerings to the night drop -- even given a key to negotiate the bags into the slot.

What happened next is prime news! Having served previously, Jimmie knew where church banking was done. Therefore, on his first Sunday he picked up the prepared money with a deposit slip of about ten thousand dollars and headed for the bank. Another deacon who had agreed to meet him at the bank never showed up.

Upon arrival, Jimmie approached the night dispository just behind the Treasurer from the neighboring Christian Church, who had already opened it with his key. As a neighbor, he said, "Go ahead, Jimmie, the thing is unlocked", and in went SNBC's offering.

Judgment Day is coming! On Monday, Floyd Allen, Financial Secretary at SNBC could not locate the substantial offering. The new bank could not discover one "dime" or the money bags from the church. Floyd was about to "chill out"; it made for a depressing sensation to lose all of that cash offering.

In due time the courier was called on the carpet for an accounting. Virgie took the phone call and relayed to Jimmie the money was missing and further adding to his misery, said, "The money has been bilked -- you will have to make up the thievery."

Now that Jimmie had been "iced", his only explanation was, "I put the bags in the bank."

This is a plot for a good mystery story -- money counted -- money deposited -- money vanished! Floyd and Jimmie solved the riddle; he had put the money into the wrong "collection plate". Now it is time for Virgie and two bewildered deacons to engage in riotous laughter.

## Marriage

Mattie (19) married Mark Midgette Alexander (22) in her parents' home August 24, 1923. The honeymoon was a southern trip to Elizabeth City, N. C. The courtship was done in exchange letters; also Mark made pop calls going home from work, and Mattie found that the porch needed sweeping in the afternoons. It was reported that the Forehand porch was the cleanest in town!

Mark was born March 26, 1901 in Tyrrell County, N. C. His father, Henry, was in the lumber business, and his mother, Mary Rhodes, died at ninety-six.

Mark served as SNBC deacon and was a teacher of a Men's Bible Class for over forty years. As a layman he often filled the pulpit for me when I was away in revivals. His life-long dream was to search The Scriptures. He had a leaning toward the ministry, but was prevented due to lack of funds and a large family. His desire to preach was still present on his deathbed where he set forth Paul's doctrine of justification. Every Sunday afternoon, he began preparing for the next Sunday morning. Mark taught his children high Christian ethics.

Mark and Mattie were blessed with six wonderful children -- Auna, Eleanor, Mark Jr., Laura Fay, Ronald Joseph, and Carole. All of the children became supporters of SNBC in worship and the program organizations. There are now seven grandchildren plus eight great grandchildren.

### Missionary

Mattie and Mark felt a great tie with his desire to preach when their son, Mark Jr., answered the call of God to enter the ministry. It was a high hour in the family as the son finished Wake Forest, Southwestern Seminary, and in due time, was appointed Missionary by The Foreign Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention.

Following language school in Costa Rica, he put down roots in Argentina. In July, 1991, South Norfolk Baptist Church held a reception in recognition of faithful service of Mark Jr. and his wife, Cecile Price upon their retirement following thirty-five years in missionary work.

However, the story does not end there -- the son of Mark Jr. is now serving in his father's place. Mark Steven and wife, Karen Douglas Alexander, are working in Argentina. The Gospel is a mystery and the Word of God flows on in eternal reward: from father, through son, through grandson; and only God knows the goal.

Both missionaries were ordained to the Gospel Ministry by SNBC and have been sustained by prayers and gifts. Two great missionaries are a vital part of the Alexander history. In 1916 the Dean of Wake Forest spoke these words, "Every man's life: A plan of God. An opportunity to do something is a call to do it. God wouldn't give you the opportunity and then condemn you for doing it." Mark Sr. struggled with this inner call, Mark Jr. and Mark Steven had the same struggle. Mark Sr. fulfilled God's plan as Bible teacher. Mark Jr. fulfilled God's plan as missionary. And now, Mark Steven is also in the plan of God.

### Faithful Servant

Mattie was baptized at age 10 at the same time as her friend, Inez Pierce Ramsey, by Rev. William Black.

She remembers the old wooden church building was over-crowded with people.

"I took piano lessons from Virgie Branch", and she was the faithful pianist in the Nursery Department of Sunday School for many years. "I worked with Jewel Harper and Louise Goodwin."

"I remember the little wooden church had a small choir loft over the pulpit. As a child, I sang with the children in the services."

"My early teachers in Sunday School were Mrs. Charlie Johnson and Mrs. Mattie VanVleet."

The practice of strong churchmanship by the Alexanders has produced inevitable results in the field of missions, giving a son and grandson.

### Foresight For The Future

Mattie told me some of the history was out of sight -- unable to bring it up on her computer, telling me that she had "given me enough to worry about". Carole listened as I put the question, "what is the most important thing needed in South Norfolk Baptist Church?"

In the twinkling of an eye, the beauty of her vision flashed, "Call A GOOD PREACHER".

Pastor Mac Brunson had resigned only a week before our interview. There is no other point of issue; the sheep need a Shepherd!



**NATHANIEL**

**JAMES**

**BABB**

**Foundation Block In History**

During this interview I found two of the happiest people on earth. "Take my life, and let it be consecrated Lord, to Thee," is the theme of their lives.

"To Lift or to Lean", title of one of Babb's favorite poems, tells the story of their lives. He has spent 86 years "Lifting".

October 29, 1904, N. J. was born in Norfolk County at home under the supervision of a Dr. Fields.

**Family And Railroad**

"Both of my grandfathers were veterans of the Civil War. My mother told me how her father joined the Confederate Army in the Beaver Dam churchyard. A marker there tells the date, April 1861. Grandpa Babb joined the cavalry and was wounded in the hip in the Battle of Williamsburg, 1863.

"My father followed sawmill work. I started school at Ivor, Virginia, finishing grades one through six, and transferred to Rena B. Wright on B Street, South Norfolk when my parents moved there in 1916. We lived first on Poindexter Street, and later built a house on Park Avenue which was destroyed by fire a number of years later.

"November 20, 1926, I was married to Martha Sue Stallings at the Baptist parsonage in Smithfield, Virginia by a Rev. Faulkner. After a lengthy honeymoon (one day) to Newport News, we settled on Park Avenue.

"We have one son, Robert Fletcher, a Judge in Portsmouth.

**Family And Railroad (Cont'd).**

"I went to work first with Seaboard Railroad (3 years), then Norfolk Southern Railway Company (43 years).

"I served as Mayor of South Norfolk 1953-1957." He has given much time working for improvements for the city.

**Feelings About Sunday School**

In early childhood mother carried me to Sunday School at Ivor Baptist Church, where I was baptized.

"My first Sunday School teacher at South Norfolk Baptist Church was R. C. Lynch. George White was Sunday School Superintendent, and I followed him.

"One of the big events each year was the Annual Picnic. All the South Norfolk Sunday Schools joined on a special day in July and were transported by a local steam train to a Seaside Park at Virginia Beach. Everyone carried dinner and it was a big party going down. The children saved money for the rides."

**Favorite Pastors**

"We have been blessed and enjoyed contact with our Pastors."

**Rev. William Black**

"I remember he was a kind person and had an excellent way with the children, also interesting as a speaker. He was here when we dedicated the new church building after a tragic fire destroyed the little wooden building."

**Rev. Clyde S. Sawyer**

"He came to us at the close of World War I.

"He was forthright, and called things as he saw them. Sawyer was well educated and kept on learning.

"He developed "Rally Day", when organizations and members were called into account. Often this day produced a large offering which was applied to the church debt, and many times to catch the pastor's salary up to date. Mr. Sawyer controlled the agenda of that hour.

"I remember his first car was a Model T -- he was a conservative driver, about twenty miles per hour.

"Following his death, we placed flowers on his grave at Riverside each Memorial Day until his family moved his body back to his native home in N. C."



### Favorite Pastors (Con't),

**Rev. Frank Hughes, Jr.**

"Our church took on new growth with large attendance at preaching services."

"There was such a crowd one night some strangers passing wanted to know what was taking place. They were told it was evening worship and were welcome -- the couple came in and had to sit in the balcony."

"The Sunday School was pressed for space; we were using the basement plus William's Funeral Chapel in the next block, and a vacant house next door. The Educational Building brought relief."

"We had some good times!"

Mr. and Mrs. Babb were among the first to open their home for Revival Prayer Meetings, and always provided a meal for the evangelist and pastor!

Each Sunday Mr. Babb recited one of his inspirational poems. At age 18 he began memorizing poetry and at age 86 he can give the gems fresh from his soul. Many times I have listened with profit to "The Anvil -- God's Word". When N. J. wrote an article published in the church newsletter "The Messenger", a poem was used as a window of light.

**Rev. Mac Brunson**

"This young man puts great effort and time in preparing sermons; he always has a good message."

"I like him as a preacher, and his nice family. Wills came by to visit us."

### Faithful Servant

N. J. has filled many shoes in SNBC: Deacon, Sunday School Superintendent, Teacher, Usher, Financial Secretary, and on many Committees. "There have been many who have helped: Mattie VanVleet, Billie Todd, Mutt Harrell, Jack Rodgers, George White, Ruth Krick, Zeke Horton, Jimmie Megginson. My wife, Martha, has served - W. M. U. President, Circle Leader, Head of Sunday School Primary Department, plus Committees. Once she enlisted a primary worker by using a quart of fresh shelled butter beans. There was no way the woman could turn down her invitation for help, after a gift like that!"

"Grandma" (Martha) is busy doing ministry for others. She is knitting lap robes for nursing home folks."

### Foresight Into The Future

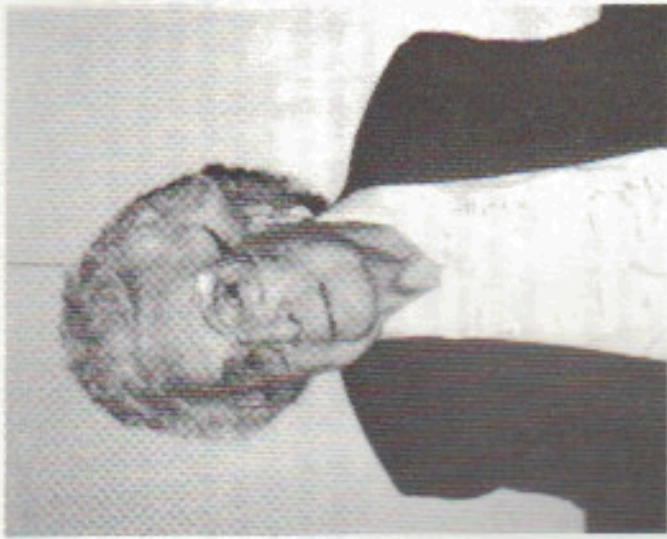
"I believe the church must set goals and follow through."

### Foresight Into The Future (Con't),

"We need to black top our parking area."

"The Family" idea slogan is a grand concern; it includes everyone. Thus, we link the family and church family in unity."

N. J. has been a pillar in the church. From every viewpoint he has been a firm support. A good steward of his money, wonderful servant with his time, devoted layman in the pew, worshipping at all meetings, and going the second mile in Christian witnessing. He is a man who lives close to Christ and hence, he has lived closer to fellow church members. His kindness is like snow -- it beautifies everything it covers.



**VIRGIE  
TOWNSEND  
BRANCH**

**Foundation Block In History**

During this interview we heard echoes from one hundred years, and picked up some directions for the future.

Life began for Virgie, June 4, 1892, born in the home, on Walnut Street, Berkley. They were poor people, with just a path! Her father worked with lumber. The family moved to Seaboard Avenue when she was seven or eight.

Please keep in mind our design is to touch the past, present, and future as the one hundred anniversary of our church is celebrated.

**Family**

"I married February 21, 1910, at home on Seaboard Avenue, and the knot was tied by a Methodist preacher.

"The honeymoon was a trip to the New England states. Victor, my husband, got passes from Norfolk Western Railroad where he worked as a telegraph operator for \$90 a month, and believe you me, that was good money.

"My education began at a little school on Jackson Street. When Rena B. Wright School was built, I transferred, already having completed the third grade. Got married before I finished Rena B.

"I have lived in the same house on Holly Street for 76 years. The street was mud when I moved in, the side walks made of boards, and if you rolled your baby "Go Cart" the wheels would get hung in the cracks!

"In the war days I had a job on The Price And Rationing Board. Then I spent seventeen years with The Pilot Insurance Company. During my later years, time was spent writing South Norfolk news for The Chesapeake Post. (One of the church members called her blood hound Branch, due to her ability to dig up juicy stuff for the social column).

**Feelings About Sunday School**

"I attended the little one room affair until they added on a room or so. As a child I took piano lessons from Teacher, Ada H. Donoho. I played for Sunday School until age 97. Always loved music and sang in the Choir."

**Favorite Pastors**

"I've known quite a few."

**Rev. P. S. C. Davis**

"Children liked him, and he was a good 'old man'. A cousin to Q. C. Davis."

**Rev. Q. C. Davis**

"I could fill a book about that man! His daughter Rose was a good friend of mine and I was in and out of his home.

Besides Rose, there were four boys: Floyd, Hershey, Clarence, and Vernon. His wife was tied to the house as a homemaker, cooking in the kitchen. The whole family had to respect him with 'yes sir' and 'no sir', tough on discipline.

He had a loud voice and loved to hear his own voice.

As to his sermons, he preached on the seven churches in Asia from Revelation and when he finished the series, he turned right around and repeated them!"

**Rev. Frank M. Wilson**

"He was newly married when he came. I liked him, but he and George White did not see eye to eye, and he left after three months."

**Rev. Edward Sylvester Pierce**

"He got killed, he was a good person. I remember an electric light on the pulpit and when he preached we could see his teeth."

### Favorite Pastors (Cont'd).

Rev. William M. Black

"One phrase describes this wonderful preacher, 'good as gold'. Nice looking and a little stout. Married while he was here."

Rev. Clyde S. Sawyer

"I had a bad introduction -- when he arrived with his suitcase on my porch, and tried to get a room at my house. He had heard I had a vacant room and he was determined to wedge his way in."

"At that time I had a nursing baby, and my father and mother living with me. There was no heat in the room and I could not handle a boarder. Therefore, right off the bat, we did not have a favorable relationship. He finally married the school nurse, Elizabeth Davis (Catholic). I was a friend of hers in my association as 'President of the School League'."

"Mr. Sawyer was more of a teacher. He had three children and stayed until his health gave way."

Rev. Frank Hughes, Jr.

"I think he was nice to every body. He kept us busy building a new addition."

One other thing I remember about his long years with the church, there has been a lot of eating and meeting."

Rev. Mac Brunson

"He has visited me, I'm not in the swirl of things now. I have seen his baby. He has a great interest in getting new members and growing a bigger church."

### Faithful Servant

"I have worked in the Choir for over forty years. I used my talents in Sunday School. At times I have played the piano and organ when needed. During one of the baptizings a remark was made that I had played on the piano every hymn in the book -- soft when they were under the water and loud when the water made a noise."

### Foresight Into The Future

"I am getting feeble now and things are changing. I quote Victor, "Ice is not as cold as it used to be."

I still enjoy the church bulletins and "The Messenger". They keep me

### Foresight Into The Future (Cont'd).

informed. Preacher, I hope you will find something good to say about me when I die. So people will know who I am!

My advice is keep on growing and keep the church at that location. Try to keep the pastor and follow him.

Don't forget the older people who have planted their lives and support in the church."

### Festival

June 4, 1992, the church celebrated Birthday -- one hundred for Miss Virgie. The home on Holly Street became a house of flowers, cards, gifts, and friends. The tremendous response from church and community was a source of amazement.

Annie, the maid, and I had the floor for about an hour June 5, 1992. Miss Virgie gave some expert advice.

On women - "They wear as little as they can and live together unmarried, and that's wrong, as wrong as can be!"

On preachers at her church - "I've loved them all up to a point! I knew Q. C. Davis like a book. I remember the day the little wooden church burned to the ground. We lived just across the street on Seaboard Avenue. I think the only thing saved was the piano. It was in the day time and they say it started from some oily cleaning rags in a closet."

On weddings - "I remember P. S. C. Davis was conducting a wedding. We young girls wanted to see it. It was a mess! The groom named Jones got confused and started out with the best man, leaving the bride at the altar!"

On practical rules - "Wash with soap and water. Be kind to friends and neighbors. Eat plenty of home-cooked meals. Laugh when you can, and don't worry too much; just keep things simple and fun. Money won't do you any good without friends. You haven't got anything without them."

As I read Psalm 100 in honor of her 100 years, Virgie quoted from memory many of the verses. We shared a prayer of Thanksgiving for her dedicated service to SNBC.

A poem states age is a quality of mind.

*"But if in life you take the best,  
And in life you keep the least,  
If love you hold,  
No matter how the years go by,  
No matter how the anniversaries fly,  
You are not old."*



SADIE

SCOTT

CARROLL

#### Foundation Block In History

I was met at the door by a neat beautiful lady whose attire reflected the essence of an efficient business woman. She was wearing an attractive apron with four pockets loaded with a cargo of reading glasses, note pad and pencil, handkerchief, etc. (Organized!)

Sadie, pushing 93, born July 27, 1899, told me her birth took place in Pamlico County, North Carolina, "near the cross roads. We really lived in the country, about two miles from Goose Creek Baptist Church. Isn't that some name for a church?"

I told her that was not too far-fetched a name for a Baptist Church. We had one in Western Virginia. E. J. Wright was really amused attending an Association Meeting when the leader called upon Rev. Shivers from Naked Creek Baptist Church for the Benediction!

Nature hides her richest treasure -- gold in deep mines, pearls in the sea, and a Baptist family on a farm near the end of the world. Yet as Owens says, "fastened to the Rock which cannot move, grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love".

#### Family And Railroad

"My Daddy was a farmer; Norman H. Scott, died at 55 with a heart attack. Mother's name, Mittie Rawls, lived until age 77. They worked hard and traveled two miles to Goose Creek Baptist Church each Sunday in a cart drawn by a little mule. The mule acted up one day and emptied the cart load of church-goers on the ditch bank. After church my parents would invite a number of guests to dinner,

to share the results of cooking all day Saturday; many times a dozen pies were fresh baked. The yard would be filled with horses and buggies, and fodder was given the animals.

"There were five girls and four boys in our family. Just imagine nine children plus friends from the church at the dinner table!" That is probably where the saying originated, "I had to take a cold 'tater and wait".

"My father was also good at laying bricks for a chimney. He raised hogs for salt pork and ham, ground his own meal from corn grown on the farm. Bought flour in one hundred pound barrels, and sugar by the sack. We children loved the fire place in the evening with pop corn or shelling peanuts.

"I used to pick cotton in September. The secret was to get in the patch early while the dew was still heavy, weighing up, you made more money!

"A Dr. McCotter from Bayboro treated most of the folks. He gave everybody sick the same pill! It did not matter what the illness, the same bottle would be extracted from his little bag. It was a standing joke in the community. Our family was a happy one and all nine children worked!

"In 1918 I came to South Norfolk and boarded with J. B. and Gracie Flora. I worked for the Virginian Railroad Office for many years. I learned what to do with a little bit of money on my first brief job which was with the phone company.

"My marriage to Wesley MacGrath was December 3, 1922. After four and a half years, he died. Following a long wait, I married Percy H. Carroll in 1937. (He lived until 1960.) The house I now live in was designed by Percy. He was a bridge builder in heavy construction work. I traveled with him in his work as he would Superintend jobs. The high rise bridge in Charleston, S. C. was one of his projects.

"My formal education was not what I would have liked. However, I tried to expand my education through night school and correspondence courses.

"I studied parliamentary law and am a Registered Professional Parliamentarian and a member of A. I. P.

"Another interest is membership in the Business and Professional Woman's Club.

"One special hobby has been growing roses, and we had a large display in my yard. As President of the Federation of Garden Clubs of Norfolk and vicinity, I spent much time judging in shows and working with the seven thousand members.

"Hard work has helped me live a long life. Like to be busy and mentally employed. Fresh fruit, especially red delicious apples are in my diet each day. If I'm fortunate enough to get a piece of country ham, I am very stingy and slice it thin. Preacher, my weight has been the same year after year."

### Feelings About Sunday School

"Goose Creek Sunday School from my childhood was my love. I accepted the Lord at age 12 (1912) and was baptized the next Sunday in the river.

"On arrival in South Norfolk, I went with the Baptists. I taught a class of girls in the Intermediate (Youth) Department and Roscoe Whitfield was Superintendent. I worked in many positions in the Sunday School, substitute, president of a class, and made secretary of everything I joined."

### Favorite Pastors

"My contacts with ministers began with the red-headed pastor of Goose Creek. He would stop at our home for Saturday night, we all would ride the cart to church."

### Rev. Clyde S. Sawyer

"He was pastor when I arrived in 1918. He was a quiet individual, also smart with his sermons. But he was a very reserved person. Often he would come by the house where I boarded and stop for a few words on the porch. At that time, Mr. & Mrs. Bonney Powers (Addie) lived next door. "Representing the young people of South Norfolk Baptist Church, Evie Layden and I traveled to Montreal, Canada, for the Baptist World Alliance Meeting in 1928. We roomed at the Y. W. C. A. One day we were sight-seeing and a young man approached us with an offer to show us around. We accepted the offer which resulted in a canoe ride on the lake and dinner.

"Miss Layden gave her address to the young man, and after a few letters were exchanged, I got the job as Mistress of Ceremonies! Whereupon, she moved to Canada. The B. W. A. was a great experience, and we heard some of the world's outstanding speakers."

### Rev. Frank Hughes, Jr.

"I traveled with my husband many of the years you were pastor. I am thankful for the new educational building.

"Some of my close friends; Ava Lee Whitfield, Mary and Roscoe Whitfield (we sang in the choir and worked in Sunday School together), Mattie VanVleet, Elizabeth Whitfield, the Overman's, Mae Eley, Harry and Rosa Stewart, MacJernigan, and could she - 'rag' a piano - she would play notes on the end of the keyboard where there were no notes!"

### Rev. Mac Brunson

"He is doing a good job. I like him a lot. He even delivered a dinner from the church to me one day.

"Telling it like it is makes things powerful. His preaching is thoughtful

and gives evidence of preparation. Even a child can understand his sermons!

"I had a hip replacement six years ago and have been unable to be regular at church. However, I attended Sunday School and worship last Sunday. It felt like another world; they used some of the old hymns and Brunson's sermon was really something -- I was lifted up; the Spirit was upon God's people. You know what I mean?"

Yes, we know what your feelings were. The moral elevation of The Bible, the heavenly atmosphere it dispenses, its breath taking splendor, its spiritual dignity -- reveals the handiwork of a living God.

### Faithful Servant

Give us one note or two about using your talents in music. "We had a pump organ and my brother took me by mule cart to get music lessons, 50 cents each. I began as a child to play the old organ in Goose Creek Church. After coming to South Norfolk, I took piano lessons from Mary Morse and voice at the Y. W. C. A. Norfolk under Mae Haymaker Henley. On special occasions I sang in the Christian Temple Choir to pay for voice lessons. One of my favorites was "The Hallelujah Chorus", and I sang in the S. N. B. C. choir."

Sadie, also served in the Sunday School as a faithful worker. She still loves to attend and study the Scriptures. Proving her devoted love for the church where she was baptized, she gave funds for a steeple on Goose Creek Church in honor of her parents.

### Foresight Into The Future

"One person cannot do it all! The pastor needs the help of the congregation -- they make up the church."

"Our church is really growing and it will require sincere activity with inspiration. Strangers need to be made welcome. As each member is involved, he involves some one else. I pray for my church to continue in the Spirit of the Lord."

Memory leads us to conclude with Paul, "We work together in God's service; you are God's field to be planted, God's house to be built." I Corinthians 3:9.

Sadie has lived a pleasant life for ninety-three years and has made plans to cross over the river of life, where the waters splash with the sweetness of spirit; and the precious music of the old hymns tell of God's enabling presence.

"My will lists two favorite hymns to be used at my final service: "Have Thine Own Way, Lord" and a real treasure of mine, which I have tried to fulfill,

### "My Task"

To love someone more dearly every day . . .  
To help a wan-d'ring Child to find his way,  
To pon-der o'er a noble tho't and pray,  
And smile when evening falls,  
And smile when evening falls, "This is (was) my task.

"To follow truth as blind men long for light . . .  
To do my best from dawn of day till night,  
To keep my heart fit for His ho-ly sight,  
And answer when He calls,  
And answer when He calls, This is (was) my task.

"And then my Sav-ior by and by to meet . . .  
When faith hath made her task on earth complete,  
And lay my hom-age at the Mas-ter's feet,  
With-in the Jas-per Walls,  
With-in the Jas-per Walls, This Crowns my task."

That hymn has the fragrance of yellow honeysuckle; God could not have made a better place than Goose Creek Church to fashion this building block; "but with good deeds; for this is appropriate for women who profess to be pious." 2 Timothy 2:10 (Williams).



"CAPT. JOHN"

D.

CURLING

### Foundation Block In History

Though like the Egyptian mummies we were "pressed for time", I enjoyed visiting with "Capt. John" along memory trail.

It was like getting a memo from Moses, "as for the days of our years, they contain seventy; or if due to good health eighty.

Yet that boastful extension of time means only toil and trouble, and haste arises to fly away from it all." Psalm 90:10 . . . To capture the spirit of the man, is to see a miracle of God working through the Lord Jesus Christ in his life being led by the Holy Spirit.

His life has been filled with enjoyable and fruitful experiences. God has given him eighty-nine years to live on earth, born December 1, 1902 -- now the year is 1991. In his lifetime there have been more changes than at any other time since the earth has been inhabited. Knowledge has doubled every 10 years and his grandparents traveled by the same methods used by Abraham and George Washington.

### Family And Farming

"I must say one word about "Miss Rosa". This I cannot do without weeping at times. Born at Fentress, Virginia, we married September 30, 1925 and spent almost sixty-five years together.

"One of our sweetest memories was sitting in worship with our children, Ray, Beverly, Doris, and Durwood.

### Family And Farming (Con't).

"I was cut out to be a farmer. We lived a plain life, wood fires in the home, long hours in the fields.

"The grandparents on my mother's side moved from New Jersey and bought farm land on Old Great Bridge Road. My birth took place in the same house as that of my mother. The grandparents on my father's side lived on a farm located on Waters Road.

"I have not traveled very much, I live today within a half mile of where I was born.

"My education was limited. We rode in a wagon 'afair' drawn by mules to Rena B. Wright School, South Norfolk. We drove the mules starting at our farm for \$75.00 per month. The animals were put in the livery stable during school hours. I played football for the high school team even though I was not in high school. Not being a scholar, I managed Grades one through six."

### Feelings About Sunday School

"My memory tells me that at one time I was the youngest man in the Men's Bible Class and now the oldest. Mr. George White was leader and Charlie Johnson teacher of men in the early days of Sunday School.

"I went through the Primary Department of Sunday School twice, due to the fact that one of my boys would not stay in the class without crying, so I remained in the class to keep the noise down."

Fun at the Picnic sponsored by the churches of South Norfolk: "We traveled on the train to Virginia Beach. It was good fellowship as we spread our food on tables under the large pavilion beside the Atlantic Ocean. The joy of swapping food at lunch built lasting friendships."

### Favorite Pastors

With a grin, "I liked them all!"

### Rev. William Black

He was pastor when I joined, I believe about the age of 12-13. He baptized me in the little pool in the corner. I do not remember much about the old building that burned. The streets were of dirt and sidewalks made from boards.

Everybody agreed that Rev. Black was a good man.

### Favorite Pastors (Con't).

#### Rev. Clyde Sawyer

He preached one of his great sermons during the revival in the Christian Church. He reached way back and got it from somewhere; it was very moving.

Preacher Sawyer came out to the farm for an unannounced visit. "Miss Rosa" was coming out of the chicken house with some eggs when they met. She said, "This is a sight, I'm dirty, not fixed up, looking like a scarecrow." His reply was a classic, "You know every farm needs a scarecrow to frighten the birds away?"

"Rally Day was one of the special events during Rev. Sawyer's pastorate. During The Depression years he presided over a special service raising money from the flock. This was a real time of excitement as each gift was recorded.

"I am proud of many things in my church, and one was that I served as a pallbearer for Rev. Sawyer.

#### Rev. Frank Hughes, Jr.

"I remember his first sermon and also, his sermon on frogs!

I remember the great revival with a packed building and people seated over the pool, in the aisles, everywhere.

The young ministerial students visiting and many decisions for Christ being made. I remember it with pleasure."

#### Rev. Mac Brunson

"We now have an excellent pastor.

I have been a supporter and friend to all of our pastors. I am proud that I have stood by them and prayed for them.

#### Faithful Servant

"I have tried to be a faithful deacon and trustee. I have tried to be generous in my praise, prayers, and giving of my money." "Capt. John" has tried to take good care of God's church. His trade mark, "I'll do my part."

#### Foresight Into The Future

"We need to do some positive things for our children and young people.

We need to expand our missionary work, provide food for the hungry and starving. We need to work on The Great Commission. The people of America have changed their attitude about sin, but the Lord is going to change all of that -- before the end of time -- the Lord has more power than the devil.

Our church has a great future and God is still able."



LEATHIA

LOUISE

MILLER

DOWDY

### Foundation Block In History

Life is so constituted that no person can stand still. Whittier, the poet, expressed:

*"I know not what the future hath  
of marvel or surprise,  
Assured alone that life and death  
His mercy underlies."*

No matter what happens, God can use it to further His plan and purposes for our lives. You cannot fool God in depression times or good days: He knows whether we have surrendered our wills to His will. We capture the truth in the Miller family.

Louise: Born February 10, 1904 at home. Dr. Ferbee delivered the baby. The house, located at Buell, Virginia (Money Point - Portlock Section) on the Elizabeth River, was a two-story house: three rooms down, three rooms up, with porches on front and back.

### Family

"My Father, John Henry Miller - (Edenton, N. C.) and my mother, Lenora Liverman - (Elizabeth City, N. C.) had four children - Gladys, Louise, Waverly Earl (died of T. B. age 22), and John Henry.

"My father was a carpenter in one of the industrial plants along the water

front.

"Talking about a large family -- when my mother's sister died, her husband plus three children, Thelma age 4, Annie age 6, and Arthur age 8, moved in. There were 12 people living in the house! Talk about a crowd."

I thought about the little girl who said she would like to have fifteen children. When asked, how would you feed them? Replied, I'd get a long long table!

"We had little food at times, maybe molasses and a piece of bread. Had to make out best we could. Mama was in charge and each child had work to do. Some had to wash dishes and others dry. Often somebody would say, "That dish is not clean and put it back in the dishpan. This would cause an argument. Mama restored order by saying, 'I will whip each one, until I get to the right one!' The trouble soon ceased. Mama was a positive person and took care of all the punishment. She was a member of Raleigh Heights Baptist Church.

"As I got older, it was my job to milk Beauty, our cow. Mama did most of the milking. This helped with providing food. A cyclone hit one day and the cow got tangled up with the train. It did not kill her.

"I had to walk about two miles to Portlock School where I finished fifth grade. My education was completed at Rena B. Wright, I believe it was sixth grade.

"We moved to South Norfolk when I was eleven. Leonard Todd used to help me with my homework, I had trouble with math. His desk was ahead of mine and he would pass the answer on a slip of paper.

"My father died at seventy-two, and mother at eighty-two. We had a large happy family. All we children would play base ball (hard ball). There were a number of games we played in the field, such as Fox in the Walnut; it was a barrel of fun. I think that is where I met my husband, Prince; we attended school and played together. As time passed, we got an old pump organ and my sister would play. We would gather around in a group singing. It was our entertainment.

How on earth did your family beat poverty, you lived in the Great Depression?

"You wouldn't believe it if you weren't there. At age 13 I went to work at the Chesapeake Knitting Mill across the tracks on D Street. There were two mills in South Norfolk. The other one was Elizabeth Mill on Perry Street. I left after school and worked until 6:00 P. M. five days each week. I was an inspector and clipped strings and folded men's underwear. I was paid 5 cents a ticket. The garments were in bundles and contained a ticket on top. I did not make much money, because my salary depended on the number of tickets turned in.

"My next job was Williams Candy Factory. Five days fixing mixed hard candies in fifty pound cans (I am still paying for that heavy work with a bad back), also helped package suckers.

"The next job with L. Snyders Department Store on Church Street, Nor-



folk, was six days per week in lingerie. I was paid \$27.50 each week and worked there five years.

"My next job was with Sam Finkelstein Company making suits for men. For sixteen years I laboured from 8:00 A. M. to 4:00 P. M. for \$17.05 to \$23.00 each week."

Did you ever get a break?

"No, I would often work two months in the summer at the Pickle Plant in Berkeley.

"My last job was at Oscar Smith High School as cashier in the lunch room. It lasted sixteen years. In 1978 I retired!"

What about your marriage, give me a few candid clinkers about your love affair. I have heard it was very warm, and lasted a life-time.

"I must be truthful - we met at school and on the play ground. Prince Louis Dowdy was a wonderful man. He was born February 23, 1902, in a house on Liberty Street, South Norfolk. His mother was from Moyock, N. C. and his father was a merchant seaman. I was sixteen and Prince eighteen, the wedding took place in the Dowdy home. At that time Prince was working for Norfolk Southern Railroad and got passes for our honeymoon trip, October 16, 1920. Our first stop was Moyock, N. C. where we spent a week on a relative's farm. It was a new introduction for a city girl - a hog killing plus traveling around in a buggy to the country store was some excitement. The trip of a life-time moved on to Edenton, N. C. for the last week of our honeymoon. At least we were staying in town!

"Prince and I finally settled on Bainbridge Blvd. about where Twines Florist is now. We had two boys born at that address: Charlie Winfred and Waverly Earl; both put twenty years in the Navy. The road got rough at times, we took Nancy Earlene Dowdy (Waverly's daughter) when she was seven months old and raised her until grown - age 21. We moved to our D Street home sixty-one years ago. Prince became a master plumber and established his own business."

### Feelings About Sunday School

"I have always loved Sunday School. Jack and Alice Rodgers invited me to Sunday School and were instrumental in getting me started. They were fine Baptist people."

### Favorite Pastors

Rev. William Black

"He was a quiet man, and in his preaching he did not run around on the pulpit while speaking. He took his place behind the stand and spoke slowly in plain language.

"I joined church at age 12. At the same time sister Gladys age 15, and our cousins Annie and Thelma Donahou made professions of faith. We were all baptized at the same service by Rev. Black."

### Rev. Frank Hughes, Jr.

"Why did you leave us? I hated to give you up; I enjoyed everything about your ministry, and want you present at my funeral.

"The Golden Wedding Anniversary Celebration, February 16, 1975, was a great program. I still have the booklet, "A Chapel In My Heart" - 'Treasures of Thought and Contemplation', presented to Mr. and Mrs. Prince Dowdy by South Norfolk Baptist Church."

The celebration was very interesting with a brief history of each couple. N. J. Babb and Adult Sunday School Department IV helped develop a terrific time for sixteen couples who celebrated fifty or more years of marriage. Our Men's Quartet plus Billie Todd's group were tops. I had forgotten this unique Golden Wedding Program. It's worth giving a repeat at some later date.

### Faithful Servant

"I have served as President of my Sunday School Class and Secretary of W. M. U. I do enjoy the Class Meetings and Missionary Meetings.

"I always tried to work with my Sunday School Teachers, many were outstanding."

List some of them for us: "Irene Grimes, Garnett Harrell, Ruby Hobbs, and Marjorie White."

List some of your friends: "B. O. Johnson, Alethia Todd, Helen Calboon, Cathleen Grissom, Florence Skinner, Blanche Trueblood, Annie Mae White, Earle Willis, Eva Cartwright, Lorene Trafton, Margaret and Joe Lassiter, Annie Gurganus, and Lucy Holland. Two of my friends are moving to small apartments; but my next move is to Heaven!

"Mattie VanVleet was a good church friend and helped me with my income taxes."

She listed a host of church friends and enjoys life, especially serving the Lord.

I failed to mention that she is a real comic -- "The Lord hid me when he passed out money and beauty."

### Foresight Into The Future

"The future depends upon our youth. I would encourage our church to develop a strong program with young people.

"Another thing, I am strong on is that we seek to get out of debt. This will give us freedom of spirit.

"My belief is that we have a good music program in S. N. B. C. I would like to see us depend more upon the organ and piano with special music. Canned music is usually too loud and it's hard to understand the words."

Historically, churches have adopted one of two mindsets. First one is survival, and the other is growth.

S. N. B. C. according to the "senior class" have all said the key is growth, expansion, and outreach.

Halford Lucock tells of a village in Maine that was doomed to extinction because it was to be inundated by a lake being created by the construction of a new dam. Before that fateful day - he visited the village and noticed the terrible condition of all the buildings. Everything he saw needed repairing, painting, and cleaning; but nothing was being done.

He summarized the experience -- "Where there is no faith in the future, there is no power in the present."

S. N. B. C. should think about that. The church that does not plan for the future will forfeit its power in the present.

Thank you, Louise, for helping us promote our historic heritage, and find the future bright as we face reality. This has not been a pageant, you have given sincere participation.



IDA

HARRELL

HORTON

### Foundation Block In History

The years will make us better or they will make us bitter. John 10:10 is clear in the Cambridge Bible, "That ye may have life in all its fullness." Life is a radiant road and we do not walk alone. Ida has maturity and a treasure chest of fulfillment.

Born November 5, 1900, Gates County, N. C. She is already beyond sweet ninety and can remember the early days on the farm. She confessed to me that she had reviewed the spiritual and physical journey of her life, that very morning.

### Family

"The only boy I ever dated, I married (E. Z. Horton). Zeke and I attended school together. We walked a mile to school and he carried my books. It was an unusual case!

"I finished seven grades at Cool Springs School.

"On Sunday morning, November 3, 1919, I married Zeke at the home; then we went to church, traveling by horse and buggy." Following the wedding vows, taking a spiritual journey to worship is a commitment worth taking note of. It set the tone and pattern for all sixty-two years of a Christian marriage. They had three boys: Whit, Shelton, and William. Zeke served in the Army, World War I in France.

### Feelings About Sunday School

"Following marriage in 1919, we traveled by train to South Norfolk and rented an apartment of two rooms at Park Avenue and Seaboard Avenue.

"I enrolled in Sunday School, Stella Taylor was the Teacher. George White was leader of the school. We called him 'Uncle George'.

"In fact, I remember a big Christmas Program in which I played the part of Mary (because I was young) and 'Uncle George' was Joseph. It was some entertainment!"

### Favorite Pastors

Rev. Clyde Sawyer

"My impression is that he would have made a good business man, because he was a good manager."

"He was not married when I first knew him. During his ministry we transferred our church membership from Cool Springs Baptist. He was present in our home when we celebrated twenty-five years of marriage. The only thing I remember is that we worked real hard raising money by every means possible to put on the church debt."

Rev. Frank Hughes, Jr.

"You have been a wonderful pastor and neighbor. It seems that the church turned around in a new direction.

"The Sunday School was able to move from curtains in the balcony and basement into a beautiful new educational building.

"Then I remember the young people going out into the ministry and the Revivals with power.

"I also, remember feeding my preacher's family black-eyed peas on New Year Day for many years."

Rev. Mac Brunson

"He is a mighty fine preacher and like Hughes, he believes what he preaches!

"He is likeable, friendly, enjoyable, and sociable.

"He really has a desire for the church to move forward."

### Faithful Servant

Mrs. Horton has worked in Sunday School, Training Union, W. M. U., and served on Committees of the Church. Zeke served at her side in working with children.

### Faithful Servant (Cont.)

"We tithed our income. My husband's top salary was \$78.00 per week. Each week we spread our church envelopes out and counted out ten per cent of every dollar for the Lord's work. We practiced tithing and I still do!"

(There are untold blessings in giving God's tithe and our offerings. Try tithing -- it will enrich your life. How much should I give is often answered, "give what you can, its up to you". When a Christian tithes, he is telling the world that God owns all. Faithful stewards prove God's grace.)

### Foresight Into The Future

"The most important advice I have for people is give your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ and The Gospel. People need the Lord and should serve Him.

"Second, we need to follow our leader in the church. Finding God's Will and doing it.

"Third, I believe in the power of prayer. The church needs to pray, and in my experience I find that the Lord answers prayer, even about little things. Often, some urgent matter appears and I request the Lord for help and He sends someone to care for the situation."

Ida has given the church an example of 'another spirit' -- through intercessory prayer and by contributing regularly to its support.

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**HELEN**

**DUNNING**

**KRISS**

#### Foundation Block In History

"Brothers, I am going to use a human illustration:" using the words of Paul, Galatians 3:15. Helen was born January 16, 1908, perhaps about 300 feet from the first little wooden building of South Norfolk Baptist Church, and has lived her life in the next block of Seaboard Avenue. Now for the rest of this human interest story.

#### Family And Homemaker

"My mama - Jonnie Clark Bunch - born in Bertie County, N. C. on a farm, lived 98 years.

"My father, Henry Winston Dunning, moved from N. C. to Berkley (Norfolk), and about 1907 built a house at 1128 Seaboard Avenue. I was born in the new house located near the Baptist Church. My father was an engineer on a tugboat, dredging channels. His work moved about and often up north for several months at a time. There were seven children - Winston, Helen, Louise, Hazel, Irving, Jack, and Elizabeth. Mother was active in church and the women's work. She often talked about having the preacher for a meal."

Mrs. Dunning was a small person and had the appearance of Whistler's mother. She also earned the name "Two Mama's" as little grand and great-grandchildren arrived.

"My marriage April 4, 1929, took place in the parsonage with Rev. Sawyer doing the ceremony. Arthur Martin Kriss from N. Y. was the groom. Now let me give you a little bit of history about S. N. B. C. My husband's father Martin Kriss had moved down here with the Steel Plant from N. Y. He became an out-

standing leader and Deacon in the church. He was a close friend with Rev. Sawyer. His daughter, Norma (Kriss) Barnes was organist of the church. My brother, Winston Dunning, married one of his daughters, Florence Kriss. The Kriss family, my husband, his sisters, and father, Martin, were all human links in Baptist heritage.

"I gave birth to seven children (like my mother): Henry Martin, Lou Ann, Arthur Irving, Ellen, Rosemary, Norma Sue, and Janie. There is a place in my heart for each one. We never wasted food or clothes! I worked on a sewing machine making all of the girls' clothes until they were old enough to sew for themselves. This helped our finances. A tradition of celebrating Birthdays is always a family reunion. A favorite dish is corn bread and cabbage, plus ice cream.

"My brother, Irving, lived in a wheel chair for 32 years and his wife, Alice, deserves a special place in heaven for her love and care." (Irving and Alice were members of S. N. B. C.).

"One more thing, I remember about Christmas as a child, we didn't get much: a little doll and tin dishes, raisins on a stem with an apple and orange in a stocking. All the children shared alike.

#### Feelings About Sunday School

"As a child I loved Sunday School and the Annual Picnic. I later served as teacher and superintendent of twelve-year-olds. Mama would not let us skate, ride bikes, attend movies, etc. on Sunday. It was a religious day; we sat on the porch and talked with neighbors."

Two Mamas had a clear understanding of I John 3:8-9 "Whoever practices sin belongs to the devil . . . No one born of God makes a practice of sinning."

#### Favorite Pastors

"We always looked up to them as a celebrity! Never called them by their first name, but treated them with respectfulness.

"A lot of things have changed today - even school teachers are not respected. They are looked upon as one of the crowd and I think that is bad."

#### Rev. Q. C. Davis and Early Pastors

"All I remember about these early pastors is hearing my mother saying this or that about them."

#### Rev. William Black

"He was stocky in stature. He lived on Chesapeake Avenue -- 1000 block.

There was a doctor who had an office and home near Black's home. "I remember the awful day when the church building was destroyed by fire. My mother came running into the house crying -- the church building is burning up. It upset us all."

This was a very crucial point which must not be overlooked; by all outward appearances the fire seemed to leave the membership in the depths of despair. But God had a secret in mind that He had not revealed to the Dunning and Kriss families. It ushered in a new program, fulfilling the dreams of early pastors, such as E. S. Pierce, who had urged a vigorous effort to raise money for a new building. The congregation had outgrown the little wooden structure. Therefore, as we watch this documentary of S. N. B. C. history (fire) followed by a picture of members digging a basement, raising brick walls two and one half feet thick, placing huge columns, elevated floor, balcony, magnificent stained glass windows, we see a beautiful sanctuary consecrated to God. There is only one answer: it was a plan embraced by Christ our Lord. For the tender beauty of beginnings our praise we lift to Thee.

#### Rev. Clyde Sawyer

"He baptized me; at age 12 I made a profession of faith. Florence Kriss joined and we were baptized in the pool of the new church.

"Rev. Sawyer was a quiet man, tall and thin. He was dignified, dressed neat, and a good preacher. When he got up to preach, he went straight to preaching and followed the Scripture very carefully."

#### Rev. Frank Hughes, Jr.

"I remember a little bit about you, and wished you had not retired. I really enjoyed my church, you were one of us and we all felt like family. All of my people loved you."

#### Rev. Mac Brunson

"I attend church when I can; my vision is poor (lost sight in one eye). I need help to go.

"Rev. Brunson is very alive, on fire, not put on, believes what he preaches!"

"He is doing well with our young people. The sermons are inspiring. He does a great deal of hospital visiting, and fits into the senior adult work, bus trips, loves to eat -- one of us. Does not act superior. He has a lovely wife and family; we are proud of them. He throws himself into his work and he is not in it for the money."

As Helen spoke of the great successes today, I remembered Psalm 1 of the blessedness of a man of God. Wordsworth put it in this phrase, "He

shall prosper in whatsoever he doeth." God's blessing is on all the handiwork of the godly, and directs it to blessed and prosperous issues. Oh! the blessedness of the man who delights in the law of the Lord.

#### Faithful Servant

"Helen filled many places of Christian support in Sunday School, Training Union, W. M. U., Vacation Bible School, and worship. "My life has been one of contentment with a happy marriage. Arthur would help with the dishes and children in the bath tub. I think T. V. is awful today -- people with no clothes, bedroom drama -- soap shows -- filthy language -- some folks think anything is alright. But it hurts other people, the children, and I turn it off!"

Helen listed some of her co-laborers: "Cathleen Grissom, Helen Cahoon, Rennie Baines, Annie Mae Tayloe, Mary McPherson, Margaret Lassiter, Ruth Krick, and Zeke Horton."

#### Foresight Into The Future

Helen gave us several common sense ideas to work on:

"I believe witnessing is the whole thing in a 'nut shell'! Outreach in the neighborhood around the church is first priority.

"Keep the church members interested with a live program.

"Develop programs for the children.

"Feature help for the family unit and not let the world take over.

"Maintain stability in church -- our church has been consistent, never an up and down, hot and cold situation.

"Let's continue moving forward on level ground. Branches linked we stand."

Her attitude makes us thankful for congregational control in the sovereignty of God, and makes us admit that church unity is to be desired. A mighty work for God is yet to be done. Helen has suggested a pattern for our future. Regardless of the history of the church, there are hostile enemies to face, and only by unity is victory won. "Continuing with eager earnestness to maintain the unity of the Spirit through the tie of peace." Ephesians 4:3.

"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like precious oil upon the head and beard of Aaron. . . . It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion!"

"For there the Lord has commanded the blessing, life for evermore." Psalm 133.

house I live in at 905 Ohio Street. I have been living in my present house since 1945. The Rena B. Wright School I attended has been destroyed.

"I went to work at 12 years of age in the Old Elizabeth Knitting Mill. The company had another mill in Berkeley. My first job was to separate men's underwear into bundles. Later my job was to put the strip on the front and place a label at the bottom. We were paid by the number of tickets we cut each day."

Tell me about your marriage. "I met Lyman Lilley from Little Washington, N. C. who came to South Norfolk to work. I was age 22 and he was 24. We caught the train to Elizabeth City for the wedding. My sister lived there and there wasn't anything as a honeymoon in those days!"

We had eight children -- Lillian, Dorothy, Frank, Elsie, Gertie, Norma, Barbara, and Faye. Often the girls and Mama get together for lunch; it is a crowd when we do.

"You can't keep a secret in this family -- if one knows something she has already told one of the others. There are already 16 grandchildren and 18 great grandchildren. I'm proud of my children -- they are so good; one of them spends each night with me."

Tell me about the luxuries you had 94 years ago. "At Christmas I usually received an apple and one stick of candy! Not a lot of stuff like kids get today. We had fun and a good time. Open fields to play in; today children do not have anywhere to play; and the streets are full of cars. (Oh, for the days when "the highways were unoccupied." Judges 5:6) We traveled by horse and buggy. Mr. Bray had one of the first autos in South Norfolk.

"It was hard with outdoor bathrooms and no bath tub in the house. My clothes were hand washed on a scrub board and boiled in an iron pot in the yard. Heated my iron on a wood stove. We knew nothing of gas and electric stoves. My ice box would hold about 50 pounds and it was delivered about three days each week by a man driving a horse and wagon."

Share with me your assessment of living situations today. "I would not be caught dead in some of the bathing suits women wear, even the clothes today are junk! I never owned a pair of shorts in my life. In my day women wore dresses and men wore pants! Boys wore knickers. I have never heard of so much killing and it's not safe to answer your door. I don't believe people ought to use all these credit cards; they need to wait until they can pay cash for things needed."

Everybody is interested to know your secret for living 94 years; they want a copy of the formula.

"I'll tell you the first thing is hard work (that is verified because the house and yard are spotless)! Second, I do not smoke, dip or drink Coca Colas - my drink is ice tea. (What a classic answer)! Third, I eat anything, like boiled food, never fry -- use the oven. For breakfast I eat oat meal, cream of wheat, or cereal most of the time." How about desserts? "That's my dish! When it comes to candy and cakes, there's nothing better!"



**GERTIE**

**ESTELLE**

**PERICE**

**LILLEY**

### **Foundation Block In History**

"Christ has given each of us special abilities -- whatever he wants us to have out of his rich storehouse of gifts." Eph. 4:7.

The primary responsibility for doing God's work, in any given time and place, rests upon the shoulders of the congregation -- the people of God -- rather than upon the clergy. In 1609 John Smyth called the church a "company of the faithful".

Gertie can help different generations find common bonds. Does she enjoy telling tales of the "good old tough days"? Just press her button and 94 years will unwind.

Born January 6, 1898. When I asked her birth date, she turned the tables, "Now you want to know how old I am; how old are you?" I said, "seventy-two". Her reply, "that's nothing". I go all the way back to the little wooden church destroyed by fire. I was born near Windsor, Bertie County, North Carolina. My Daddy was Frank Perice and mother's name was Salley White. Mama died when I was one year old.

### **Family And House Keeping**

"My friend Rev. Rowland Wagner told me once, he was a small potato, but hard to peel." Mrs. Lilley is a small person of stature like Zacchaeus. She said, "My short legs have been a problem, especially when trying to climb up on the street car. I was five years old when my Daddy moved to South Norfolk and went to work on a tugboat. Later he worked as a carpenter; in fact, he helped build the

These are some tips to help stay alive as long as you live. It is not just food, but the most alive quality about Gertie is her zeal for the Scripture, I will explain this later.

#### Feelings About Sunday School

"I attended Sunday School in the little wooden church building. I do not remember much about the fire. But that was where I started Sunday School and never attended any other church."

#### Favorite Pastors

**Rev. Q. C. Davis**

"I remember he was pastor, and the story about him and some of the early preachers is too long to tell."

**Rev. E. S. Pierce**

"Do not remember much about him."

**Rev. William Black**

"Stayed a long time."

**Rev. Clyde Sawyer**

"I remember him real well, but will not make comments."

**Rev. Frank Hughes, Jr.**

"Everyone loved you and you stayed a long time."

**Rev. Mac Brunson**

"I like our present pastor. His wife visited me in the hospital, and he brought his darling boy by for a visit when my daughter died. It was very thoughtful and I will never forget it."

#### Faithful Servant

"I have done what I could for my church. I worked in the kitchen many times. Sarah Oglesby, Mrs. Percy White, and others fried more chicken (than Colonel Sanders to hear her describe it) while Martha Babb prepared 300 biscuits for the Wednesday suppers. Enjoyed working with these sweet people. Always attended Sunday School and worship. Most of my friends and neighbors have passed away. Mr. & Mrs. Sam Flora, Mrs. Tavenner, etc. Nonie Rose told me she had read The Bible through thirty times. She was my Sunday School teacher

at one time. She was also a public school teacher in the days when a teacher could not be married!"

She declared that a person should live right, do right, and trust in God. "Because the Lord God helps me, I will not be dismayed; therefore, I have set my face like flint to do His will, and I know that I will triumph." Isaiah 50:7.

#### Foresight Into The Future

Talk some about your dreams and hopes for the future. In her day, things really were different. Depression "in the old days" was tough 94 years looking back.

Gertie gave us one or two stars to follow:

First, "Keep things going smooth at the church; that is the best advice I can give and there is none better!"

This gospel is overlooked by modern folks; everything in the church must be harmonized with Jesus. We need a fresh word, a word from God, a word from an aged saint about the need of a frictionless fellowship -- a 'melting pot' where the congregation forms a single homogenous body.

Second, "I am reading The Bible through this year and I recommend that our church members do the same." Let us be aware of this statement of integrity. She did not fake it, there on the table by her chair was a Bible on which she lovingly placed her hand showing me the marker of the pages read. The Bible stands in judgment of us; we do not stand in judgment of it. A Christian who feeds on The Bible will offer himself a healthy diet.

Third, "Don't worry about the future, God takes care of everything."

With that viewpoint you will reach a hundred! "Yes, Dr. Spear fixed my hip with a replacement. When I last visited his office, I asked him when my next visit should be. The Doctor told me to come back in three years! And I protested, "Do you know how old I'll be? You know what he told me -- "I know, but I fixed the hip so it would last 30 years!"

This we must remember: we only live once and we can stay alive with ordinary things to laugh about! In this interview I had to do some "still hunting" and wait for her to let slip a sunbeam in the parlor, one thing for sure, we don't stop laughing when we are ninety-four!

Do we have anything to say to this age? If so, then we had better say it. (Dr. H. E. Luccock). Those first century Christians in Acts never seemed to worry about making a good impression on the newspapers, Chamber of Commerce, etc. They often seemed to be out of step with their times, but that was because they were listening to the drum beats of another drummer. Gertie found her salvation in redemption through Christ at an early age, and has been a "foundation block" in making history within the one hundred years of South Norfolk Baptist Church history.





ALTON

WOODLEY

OVERTON

#### Foundation Block In History

Because of his rigorous work pattern, I had to gauge the process for an interview with accuracy and precision. Arising at 3:00 A. M. Mr. Overton, age 86, works in high gear until lights are out at night!

Keeping his business organization in full swing, he greets friends with genuine old-fashioned hospitality. Highly knowledgeable and qualified by almost any standard, with a keen intellect and wit, he is articulate in conversation anywhere.

To Spencer Milton and Lucy Overton he was born at home on Narrow Shore, Currituck Sound, May 26, 1905. (Aydlett, N. C.) \*Dr. W. T. Griggs delivered me, he drove a horse and buggy until 1910, he purchased his first car. \* At age 4 adversity hit early: the death of his mother, also poverty. In a few excerpts we mirror some of his beliefs and victories. Life for A. W. has been a ministry of excitement.

#### Family And Merchant

\*Papa was a waterfowl hunter in winter, and a farmer during summer. The delicious flavor of Currituck's waterfowl, shipped in iced wooden barrels to northern cities, brought premium prices. There was no limit on the number killed, using live decoys and brass shells. Soon a limit law was passed, and no more sales.

\*I began my education in a one-room school, Aydlett, N. C. There were seven grades and one teacher! It involved a two mile walk on dirt roads.

#### Family And Merchant Con't.

\*In 1917 the family moved to Appomattox Street, Berkley, and I transferred to George Washington School for one year.

\*Next year 1918, Papa moved to South Norfolk where I completed high school.

\*My big step was William and Mary College. Working my way through with dining room service, repairing alarm clocks, selling socks and handkerchiefs, also in farm labor. My grade average was 94.7 after completing three years work in two.

\*I hit the road selling for the Gold Dust Company out of New York City (10 years).

\*1927, May 28, my marriage to Lois Hardy was performed by Clyde Sawyer, front room of the parsonage, 1214 Chesapeake Avenue.

\*World War II, as Lt. Commander in the Navy, I was in charge of The Commissary, Banana River, Florida, 1943-1946.

\*1946 I opened a Super Market (South Norfolk). We soon expanded to eleven markets (Norfolk area) and a warehouse.\*

Despite the demands of the multiple business he served on the City Council.

#### Feelings About Sunday School

\*I began Sunday School at the Aydlett Methodist, and some times at Coinjock Baptist. There are fond memories of the country churches.

\*1917 I attended Berkley Avenue Baptist and the next year the family moved to South Norfolk. My practice has been to be present for Sunday School and worship and I have encouraged my son Billy (W. S.) to follow my steps.\*

#### Favorite Pastors

\*I have stood by every one of our ministers.\*

#### Rev. William Black

\*I did not know him. Rev. Beecher Rhodes was pastor at Berkley Avenue.\* (The church that organized SNBC).

#### Rev. Clyde S. Sawyer

\*Highly respected in the community, Sawyer had one strong point, he was shepherd of his flock!

\*He knew what was going on in the town and ran a tight ship. Never allowing any foolishness in the church. Good man, did his job, and left

Rev. Clyde S. Sawyer (Con't).

the church debt-free.

"He deserves a lot of credit. He baptized me, married me, and I served as a pallbearer for Rev. Sawyer."

Rev. Frank Hughes, Jr.

"I served on the Pulpit Committee that recommended the call. I shall never forget the first sermon, *Has He Knocked At Your Door?* It was a very clear message.

"The church turned around quick and reversed directions. Deacons were put on a rotation plan, the unified budget plan was adopted, a strong staff was developed, the Sunday School was graded, and mission outreach at Southside, Princess Anne Plaza, and Greenbrier proved an effective way of winning souls. The church sent the pastor to Alaska on a Home Mission Board preaching mission. I remember the crowds, chairs down the aisles with the medical doctor and his wife having to sit on the platform. I served on the committee of the new educational building, securing a loan of \$200,000, and it was paid off in short order."

Rev. Mac Brunson

"I would say he is a good preacher, very ambitious, with high goals.

"He has built a fire under the younger group and is developing a good program. He has pushed the growth potential by purchasing surrounding property."

Faithful Servant

Mr. Overton says, "Many leaders have blessed our church: Mattie Van Vleck, Mark Alexander, Sr., Jack Rodgers, N. J. Babb, George Wollett, Reuben Grissom, and John Trafton are just a few; there are many others."

He has served as deacon and served on our Princess Anne Plaza Mission Committee, giving invaluable time and advice in all phases of the project.

He has given to many worthy causes, he has financed several young people through college, many years he gave fruit and candy at Christmas to all the children in Sunday School, and shared groceries with the poor, etc.

Foresight Into The Future

"The church must have continued growth with a program and promoter. We must look to new mission fields. It is like a choir -- ministry cannot be bottled up."

Foresight Into The Future (Con't).

"Preach the Gospel like it should be, the life, death, resurrection of Jesus Christ. Never dress it up. Tell it like The Bible says.

"I have heard some great preaching in my life -- Billy Sunday, Gypsy Smith, Charles E. Fuller of The Old-Fashioned Revival Hour, Billy Graham, and good preachers at SNBC."

Mr. Overton believes God's plan is work! (He fits Paul to a T -- "He who does not work shall not eat." 2 Thess. 3:10.)

"Take Hold Of Tomorrow" demands faith in God and hard faithful work for God.

He doesn't visit Doctors to find out how sick he is, but personally takes care of medicinal situations with the skill of an apothecary. Space does not permit the whole story of his faithful stewardship with the Lord's money and how God controls all the circumstances in his life. He is rich in happiness and thanks God for blessing him.

How true these words are: "Now by faith I live in Jesus and by faith He lives in me; Not by trying, but through trusting, Jesus gives the victory."



**BERNICE**

**GIBSON**

**WARD**

**ROGERS**

#### Foundation Block In History

Thanksgiving 1991 put glory into the staggering stress of life for Mrs. Rogers. She reminded me that a sovereign God has guided her for 94 years.

December 23, 1897, her birth took place in Suffolk, Virginia.

I asked her why her mother chose such a name for her?

She said, "That's quite a story: Bernice was taken from the name of a person who boarded with the Ward family, and Gibson was the doctor who delivered me in our home in Suffolk. Mama and Papa liked the doctor, also the boarder, and honored them by giving their baby their names."

"My papa, Gilbert Ward and mama Sally (Jones) Ward had four children. Papa usually was in bed by 9:00 P. M."

#### Family

From Suffolk the Ward family migrated to South Norfolk when Bernice was around 12 years of age.

"My father followed saw mill work as an occupation. Most people do not understand the fact, this whole area was in farm land and woods. Thus, there was a need for lumber."

"When we moved to South Norfolk my family went right to the Baptist Church. The side walks were made of boards, they would turn up at the ends, and you would stub and hurt your barefoot toes."

Tell me what kind of food did the family eat in the early days?

#### Family (Con't)

"Herring (fried), corn bread, boiled cabbage, dried beans, ham, chicken, butter beans, pancakes, strawberries, watermelon, cantaloupe, and you name it, we ate it!"

"I started school in Suffolk and finished my education at Rena B. Wright. I married Lester Rogers (1918) in Mana and Papa's home, 1006 Butt Street. Dr. Sparks W. Melton, pastor of Freemason Street Baptist, Norfolk, performed the ceremony. We took a trip to New York to visit relatives. There was not much to it, because all got sick on the train."

"My husband, Lester, got a job with the Pennsylvania Railroad as a young man and stuck with it until he retired."

"We eventually moved in with my mother and cared for her until her death. We had two children, Sarah Margaret and Ray. My daughter married Rev. Sam Talem."

Who were close friends of yours? "Charles Johnson, Mattie VanVleet, Ann Faircloth, Sarah Oglesby, Lottie Sykes, Roxie Harris, Vadie Winston, Virgie Branch, the Smith family, and many others."

#### Feelings About Sunday School

"My mother carried me to Sunday School and I still remember those tiny chairs! The Sunday School cards with Bible verses were real pretty and I just loved them. Blanch Smith was my teacher in Sunday School and George White was Superintendent. He was always there! (Referring to the long history of his 40 years in office.)"

"One of the highlights of the Sunday School was the Annual Picnic. We tried to have new shoes and dress for the train ride to Virginia Beach. My basket was filled with deviled eggs, fried chicken, ham, and without fail, a chocolate cake. Boy, did we have a good time!" Those excursions were described as a picturesque lay out.

#### Favorite Pastors

"My family had respect for the leadership." All ministers should strive to merit respect. This virtue is so needful in 1991. As Peter said in Acts 15:10-11, "be careful lest in self-righteousness you come to think that anyone who believes differently from you about God must be silenced." Mrs. Rogers affirmed her love for all her pastors, and "all were able to tell me something".

**Rev. Edward Sylvester Pierce**

"He was pastor when we settled in South Norfolk. My mother (Sally Jones) knew his family from Gates County, N. C. where she had lived; my grandfather's farm was back of their farm.

"My mother, in the early days, took me by the hand and we attended The Woman's Missionary Meetings.

"I also remember my mother getting sick during an evening service in the little wooden church. She was overcome by gas fumes.

"I went to the little wooden church and remember the day it tragically burned. We could all see the fire, people cried, and I remember sitting down and crying as it burned to the ground. The members met at the lodge hall after the fire. I think Rev. Pierce was murdered after leaving our church."

**Rev. William Black**

Remember, old folks are worth a fortune, they have a library of information. Mrs. Rogers is gifted at poking fun; you would think she had read

"The Dictionary for Yankees and other uneducated people." Her husband Lester was always busy and cooking up new schemes such as playing pranks, and seeing the funny side of situations.

However, when talking about her salvation experience she spoke with sincerity and charity. One could feel the love and kindness in her voice.

"When Rev. Black preached The Gospel, it touched my heart! What a magnificent declaration, heart-felt religion! "I was a teenager and he baptized me in the South Norfolk Baptist Church."

We need to focus with more intensity on the religious experience. It may sound like a narrow agenda or like a watchdog barking warnings. But this is vitally important in your commitment to Jesus Christ. Whatever way you state it, you have a personal testimony and it can warmly be repeated -- "The Gospel touched my heart."

"Rev. Black was a good man, and as a preacher he spoke slow and in a clear tone. It was easy to understand his sermons and you could get something from the messages."

It is unbelievable that after 94 years her memory of this preacher is as fresh as the morning dew. It is a great affirmation -- what else matters. "God touched her heart" -- through that special pastor!

**Rev. Clyde S. Sawyer**

We had an enjoyable time and pleasant discussions about the pastors of the church.

She just put everything on the table. Through the years, I have discovered that Mrs. Rogers does not put candy

**Rev. Clyde S. Sawyer (Con't).**

coating on her opinions.

At the mention of Sawyer's name, like a flash of lightning she said, "He knew too much!" That evaluation was shocking, but it referred to his being learned. "Doc Sawyer" was always opening new windows for the members to view. He was a mental enrichment to others.

"Sawyer was not married in the early years of his pastorate. I liked him alright, and he told me something.

"I know another thing about him other than his intelligence; he was good to my family. Especially when Papa was sick, his visits were helpful.

"I would like to mention one other thing about him. He was a great hunter and was always some where with his gun and dog. Many times he would bring wild game around to the Ward's home. Papa enjoyed eating the meat."

It is true Sawyer was a fountain and source of blessing, one blessing after another flowed through the minuteness of his care for the flock.

Sitting up with the sick all night, sharing his wild game, plus other acts of grace and love.

With the poet Tremain:

*"O, to be something, something!"*

*Where others Thy likeness may see;*

*That self may be lost in service,*

*And our lives glorify Thee."*

**Rev. Frank Hughes, Jr.**

The interview had been a little long therefore, I requested her to be brief on the last two pastors. She hit the nail with: "He was a mighty good preacher in the pulpit, and he stayed a long time. You know I love you and love to hear you laugh."

This outpouring of her love was all my emotions could retain, so I suggested we move on to the next pastor.

**Rev. Mac Brunson**

"I have not been able to attend the church services since he arrived. He came by to visit me and I enjoyed our time together. I hear he is doing a great work."

Her response to my questions was stimulating. She showed genuine spiritual understanding. Almost totally blind, she blessed me by the fragrance of a thankful heart, full and pious with praise for every pastor who had served S. N. B. C.

### Faithful Servant

A lesson for young parents can be found in the life of Bernice, mother took her by the hand and led her child to Sunday School and worship. That memory is still a joy for her to relate. Youth need a guide "by kindly deeds and virtuous life", F. W. Faber.

"I worked by the side of my mother cooking and serving oyster suppers to raise money for the church." The methods of paying off a church debt were largely undertaken by the women who held regular suppers in the basement, plus ice cream socials on the lawn.

"All my life I have been a regular contributor to my church.

"I never took advantage of friend or foe, nor mistreated any person. My intentions have always been to live a Christian life. I do not want it to be said of me that I ever neglected my church."

A life of honesty, integrity, obedience, and unselfish love is a prism through which the glory of God is seen and transmitted. "The Gospel touched my heart." A person who can discern this knowledge can rejoice in the things of God.

The true valuation of a person's life cannot be placed in the permanent record while he lives. From all accounts, Bernice's beautiful submission to the will of God declares she was a faithful servant.

### Foresight Into The Future

At the conclusion of our interview she said, "I have told you enough, but I would like to advise some things for the church to do.

"Tell them to stay busy enlarging the church, and one of the best things for the members is to be friendly and speak to each other in love, and mean it, Tell them not to be stiff-necked!" Sound advice; Christ will never do more through us than we permit him to do.

The crowning sentence from this beloved saint puts a key into the lock that unlocks all of life -- "Tell every Christian to **Read The Bible!**"

"I read the Bible as long as I could see and now I have to depend upon others to read for me. My daughter, Sarah Margaret, always reads it and I enjoy it so very much."

The poet said, "How precious is the book divine, to guide our souls to heaven."

Thank you, Mrs. Rogers, for this challenge to give heed to the unchanging Word. Psalm 119:89.



ALETHIA

MINTON

TODD

### Foundation Block In History

Sir Walter Scott's well-known lines:

*"Lives there a man with soul so dead*

*Who never to himself hath said,*

*When wandering from some foreign strand,*

*'This is my own, my native land!'"*

Indeed South Norfolk is Alethia's land. Born March 29, 1905, Bertie County, Roxoboro, N. C. When she was three years old, the family moved and put down roots in South Norfolk on what's now called Poindexter Street. "That part of the village was a pine thicket, and all woods back to Perry Street. There were cows, hogs, goats, and animals of all description." Mrs. Todd, went on to say her mother said, "South Norfolk was the end of the world and one big mud hole."

### Family

She attended Rena B. Wright School and advanced through Grade 6. At that point she went to "Elizabeth College".

Here we had a good laugh. When the girls reached about 13 or 14, they all went to work in the Knitting Mill at Park Avenue and Perry Street. The company made men's shirts, long underwear, etc. The girls clipped the long threads and inspected the garments.

### Family (Con't).

"My Daddy worked for \$1.25 per day and Mother cooked the meals on a wood stove. There were no indoor bathrooms. The Doctor traveled by horse and buggy to see sick folks."

"I got married at seventeen to Leonard Todd, my neighbor, July 21, 1921. We lacked five months reaching 50 years together. It made us happy that our son Earl, and wife Billie and children have always been active in the church."

### Feelings About Sunday School

"It was during a Revival I made a profession of faith and joined the church at age eleven. I'm sure I attended Sunday School in the little wooden church building. But I do not have much recollection of how it looked. I only remember my mother talking about how sad the fire was. I began teaching primary children in the mission Sunday School at age 14."

"I enjoy Sunday School so much and the lessons are wonderful."

### Favorite Pastors

With great affirmation, "I have loved them all."

#### Rev. William Black

"The main thing I remember about him was how he looked. He was not real tall and wore a black derby hat."

#### Rev. Clyde Sawyer

"He came to our church from Columbia, N. C. When there was sickness or trouble, you could count on him."

"He showed a great deal of compassion."

"Sawyer would often stop by the Todd house and have a meal, always making himself at home."

"Sometimes he preached in a cut-away coat with a stiff white collar on his shirt. He always went about dressed neat and clean; you never saw him in sloppy clothes."

"His worship services were done on time and people got out on schedule."

"He was good at holding things together and dropped names from the roll of persons who did not attend and contribute."

"He pushed hard until the end during his last illness."

#### Rev. Frank Hughes, Jr.

"I remember when he was called and how he preached The Gospel."

#### Rev. Frank Hughes, Jr. (Con't).

"There have been some precious moments: The great number of young people entering the ministry; Revival Meetings with a full house, the doors closed with the place packed; great fellowship; the choir with black robes and the women wore hats."

#### Rev. Mac Brunson

"He is compassionate, humble, and impressive as a preacher. He has good delivery and a wonderful memory."

I believe he is God-called and the pastor for our church in this hour. He is not afraid of work and excellent with the sick in the hospitals."

#### Faithful Servant

"I have tried to support my church with my prayers and service, working in W. M. U., also Sunday School. Leonard, my husband, served as Treasurer, Sunday School Teacher, Deacon, and Choir."

#### Foresight Into The Future

"We cannot stand still; growth is needed with conversions and more parking space."

We need to continue to teach The Scriptures and work together with our Staff.

One word we do not need to hear - 'discouragement'.

Let us in the church remain steadfast in the faith and belief, giving God the Glory."

South Norfolk Baptist Church has been blessed beyond words by this great fruit-bearing Christian.



AVA

LEE

WHITFIELD

#### Foundation Block In History

"Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet unborn may praise the Lord." Psalm 102:18.

August 29, 1903, George William Whitfield and Mary Eliza Babb Whitfield welcomed a red-headed girl into their farm home near Franklin, Isle of Wight County, Virginia. Mother Mary chose the name "Ava", and uncle Fletcher Babb selected her middle name, "Lee". (Fletcher was Mary's brother and father of N. J. Babb.) Other children in the family were Elizabeth, Roscoe, Drew, Ashley, and Baker.

Ava Lee showed me a copy of the Isle of Wight Court record of marriage for her Whitfield grandparents: James P. Whitfield, age 26, and Elizabeth L. Gardner, age 32, married March 14, 1871. James placed an "X" for his signature. "He served in the Civil War, and after the war they scrubbed him to get rid of the lice."

#### Family And Phone Company

Paul in Philipians offered themes on perseverance, injunctions to stand firm, remain united in love.

The Whitfield family moved in 1916 from the farm to South Norfolk and rented a house on "B" Street. George worked for a local saw mill.

"My Daddy and Roscoe loved to sing, and one Sunday evening we were

getting ready to go visit the Bobbitt family in Berkley. They had a piano and a group often gathered for entertainment. My father was taken with a pain, lay on the couch, and took some soda for indigestion. Mama sent Drew, who was seven years old, to get Dr. Frank Wilson, whose office was on Chesapeake Avenue. The Doctor soon arrived and my daddy died in a few minutes of a heart attack at age 37."

How does a widow with six children assume responsibility in this desperate situation?

*"Alone with one but Thee, my God:*

*I journey on my way;*

*What need I fear, when Thou art near,*

*O King of night and day?" (Anon.)*

The story unfolds as Elijah said to the widow at Zarephath "Fear not -- the hand full of meal shall not be spent according to The Word of the Lord." I Kings 17:16.

First, Mrs. Whitfield set out to buy a house large enough for the family. With no savings, poor, destitute, less than a "hand full of meal". "Mama heard about a house for sale, 1409 Jackson Street. She walked to look it over, and then walked to the Building and Loan. Told them she wanted to buy the house, did not have a penny for a down payment. They sold her the house at \$4.50 per week!"

Second, note how God used her faith. Ava Lee got a job with the Telephone Company at age fifteen and each week after receiving her check, stopped by the Building and Loan with \$4.50 payment on the new home. "I worked for the Phone Company 49 years and 7 months until retirement. Roscoe went to work at age thirteen to help put food on the table. Elizabeth got a job when she reached 15 years of age. Each child contributed and Mama was the manager. She took Uncle Britt Babb and Uncle Frank Babb, her single brothers, as boarders to help with expenses. Uncle Britt lacked two weeks living to reach his goal of 100 years."

The Whitfield Family would never have been a victorious Christian household if a defeatist attitude of pessimism, hopelessness, and despair had filled the widow's mind. Her faith in God brought a radical transformation in unstable days. The center of gravity never shifted. She held fast her faith through the thick darkness round about the heaviest burdens. Considering the sorrows and ensnaring poverty is enough to move one to tears. The Whitfield Family did not become a piece of driftwood across the waters of life with an uncertain course, not arriving anywhere. The widow let the Holy Spirit plant the seed and a fragrant harvest followed. Every child brought to full fruition the dreams and prayers of Miss Mary.

### Feelings About Sunday School

"I have always enjoyed Sunday School. My early teachers were Virgie Branch and Ruby Townsend. My brother Roscoe took a great interest in Sunday School and would often invite his class to our house for a class meeting. My mother would always serve a little something for refreshments. It got to be a family joke during The Depression -- the cheapest thing to serve was jello! But they had a good time of fellowship even though the "here after" was predicted -- jello!

"In my adult years, I served as President in my Sunday School Class for years. We maintained a large active membership for Bible Study."

### Favorite Pastors

"The pastors were always welcome at our home. Our family never set their minds upon worldly pursuits. The world and its crowd was never a pattern for us. The family unity centered in the midst of Christian folks. Always glad to see the Pastor, we got to know all of them in a personal way. My mother had a stimulating personality, a marvelous sense of humor, and was good company. The entire Whitfield Family were great friends to the pastors."

### Rev. William Black

"I was a child and it has been many years. He was a quiet man and liked by the people."

When Ava Lee mentioned the word "quiet", I remembered another "Billy" by the name of Sunday who to make a point, destroyed chairs in the pulpit while preaching. However, Billy Black conducted his whole life work after the example of his Master.

### Rev. Clyde S. Sawyer

"Mr. Sawyer came to us from Columbia, N. C. where the parents lived on a farm. He was hard to get used to, but very friendly if you knew him. He spoke with me about becoming a Christian. I was frightened at water, but he baptized me as a teenager. I will tell you a few interesting things about him, but you need not tell all these family secrets."

"First, I remember he made Roscoe (my brother) a Deacon at age 19. They were great friends."

"Second, Roscoe and Mr. Sawyer dated the same girl, Sadie. After a meal one day Roscoe and the preacher were sitting on our front porch talking. It was summer time and the windows were open for fresh air. I was in the living room and overheard them talking about Sadie. The preacher said that on his last date she had an oil lamp burning in every corner of the room. He went on to say that he could not make any love at all in that room; there was too much light! As it turned out, Sadie did not marry either one, perhaps due to her enlightened situation."

"Third, for some unknown reason, Rev. Sawyer never called me "Ava

Lee"; it was always "Cousin"! I didn't like it, but never said anything to him."

"Fourth, Mr. Charlie Johnson was Assistant Sunday School Superintendent. When he arrived Mr. Sawyer was single and finally married the Public School Nurse. After they had three children, Mr. Johnson named them "Faith, Hope, and Charity".

### Rev. Frank Hughes, Jr.

"He stayed a long time. I appreciated all that he did for our church. I remember he showed an interest in all of the work, even attending our parties and social gatherings."

I had to cut this interview -- time wise -- because Ava Lee had offered me a chair beside the floor furnace, and I spent some of my time shedding and peeling like a crab, turning redder all the while.

### Dr. Donald McCall Brunson, Jr.

"He is a very faithful visitor and helped me during my hospital stay. I attended his "Open House Ceremony" when the church members visited with his family. They are fine people. My great regret now is that my health does not permit me to attend Sunday School and worship each week. I am praying that my illness will soon improve so I can hear him preach."

### Faithful Servant

This building block has been one of the most faithful members in South Norfolk Baptist Church. Space will not permit us to share the great contributions of the Whitfield descendants. Examination reveals them to be strong Baptists. Ava Lee listed a few church friends: Virgie Branch, Mattie VanVleet, Ida and Ed Overman, Mae Eley, Blanche Trueblood, Elizabeth Belton, Sadie Carroll, and Louise and Ross Goodwin.

I detected that humor was an important glue binding Ava Lee's family. She said, "they were working on a car in the yard. Someone sent Drew to get a monkey wrench from a tool box. He started and stopped with a serious question, 'will he bite me?' On another occasion Roscoe and his wife went to the cemetery to buy some grave lots. Returning, they informed my Mama one had been bought for her. They stated it was located in a nice quiet place away from the noise of the road! We all had a big laugh about how quiet it would be."

### Foresight Into The Future

"There are some wonderful things happening right now at our church. We must provide for the crowds and keep on growing! My advice is to stay where we are, but continue enlargement of the facilities. There are great days ahead for



### Foresight Into The Future (Con't.)

South Norfolk Baptist Church. \*

Ava Lee, your example of Christian commitment has been a stimulus in our church history; and I'm going to remember you, "Cousin", with pleasure.

### EPILOGUE

A living church is one that remembers the past, lives in the present, and "Takes Hold of Tomorrow".

From the beginning of my ministry these "Foundation Blocks" have been among my closest associates. There have been many other faithful and loyal co-workers.

Only when we get to heaven will we realize what part each member of SNBC has had. The recollections reviewed fill us with thankfulness plus joy.

Read this booklet carefully and catch the spirit from these early folks. If you have never known peace in your soul, discover the testimony of these "Foundation Blocks".

The question for each of us is, "What kind of building block is my life adding to SNBC?"

Henry Van Dyke has some important words:

### FOUR THINGS

A man must learn to do

- If he would keep  
his record true:*
- To think,  
without confusion, clearly;*
- To love  
his fellow-man sincerely;*
- To act  
from honest motives purely;*
- To trust in God  
and Heaven securely. \**

Romans 10:9. "For if you tell others with your own mouth that Jesus Christ is your Lord, and believe in your own heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. \*

Amen

## THE ANVIL -- GOD'S WORD

Last eve I paused beside a blacksmith's door

And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;

Then looking in, I saw upon the floor

Old hammers worn with beating years of time.

"How many anvils have you had?" said I,

"To wear and batter all these hammers, so?"

"Just one," said he; then said, with twinkling eye,

"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."

And so, I thought, the anvil of God's Word

For ages skeptic blows have beat upon:

Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard

The anvil is unharmed -- the hammers, gone!

-- Reuben Saillens



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## CENTENNIAL MOMENT

### Helen Lassiter Cahoon, Chair SNBC History Committee

Helen was born January 11, 1913, one of eight children to William Presley Lassiter and Nannie Taylor Lassiter. Other children were William, Lucy, Claude, Gertrude, Johnnie, Joseph, and Cathleen.

In 1910 the Lassiter Family moved from a farm in Harrelsville, N. C. to South Norfolk. Earlier, son William left the farm to work in the city. Preserved are letters written in 1909 by Nannie to her son letting him know that Pa could not run the farm without his help. Using strong language, she repeated, "I know Pa will not farm without you because he is so 'sappy-headed'!"

Leaving the farm was a major undertaking for Nannie. The trip was made by boat to Edenton, N. C. and train to South Norfolk. Each child was responsible in transporting one item, and the family could never forget how Lucy "took care" of the clock.

"My father died in February, 1918. Rev. Black, who visited our home often, traveled with the family by train to my grandfather's farm for the funeral which was held at night in the house. Rev. Black was a real comfort during our days of trouble and the first World War.

"My mother operated a sewing shop with a number of employees making middy blouses for department stores and a girls' school in N. Y. All of the family helped with buttons, braid, and stars.

"Mama led all of the children to Sunday School and worship. Before I could walk, my first memory of church is sleeping on the third pew!

"I joined the church at age twelve and was baptized by Rev. Sawyer. Some of my teachers were Mrs. Z. R. Jernigan, Mrs. Nellie Smith, Mrs. Mattie VanVleet, and Mrs. Alice Whitely.

"I married Chester James Cahoon of Portlock. The ceremony in the Baptist parsonage (Chesapeake Avenue) was performed by Rev. Sawyer. Our son, Chester, Jr. is a deacon in SNBC.

#### Faithful Servant

Helen has been faithful in worship and a diligent worker in all the program organizations of SNBC: teaching Beginners (Preschool) in Sunday School with Rosa Stewart, Officer in Training Union (Discipleship Training), Vacation Bible School teacher, President of Woman's Missionary Union, and a member of Church Committees.

"I love my church; it is so restful and peaceful just to walk into the sanctuary. I get so much comfort as I think of family ties with the whole family of God.

"I have appreciated your being with my family in difficult times, and your friendship has meant much."

#### Foresight Into The Future

"I would like to see our church grow spiritually, fulfilling The Great Commission.

"I do not think big, as numbers, is where the power is in any church. We work to glorify God, and we need to do all of our work in love and harmony. Church is a meeting place for young and old; and the best of both is enriching to all."

#### Lassiter Family

In our Baptist heritage the Lassiter family has been loyal:

#### Brother William:

Deacon, Sunday School teacher and member of the Pulpit Committee when Rev. Hughes was called.

William was a hero January 6, 1921, when he rescued the unconscious Rev. Clyde Sawyer, half drowned, from the cold waters of Currituck Sound. Sawyer's duck-hunting companion

#### Brother William (Con't)

Oliver Keeter (SNBC member who lived on Chesapeake Avenue) drowned when their rowboat capsized.

As Rev. Sawyer was regaining consciousness, the Doctor tried to give him some whiskey. But the preacher refused the strong drink when he realized what it was.

#### Brother Johnnie:

Deacon and lay preacher. In the Great Depression of the 1930's many folks who lost jobs in the city moved in with relatives in the country who had an extra bed and food they could share from a garden. Johnnie and wife Ina moved in with her parents at Knott's Island. Johnnie's total wage for one year of farm work was \$33.00!!

There Johnnie taught a young boys' Sunday School Class at the Baptist Church. One pupil was none other than Frank Hughes, Jr., future SNBC pastor.

#### Sister Lucy:

Wife of deacon Archie Pierce, Sunday School Teacher of young girls, active W. M. U. member.

Their son, Artwell Lee Pierce, a member of SNBC History Committee, deserves much appreciation for many, many hours of photography, artwork, and layout in producing this book of "Foundation Blocks" in SNBC history. His concern for a presentable product is most commendable -- Thanks, Art!

#### Sister Cathleen:

Wife of deacon Reuben Grissom, W. M. U. President, and Sunday School Teacher.

Their son, Judge Preston Grissom, was Youth Pastor for the first SNBC Youth Week in the 1950's. At present, Preston is President-Elect of Norfolk Baptist Association, seventy-one churches in Norfolk, Virginia Beach, and Chesapeake.

**Sister Gertrude ("Gertie")**

Sunday School Teacher of young children, active in W. M. U., wife of Herman Eure, Faithful SNBC choir member.

The truth of the Gospel is faith expressing itself in love. Gertie and Herman opened their hearts and home to a little nine-year-old girl and cared for Stella Hope Eure (Herman's niece) with such encouragement that she was valedictorian of her Senior class and went on to college.

Stella (Mrs. Artwell) Pierce is now W. M. U. Director, Sunday School Teacher, Choir Member, and member of the Church History Committee.

**Brother Joseph (Joe)**

Deacon, faithful in support of S. N. B. C. A great humorist.

Only eternity can reveal the blessings of the Lassiter family which today continues a wide ministry in the Kingdom of God. Like a mighty army SNBC history moves from generation to generation.

Here through my "trifocals" are a few scattered reflections on a variety of subjects.

First, **Roland C. Lynch**, trustee, reached age 100. Continues blessing his church through "The R. C. Lynch Educational Fund". Daughters, Margaret Stough and Thelma Jenkins gave generously to this Trust Fund. All were friends with pastors Black, Sawyer, and Hughes.

Second, **Johnny Roberts**, Music Director in days of great revivals. Worked as a team with his pianist/organist sister, Gwen Whitehurst. Gwen was SNBC organist over 25 years.

His widow, Norma, and friends established "John R. Roberts Educational Memorial" to help SNBC young people further their education for full-time Christian ministry.

Third, **Mrs. Z. R. Jernigan**, a woman of faith, poor but powerful. Often she quoted to the pastor, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Psalm 37:25.

Fourth, **Annie Layden**, a woman of prayer, often called upon to pray during Revival Time, began her prayers, "Dear Jesus", and heaven came down as the simple utterances flowed.

Fifth, **Elbert White**, faithful tither, Deacon, Sunday School Teacher of young boys. His wife, Pearl, a Sunday School Workers, V. B. S., and Choir. His stewardship testimony, "when you see the offering plate coming in your pew, shout 'Hallelujah'."

Sixth, **R. E. Jones**, Deacon and strong family man. "Brother Hughes, Jesus never broke up a home; if a home gets into trouble, it's the work of the devil."

Seventh, **Edward L. (Eddie) McClain**, Deacon, Church Treasurer and Auditor (a C. P. A. by profession), was outspoken on things right and wrong. Giving an opinion on morals, Eddie had a standard by-line: "It's not right, in my book!" His witness lives on through his will -- a large sum of money left to SNBC.

Eighth, **Katharine Anne Read Hughes**, proof reader, and my best friend for fifty years, my debt of gratitude for her patient help in polishing these "Foundation Blocks".

Ninth, to my faithful secretary, **Mary J. Morgan**, for over twenty-five years, "Thank You" for typing, computer work, and technical skills in helping our History Committee fulfill this vital record of 100 years.

PRESERVING SNBC HERITAGE RESTS UPON YOU.