

A
Dream
Come
True

A HISTORY

RIDGECREST BAPTIST ASSEMBLY

50TH ANNIVERSARY

1907-1957

Robert L. Middleton

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Ridgcrest,

Foreign Mission Conference
June 20-26-1957.

A Dream Come True



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CONVENTION PRESS

Nashville, Tennessee

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Library of Congress catalog card number: 57-10107

Printed in the United States of America

5.F5713

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The Dream and Early Days

CHRISTOPHER WREN chose as the epitaph for his illustrious father's tomb in St. Paul's Cathedral, London, these words: "If you would see his monument, look around."

Many years later, Ralph Waldo Emerson made the observation, "An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man."

The development of Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly during its early years should be largely credited to Dr. Bernard Washington Spilman. It was his consuming desire to see established a place where Christian people might come together to study and prepare themselves for work in God's kingdom. That dream inspired him to lead in planning and establishing a Southern Baptist assembly. Ridgecrest is not only a monument to his untiring efforts but also to those of the many associates who labored with him in the early days. It is the lengthened shadow of many good and consecrated men—a miracle of God's mercy and grace.

The history of Ridgecrest can be divided into four distinct periods:

1. The dream and early days of planning and development—1907-1919.
2. Ridgecrest and the Education Board of the Southern Baptist Convention—1920-1928.
3. Ridgecrest and the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, with responsibility for planning the summer program assumed by the Baptist Sunday School Board—1929-1944.
4. Ridgecrest property deeded to the Sunday School Board by the Executive Committee with the Board assuming full responsibility for future development of the property and for planning the programs—1945-1957.

For five years prior to 1901 Dr. Spilman had been Sunday school secretary of the North Carolina Baptist State Conven-

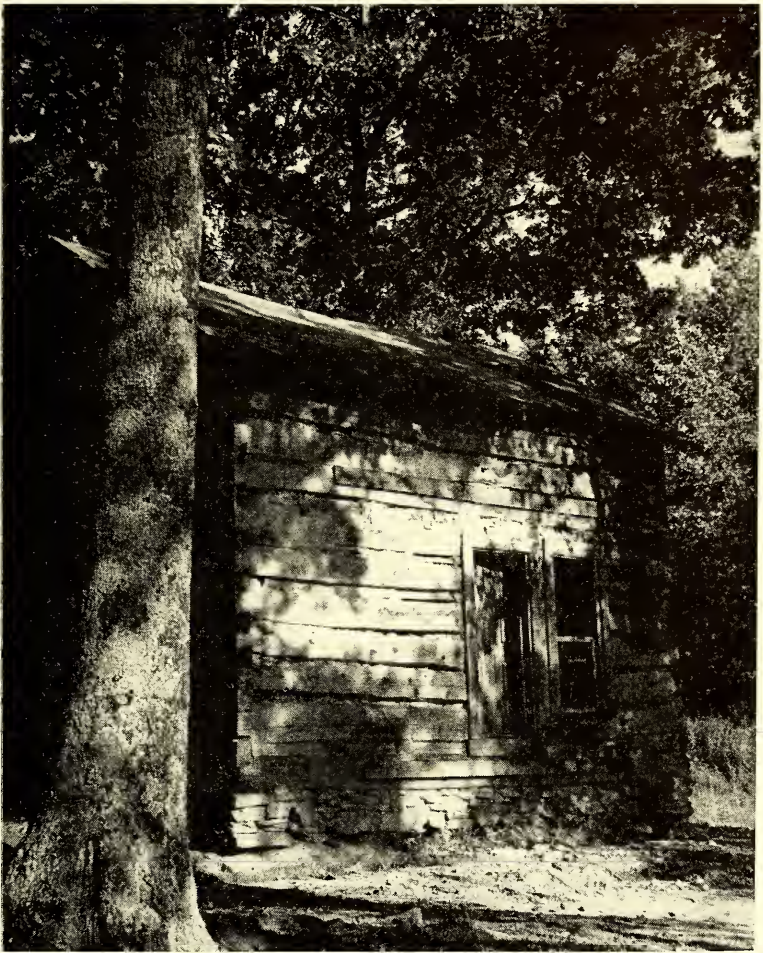
tion. He worked against overwhelming odds, not only because of the lack of necessary funds, but also because of so little interest in Sunday school work. Nevertheless, he labored untiringly, laying a foundation for a great many of the methods and principles used in present-day Sunday schools. During each of these five years there was conducted the North Carolina Baptist Sunday School Chautauqua, patterned after the famous Chautauqua institution in New York state. These meetings offered an attractive and varied type of program consisting of lectures, plays, operas, concerts with a full symphony orchestra, and special classes for training Sunday school teachers.

During one week more than two thousand people attended the sessions of a Sunday school chautauqua held at Red Springs, North Carolina. Dr. Spilman was ably and generously assisted in this particular meeting by a great Christian layman, Mr. Needham B. Broughton, of Raleigh, North Carolina. This type of religious assembly was the beginning of Dr. Spilman's dream of something larger and more far-reaching for Southern Baptists. He caught a vision of the tremendous possibilities for reaching great crowds with a message of teaching and inspiration.

The Baptist Sunday School Board was to celebrate its tenth anniversary in 1901. Dr. J. M. Frost and his small but devoted staff of workers realized fully the responsibility of the Board for a more extensive program of Bible teaching through the Sunday school. He was aware that the program being followed by most of the churches was not satisfactory and that Southern Baptists were relying too much on the International Sunday School Association for guidance and growth of their Sunday schools. C. Sylvester Green, in *B. W. Spilman—the Sunday School Man*, tells how Dr. Frost planned to solve the problem:

To Dr. Frost the answer was clear. A new approach must be made to Sunday school work. He knew well that he himself could not be the Sunday school specialist; he would have to find men, young men with ability and vision, who could specialize in the business at hand. . . . Did God have such a man ready for the hour?

Already Dr. Spilman's plans and methods were being talked about in many parts of the Southland, and he was in demand for addresses and conferences far and wide. Without his knowledge, Dr. Frost sent a representative to many of the meetings in which



First sermon at Ridgecrest preached by Dr. Spilman from front porch of this cabin to a small group in 1909

he was to appear on the program. Every report on Dr. Spilman was more than favorable. Dr. Green writes that in him

Dr. Frost saw a man who had proved that he had the courage to launch a new program against tremendous odds—and opposition—and carry it through, even at a great personal sacrifice. “He had both academic and theological training. He had a background of pastoral experience. He possessed unique platform ability; and his humor disarmed opposition and opened closed doors.”

A conference was arranged when Dr. Spilman was to fill an engagement in Montgomery, Alabama, and, again according to Dr. Green, Dr. Frost “explained to him that the Sunday School Board wanted him to do for the South what he had been doing for North Carolina. The way he would have to travel was uncharted; Southern Baptists had no precedents in this field—he would have to build his own program.”

After much prayer and consideration, Dr. Spilman accepted the position as the new field secretary for the Sunday School Board. He began his work on June 1, 1901, and was quick to launch a vigorous program for the advancement of Sunday school work. During the next four or five years it was possible for him to travel extensively throughout the territory of the Convention. He was convinced more than ever of the need for an assembly type of program through which hundreds of consecrated Christians could come together for a week of training in Bible study and leadership, preparing themselves for better service in their own churches and Sunday schools.

He sponsored this type of work in many of the states of the Southern Baptist Convention, and state assemblies started through his influence in those early days are still being carried on. Back of all of his dreaming and planning was the idea of a Southwide assembly. In all his travels he talked about this idea. Dr. Spilman said that what he wanted was a great central gathering place where people might freely consider, with plenty of time, all of the tasks at which Baptists were working. The old type of evangelistic camp meeting was not part of the proposed program.

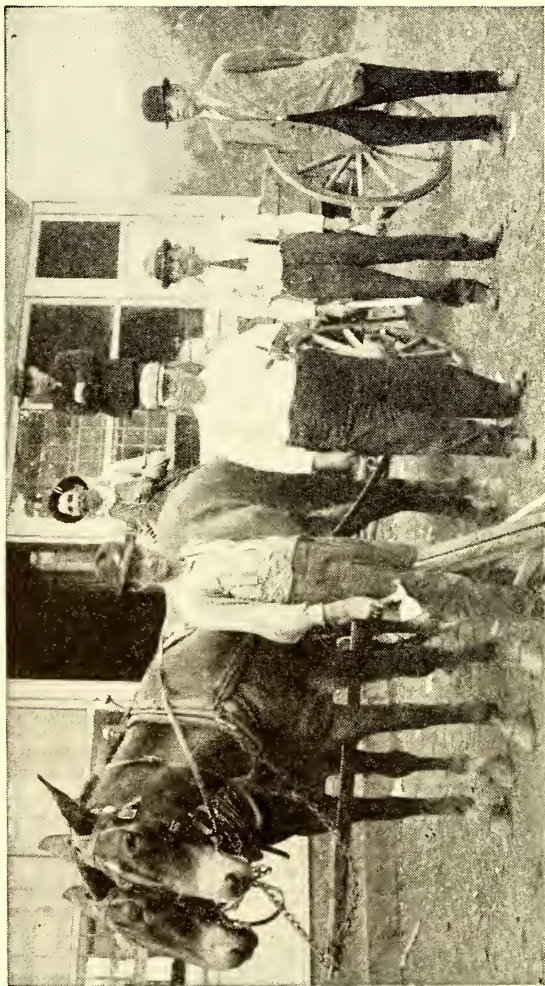
Many places in east Tennessee and western North Carolina were given consideration as a possible permanent location. Each one was visited and study given to all of the possibilities. None of them offered both easy accessibility and suitable facilities. Neither was there an organization available to sponsor and pro-

mote such an ambitious venture. Early in August, 1906, Dr. Spilman had occasion to have a conference with Mr. James H. Tucker, a great Christian layman, superintendent of the First Baptist Sunday school, and an attorney of Asheville, North Carolina. Needless to say, the thing nearest to Spilman's heart—a Southern Baptist assembly—was discussed. Mr. Tucker had been active in the work of the Mountain Retreat Association, had written its charter, and had helped in many ways to establish this inter-denominational association. The property of the association has since been taken over by the Presbyterians and is now known as Montreat.

Mr. Tucker was intrigued with Dr. Spilman's enthusiasm and was quick to see the possibilities of such an undertaking. He believed he knew of a suitable location just seventeen miles east of Asheville on the Southern Railway. The nearest train stop was a little telegraph station known as Terrell, named for the engineer assigned to "the pusher." Mr. Terrell used his engine to help "push" trains up the twelve miles from Old Fort to the top of the ridge and through the seven tunnels of this short stretch of road. The "Y" used to turn the engine around and return to Old Fort still remains, seldom used. Mr. Tucker, being the attorney for the Southern Railway, was in a position to secure an order from the train dispatcher in Asheville to stop the east-bound morning train and the west-bound afternoon train at Terrell. With these details worked out, a party composed of Mr. Tucker, Dr. Spilman, Dr. William Lunsford, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Asheville, Dr. Henry W. Battle, and Mr. Landrum P. Leavell left Asheville on the morning of August 4, 1906.

After reaching their destination, the group, under the leadership of Mr. Tucker, who was familiar with the property under consideration, walked for many hours surveying the landscape and the advantages, if any, which it offered. A source of water supply was one of the main considerations. Several small streams and a spring were found, both of which now play a prominent part in the development which has materialized. Dr. Spilman has preserved for us one of his many unique experiences of those early days in a newspaper article of 1941:

Marvelous view! We strolled west leaving the railway track and



Dr. Spilman and workmen ready to stake off lots and lay out roads
Fall of 1907

came to a spot where Pritchell Hall, the large Assembly Hotel, is now located. We found a small stream and followed it to its source (now Johnson Spring). Then we climbed the hill west and found an old fence of rotten rails. It was already broken in places. All the party climbed over. I as usual weighing about 260 pounds came last. I climbed the fence. When I was well balanced on the top of the fence every rail except the bottom one broke. It was a fairly good show.

Continuing their survey, they came to the bold clear stream which now flows into Lake Dew. Dr. Battle removed his hat, delivered an address, as only he was capable of doing, and closed by saying, "Let's buy the land and locate the first hotel on that ridge over there." Taking a rail from the broken fence, he walked over to the spot where Pritchell Hall now stands and drove the stake into the ground. Who could have foreseen the future, and the development which has arisen, from the driving of a fence rail in the ground on August 4, 1906?

Dr. Spilman continues:

We kept quiet; returned to Asheville and during the next few months laid plans to buy the land and organize the Southern Baptist Assembly.

But a long hard road was ahead. The world, the flesh and the devil set in to destroy the Assembly. But there it stands on the mountain top a spiritual dynamo whose wires extend to the ends of the earth.

Even though a possible site had been selected, there was no organized group to sponsor the building of an assembly. Believing firmly in his idea, Dr. Spilman went before the North Carolina Baptist State Convention in December, 1906, presented his dream, and asked the people of the state to take the lead. He introduced a resolution requesting the convention to name an organizing committee to select an assembly ground "somewhere in North Carolina" and invite people of all other states to cooperate with them in establishing an assembly for the Baptist people of the Southern states. It was agreed that the convention would assume no financial responsibility. The committee named was composed of James H. Tucker, Needham B. Broughton, Dr. Henry W. Battle, Dr. Hight C Moore, and Dr. Spilman.

The committee was able to forego the formalities of selecting a site, since this had already been done by the smaller group, several members of which were also members of the committee. The organization of a corporation and securing a charter seemed

to be the wise course to follow. A board of directors and an executive committee were selected. Mr. Tucker was elected chairman of the Board of Directors and was instructed to draw up the charter. The act to incorporate the "Southern Baptist Assembly" was ratified March 8, 1907, in the state legislature at Raleigh. It was a most interesting and unusual charter.

Under its provisions Ridgecrest was a municipality during the first twenty-seven years of its existence. The act provided for a mayor, a town marshal to serve as constable, and a tax collector and treasurer. Rights of stockholders were likewise set forth, under provisions that only a member of a Baptist church could own stock in the corporation. The purchase of a lot entitled the purchaser to one share of stock at a value of a hundred dollars. The lot was considered more or less a dividend and no other dividends were to be paid. Individuals other than Baptists could own lots in specified areas but no stock in the corporation. Only five hundred lots were to be available to stockholders.

After the charter was granted, Mr. Tucker and other members of the Board of Directors were busy trying to purchase the property in the chosen area. Nine different tracts were involved, the largest being purchased from Mrs. Lydia Cheesman. The cost of the property was \$8,507.80, and \$1,801.19 was spent for surveying, plats, maps, etc.

Already Dr. Spilman had busied himself with the selling of lots which carried with them a share of stock. About 140 lots were sold, but not all of them for cash; some were sold only on subscriptions. The sale of lots gave the corporation the prospects of \$14,000.00 in working capital.

Because of his deep interest in the project being sponsored by Dr. Spilman, Dr. J. M. Frost, Corresponding Secretary of the Baptist Sunday School Board, arranged for Dr. Spilman to give much of his time to the early developing of the grounds, superintending the sale of lots, and co-operating with prospective home owners. All of his time was given without cost to the Assembly. On September 1, 1907, Dr. Spilman set up an office in Asheville as General Secretary, having been elected to this position by the committee appointed by the North Carolina Baptist State Convention. An engineering firm, which had laid out the beautiful Vanderbilt Estate, was employed. Their work was completed in the early fall of 1907. From this survey maps were printed for use in publicity purposes. Money to pay the expense of the

survey had been borrowed from an Asheville bank and later repaid from the sale of lots. The financial panic of 1907 had its crippling effect, and many lots were not paid for.

The first meeting of the stockholders of the corporation was held on May 21, 1908, under an apple tree in front of the old stage coach house, which still stands. It has been converted into a Ridgecrest museum in which to preserve many early records and other interesting data. During this meeting lots were selected and assigned to purchasers. A new board of directors of the corporation was elected, as well as an executive committee. The building of homes was quickly begun, with the first house being started on lot 707. It was known as White Oak Lodge. This house, built by Dr. Spilman, still stands near the present entrance to the boys' camp.

Mr. E. L. Hon of DeLand, Florida, had been a frequent visitor to the area and was greatly interested in its development. He began construction of a summer residence, which he called "Hon-o-Lulu," in the area of the present Camp Ridgecrest for Boys. A store building was also constructed in which was located a temporary office for the general secretary and a storage room. Located on a lot near the present railroad station, it also still stands. It was known as Blue Mont Store in the early days.

The first effort at a summer program was in 1909. The first meetings were conducted in Tucker Grove, lots 719-20, just across the road from the present Ridgecrest Baptist Church. An old log cabin stood on the lot at that time, and from a temporary front porch Dr. Spilman preached the first sermon delivered at Ridgecrest. A stone marker now indicates the spot. Plans were made for the construction of an auditorium to be located in the area now used by Camp Ridgecrest for Boys. It was a crude structure, open on three sides, having only a sawdust floor and homemade benches and seating between four and five hundred people. Approximately six hundred attended the first services in the new auditorium.

Upon recommendation of Dr. Spilman, the Board of Directors named the auditorium for William Fox, a deacon in the Prescott Street Baptist Church of London, England, and a foremost leader in Sunday school work. No other reference to this fact is to be found in later records of the Assembly.

A beginning had been made, but the future was to be filled with seemingly insurmountable problems. It should be kept in

mind that the corporation in control of the Assembly was without denominational financial support and that the area was entirely undeveloped. There were no modern facilities of any kind, such as water, sewerage, electricity, or telephones. Only a gravel road from Old Fort to Black Mountain traversed the proposed grounds. Nevertheless, these stalwart early Christian leaders were seeing visions and dreaming dreams. In the words of Dr. Spilman,

It was the purpose of the founders to make of the assembly grounds a gathering place where Baptists might meet throughout the summer months to discuss in a quiet, restful, congenial, spiritual atmosphere their problems—problems of Missions, Sunday school and Baptist Young People's work, Christian Education, Social Service, Bible study and such other things as come within the realm of the thinking and doing of the Baptist people as we attempt to set forward the Kingdom of God on earth.

A significant policy in the handling of the finances of the Assembly was adopted by the Board of Directors, and it has been maintained almost to the letter throughout these fifty years. There were to be two treasurers, one for handling the maintenance of the buildings and grounds and capital improvements, and another for the expense of the program. Today each agency sponsoring a program is responsible for the expense of its program.

Even with this type of organization, during those early days the management and program leaders did not find it easy to meet their obligations. Funds for the salary of the business manager and upkeep of the buildings and grounds had to come from the sale of lots and a corporation tax levied on the property owners, together with any voluntary contributions which might come in. Funds for the program expense could only be secured from an admittance charge to the auditorium, collections taken at the services, and voluntary contributions. A printed copy of the program for the summer of 1910 lists the price of admission, together with the activities of the summer:

Cost of Admission to the Auditorium

During the summer of 1910 admission to the grounds will be free. An admission fee will be charged to all exercises in the Auditorium except the services on Sunday, the Get Acquainted Socials on Tuesday and the B.Y.P.U. Socials which may be given during the summer.

Tickets may be purchased at the Blue Mont Store or at the entrance to the Auditorium. The prices are as follows:

Single admission, good for twenty-four hours25
Two days50
One week	1.00
Two weeks	2.00
Season	3.00
Season ticket, good for family (two persons)	4.50
Each additional person in the family \$1.00	
Children, fifteen years and under.....	Free

The Emphasis by Weeks

Each week of the season a certain phase of the work will be emphasized. The addresses of the morning will be along the line of the work receiving emphasis for the week. This will generally be true of the evening addresses. The following schedule will be observed:

July 10-15—Sunday School and B.Y.P.U.

July 17-22—Missions and the Layman's Movement.

July 24-29—Education.

July 31-August 5—Music and Athletics.

August 7-21—Bible Conference.

At a meeting of the Board of Directors on August 17, 1911, a recommendation to build a hotel and sell bonds to finance it was approved. This plan was not carried through, but a loan of \$10,000.00 was secured from the Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company, of Greensboro, North Carolina. Ground breaking ceremonies were held on August 21, 1911, with prayer being led by Dr. T. P. Bell. Present for these ceremonies were J. H. Tucker, chairman of the Board of Directors, B. W. Spilman, Judge Jeter C. Pritchard, T. P. Bell, J. L. White, Hight C Moore, M. L. Kesler, D. M. Dew, W. C. Jackson, C. C. Ellzey, J. R. Sampey, and E. F. Mumford. Unfortunately, someone far underestimated the cost of the hotel. Construction was slow, since funds were not available to meet the building costs as they became due.

Just when it seemed that the Assembly was beginning to make some satisfactory progress, it suffered a great loss. One of its ardent champions, James H. Tucker, died in Asheville, February 15, 1912. This great layman and eminent lawyer gave liberally of his money, time, and strength to the early days of Ridgecrest as few men did. Hight C Moore, in *The Story of Ridgecrest*, records Dr. Spilman's summary of this man's service to the Assembly:



Dr. Spilman, often referred to as "Mr. Geniality," in 1931

He selected the site and called it to the attention of the committee. He negotiated all of the multitudinous details of securing options on the land (nine tracts) and closed the deals for all of it. He wrote all of the deeds; worked up the abstract of title to the property. He wrote the charter and secured its adoption by the General Assembly of North Carolina. On his personal credit he secured the funds with which to begin the development of the property. He secured the engineers and had general charge of the work, surveying and laying out the property for development. He was our first attorney, first president, first chairman of the board of directors, and first chairman of the executive Committee.

With untiring devotion he gave himself to the work, his only financial compensation being four building lots in the grounds. Without the help of this Christian lawyer of ability and consecration it would have been impossible to have accomplished what we did in the early days. He gave his time, his legal ability and his money without stint.

By the time of the meeting of the Board of Directors on August 12, 1913, the management was faced with a serious financial situation. A recommendation was approved authorizing the borrowing of \$35,000.00 to meet outstanding obligations and complete and furnish the hotel. A second mortgage was to be given on the property. Efforts to secure the loan were not successful, and work on the hotel was greatly delayed.

Following the death of Mr. Tucker, Judge Jeter C. Pritchard was elected chairman of the Board of Directors. In the early part of 1914 he entered into negotiations with the Old Dominion Trust Company, of Richmond, Virginia, to finance a loan of \$20,000.00 based on a bond issue. On the assurance of this loan, work was resumed on the hotel, with Mr. J. D. Elliott of Hickory, North Carolina, an experienced contractor, in charge.

Things were beginning to look a little brighter when disaster struck again. On Sunday, March 1, 1914, a terrific storm hit the area, and the only auditorium the Assembly owned was completely destroyed. Fortunately, another smaller building, known as Fidelis Hall, had been erected just to the east of the auditorium, and since it was not damaged, it was used for the conference programs during the summer of 1914. As great as this loss seemed, it was small compared to events which were to follow.

While the last finishing touches were being placed on the hotel, getting it into readiness to be opened, and while the last



Pritchell Hall

First hotel constructed, 1913-14, with fifty-four bedrooms,
dining room, and kitchen

of the furniture was being installed, the message reached Ridgecrest that the world had gone mad and the greatest war up to that time was being waged in Europe. As Dr. Spilman sat in his office signing the bonds for the Old Dominion Trust Company, this word came. The bonds were not taken. They were later burned in the furnace of the trust company. The loan was not made. In the words of Dr. Spilman: "The struggle of the next four years to keep out of the hands of the sheriff, if written, would read like a romance."

In recognition of the invaluable services rendered the Assembly by the two great Baptist laymen, Judge Jeter C. Pritchard, of Asheville, and Mr. J. D. Elliott, of Hickory, North Carolina, the new hotel was named for them: "Pritchell Inn," later "Pritchell Hall." It was officially opened on the evening of August 1, 1914. No electric lights were available, but they were turned on a few

days later. Four guests were served dinner that evening: Judge and Mrs. Jeter C. Pritchard, of Asheville, Mr. A. L. Boyd, of Charlotte, N. C., and Dr. B. W. Spilman. Mr. Joseph P. Wilson managed the hotel, which was leased to him on a percentage basis. It was recognized that the hotel could not be operated on a profitable basis unless a more extensive program were offered and larger crowds attended the conferences.

Adequate records of the events of the next few years are not available. The Assembly had obligations of more than \$32,000.00 when the Board of Directors met in August, 1915. Several proposals were made for financing this amount, one being the issuing of preferred stock in the corporation to be redeemed within five years if the creditors would accept same. This plan seems never to have materialized. A summer program was conducted during this period, with the Sunday School Board and the Home Mission Board assuming responsibility for it. Among other efforts to secure funds, Rev. O. L. Stringfield was employed as financial agent, with the responsibility to go afield among the churches and raise funds. Such a program proved unsuccessful. So discouraging was the situation that even Dr. Spilman, referring to funds for the program expense, reported to the Board of Directors, "Our present financial plan and program for the General Secretary's Department seems to me to be about as near a failure as a thing could be to exist at all . . . the pitifully inadequate amount provided by the voluntary contributions is enough to make one think that the Southern Baptist Assembly is engaged in a peanut stand business in the realm of Assemblies."

Through the generosity of the Baptist Sunday School Board and the Home Mission Board, together with the sacrificial efforts of many individuals, a summer program was conducted through the years of 1916, 1917, and 1918. The Assembly hotel was still operating at a loss. This was a source of discouragement. A number of privately owned boarding houses had been built and were available for guests during this period. However, every phase of the Assembly work was handicapped by debts.

From the minutes of the Board of Directors, meeting on August 7, 1918, one can appreciate the discouragements which faced these noble men who were striving so faithfully to keep the Assembly in operation. "With a debt whose interest charge was greater than the Assembly income only one of two things could

take place; we must needs be sold out, with possible serious financial embarrassment to the men who are security for the Assembly obligations, or some one must pay the difference.”

In the same minutes, appreciation was voiced for the agencies of the Convention who had helped as best they could.

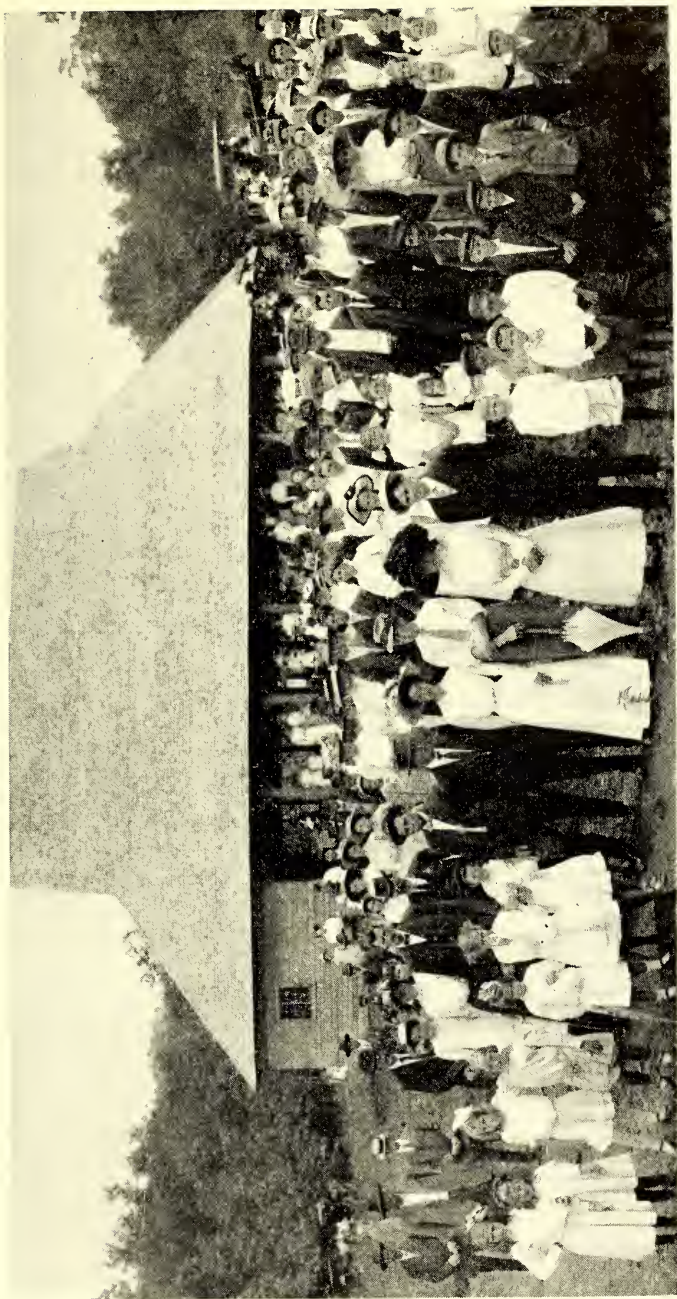
The Boards of the Southern Baptist Convention should get behind this Assembly. The Sunday School Board has helped in ways almost beyond number. This year, in addition to furnishing the services of one of its Field Secretaries to be General Secretary of the Assembly, the Sunday School Board has made a cash contribution larger than the total amount contributed for the program by all others thus far this summer. The Sunday School Board is willing, even anxious, to help those who help themselves, but the Board is not going to continue to aid where the people who receive the benefit do not care for their part of the work. Dr. Van Ness, the Corresponding Secretary of the S. S. Board, is going to recommend . . . that the Board care for the total expense of a high grade summer school for Christian Workers for six weeks during the summer of 1919.

The Home Mission Board and the Foreign Mission Board as well gave assurance of meeting the expense of a seminary professor from each of the seminaries to serve on the faculty of the School of Religious Education. Dr. Spilman appealed to the State Board of Missions of North Carolina to make an appropriation of the same amount as was being made to their own state Seaside Assembly. The Board made an appropriation of \$5,000.00 for the year 1920, without which the Assembly could probably not have carried on a program for that summer.

In an effort to meet the unpaid obligations, the Board of Directors decided to launch a campaign to raise \$100,000. Of this amount, \$50,000 was to be used for unpaid obligations and capital improvements and the other \$50,000 as an endowment fund. The machinery for carrying out this campaign was not available, but the campaign was launched with the same kind of faith which had prevailed among the directors, stockholders, and other loyal friends of the Assembly.

In August, 1919, Dr. Spilman reported a little brighter picture for the Assembly.

At our annual meeting in the summer of 1918 gloom and sadness filled our hearts. Now peace has come; and with it a new day of opportunity.



First auditorium, named for William Fox, an English Baptist deacon
Constructed in 1909, destroyed by windstorm March 1, 1914

With pleasure I record that this is the best summer which we have had at Ridgecrest. Few great movements have ever passed as many crises as has the Southern Baptist Assembly. God is with us. But for his help and but for the help of a few faithful ones who have hung on amid discouragements, many and great, the Southern Baptist Assembly would now be a memory. But the tide has turned. There is a more hopeful outlook; a new day for the Assembly is at hand.

Owing to a very burdensome debt on the Assembly and to the fact that many appeals to the stockholders and other friends of the Assembly had failed to bring complete relief the Board decided to sell Pritchelle Hall. During many months this property was on the market at a price which meant a gift to the purchaser of many thousands of dollars. Last summer the Board voted to take this property off the market and ordered that it be used as the Assembly Headquarters building. The Executive Committee faced the following conditions: the General Secretary could give only a small portion of time to the Assembly work; the collection of funds by correspondence was out of the question; there was no agent in the field, and no prospect of one. The Executive Committee decided that it would be best for the Assembly to sell this building and . . . entered into negotiations with Mr. W. S. Crawford, Mebane, N. C. who agreed to purchase the property for \$12,500, making an initial payment on it.

Through failure of certain of his plans, through no fault of his, he decided not to take the property. In the light of the developments of the following spring and of this summer one is led to believe that the hand of God was leading. . . .

God takes care of his work. While negotiations were under way for the sale of the property a letter came to the General Secretary from Rev. Luther Little, D.D., pastor of the First Baptist Church in Charlotte, N. C. suggesting that we might secure the services of Rev. Livingston T. Mays, D.D., to secure the \$100,000 which the Assembly is planning to raise. Correspondence on the part of Dr. Mays, Dr. Little and the Executive Committee resulted in a meeting of the Committee in Fidelis Hall, Ridgecrest, with the General Secretary and Dr. Mays on Friday, Dec. 27, 1918. Dr. Mays was elected Corresponding Secretary and was placed in charge of (1) the raising of the \$100,000 and of (2) the public platform work for the summer. Dr. Mays took up the work with a courage, faith and enthusiasm which meant success. The disasters and struggles of the past, the indifference and even hostility of many from whom we had every reason to expect only help and words of encouragement, the vast possibilities of having here the greatest Assembly for Baptists in all the world challenged Dr. Mays to do his best.

Under the leadership of Dr. Mays the churches responded to his appeal and pledges were received in sufficient amounts to encourage him in his work. The Baptist State Convention of

North Carolina gave further encouragement to this campaign when in its meeting at Greensboro, in January, 1919, it voted to endorse the Assembly in its effort to secure the \$100,000 and asked the churches of the state to contribute \$20,000 of this amount.

“Then came another financial cloud on the horizon,” Dr. Spilman records in *Ridgecrest, Past, Present and Future*.

The Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company wished an immediate settlement of their loan. We did all in our power to have them wait for us, since their loan was thoroughly secured and perfectly safe. But the company could not see its way clear to wait longer. We were pulling out steadily and surely but we must put up ten thousand dollars immediately or we would be thrown into the hands of a receiver.

In Black Mountain there was a small bank with ten thousand dollars capital—the Commonwealth Bank and Trust Company. We laid our case before the officers of this bank and asked if they were in a position to help us. The bank officials said that they had organized the bank for the purpose of helping this section. They made the loan; we paid every dollar to the Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Company. It is needless to say that the debt has long ago been paid in full to this friend in time of need.

There were still other unpaid obligations on the hotel and its furnishings, and Dr. Spilman again appealed to the North Carolina state convention for help. The resolution was adopted, and the convention instructed the Board of Missions to make an outright appropriation of \$20,000.00 to the Assembly. This gift enabled the Assembly to retire the majority of its obligations at this time.

At the meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta, May, 1919, a movement was inaugurated to raise among Southern Baptists the sum of \$75,000,000 for all objects in the South except local church expenses. Since the Assembly had, just nine months previously, launched its campaign for \$100,000, it did not seem wise to have the Assembly and the Southern Baptist Convention approaching the churches for pledges and contributions at the same time. In an effort to work out a satisfactory arrangement about the situation, Dr. Spilman met with the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention and the committee on the 75 Million Campaign in Nashville, Tennessee, July 2 and 3, and made the appeal that the Southern Baptist Assembly be in-

cluded in the 75 Million Campaign with other agencies of the Convention. Because the Assembly was a separate corporation and not an agency of the Convention, the Executive Committee did not look with favor upon this request. However, the Executive Committee voted to give further study to the request.

It would not be proper to close the history of this first stage of the Assembly's development without paying tribute to at least a few of the men who gave so unselfishly of their time and money in helping get the project established. Dr. Spilman is the only one who could adequately make such an appraisal of their work, and this he did to the Board of Directors, August 6, 1919. The minutes of this meeting record his words:

I voice the thinking of every member of this Board when I say that we are deeply grateful to every person who has helped through the years of struggle. It will not be possible in the limits of this report to name all of those who have helped. We can not judge of the value of a gift by a mere measure in dollars. But I would bear testimony to some notable gifts:

Mr. J. H. Tucker of Asheville, N. C., rendered valuable service in the earlier years of the Assembly. As President, Chairman of the Board of Directors and of the Executive Committee and as Attorney, he rendered a service without financial compensation.

Mr. F. W. Monnish, Tuscaloosa, Ala., came to Ridgecrest in the very busiest season of the year, the late Fall, in the year 1913, and directed the erection of Fidelis Hall, making a liberal contribution and buying the lumber for the Assembly on his personal credit.

Mr. E. L. Hon, DeLand, Fla., has given his time for days together and his money liberally to help. He has many times lightened the load for the General Secretary. His accurate business judgement and extended business experience has helped us over many a rough way.

Rev. Hight C Moore, D.D., Nashville, Tenn., while editor of the Biblical Recorder, and now as editor of the periodicals of the Baptist Sunday School Board, has given more publicity to Ridgecrest than any other person. [Dr. Moore was always faithful in attending the meetings of the stockholders and of other committees of which he was a member.]

Mr. C. C. Ellzey, of Calera, Ala., and Rev. E. F. Mumford, Oriental, N. C., have placed their personal credit at the disposal of the Assembly. [Mr. J. D. Elliott, a Christian layman of Hickory, N. C., also assisted in many ways. Not only did he extend his personal credit, but he lent money to the Assembly time and again. He had much to do with the building of Pritchell Hall.]

Rev. R. C. Buckner, D.D., late of Dallas, Texas, started our endowment fund with a gift of \$100.00.

Judge J. C. Pritchard, Chairman of our Board, Rev. M. L. Kesler, Principal E. McK. Goodwin, Mr. J. D. Elliott of the Executive Committee, and the General Secretary have not only given liberally of their money time and again, but have many times placed their personal credit behind the Assembly. . . .

God has raised up other friends who came to our help at an opportune moment. Rev. F. A. Bower, Morganton, N. C., and Rev. C. A. Owen, Salisbury, N. C., have led their churches to make liberal contributions. Rev. Luther Little, D.D., Pastor of the First Baptist Church, Charlotte, N. C., borrowed \$300.00 and loaned it to the Assembly to supply furnishings for Pritchelle Hall. He led his church to contribute a very liberal sum to the Assembly, leading with a personal subscription of \$100.00. Many other gifts have come; and many other friends have helped.

Among the helpers true and tried who have helped through all of the years, Miss Mary Ward, New York City, deserves special mention. She has directed the socials in Ridgecrest since the Assembly has had an existence. Without financial compensation she has given her time freely. These Assembly socials have been enjoyed by Ridgecresters as no other feature of the Assembly program, and have been attended by more people than any other feature of the work.

Ridgecrest and the Education Board, 1920-1928

THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION, at its meeting in Atlanta, May 14-18, 1919, enlarged the work of the Education Commission by creating the Education Board, with specified responsibilities. When the Executive Committee reconsidered the request of the Southern Baptist Assembly to be a beneficiary of the 75 Million Campaign, "the committee placed the matter in the hands of the Education Board of the Southern Baptist Convention asking the Board to include us in the objects of beneficence of the Board if possible," Dr. Spilman reported to the Assembly Board of Directors on August 6, 1919.

After the Education Board was organized, consideration was given to this recommendation from the Executive Committee, which reported to the Southern Baptist Convention in 1920 as follows: "Relative to the Southern Baptist Assembly at Ridgecrest—after thorough investigation it was decided that at least \$100,000 was needed to care for this institution, but the funds at our disposal permitted us to appropriate only \$50,000 to be prorated and paid out of the \$3,000,000 fund the same as other Southwide institutions."

The Education Board faced many problems in connection with the Assembly because of obligations which had accumulated over a period of years. It, too, found it very difficult to carry on a summer program, keep the hotel and other properties in repair, and operate from the proceeds allotted to the Assembly from the 75 Million Campaign funds. Dr. Albert R. Bond, the educational secretary of the Education Board, was asked to assume responsibility for the program. He was ably assisted by Mr. W. I. Willis, caretaker and superintendent.

After a year's experience in handling the affairs of the Assembly, the Education Board reported to the Southern Baptist Convention in 1921 that

Among the attractions of Ridgecrest this summer there will be a School of Theology, June 12-August 6th, taught by Professors Carver,

Connor and Denham of the Louisville, Fort Worth, and New Orleans schools, respectively, and a plan has been worked out in accordance with which work done in this school will be credited toward a degree in any one of the three schools, Louisville, Fort Worth and New Orleans, which the student may elect. It is hoped that the success of this new venture may be so signal as to justify its permanency. Other features at Ridgecrest will be as follows:

Faculties of Southern Baptist Mountain Schools, June 21-June 24.
Southern Baptist Laymen's Conference, July 1-July 4.

Organized Class Sunday School Teachers and Workers, July 14-Aug. 1.

Southern Baptist Women's Meeting, July 29-Aug. 5.

Bible Conference, Aug. 5-Aug. 21.

Literary and Musical Entertainment, Aug. 22-Aug. 30.

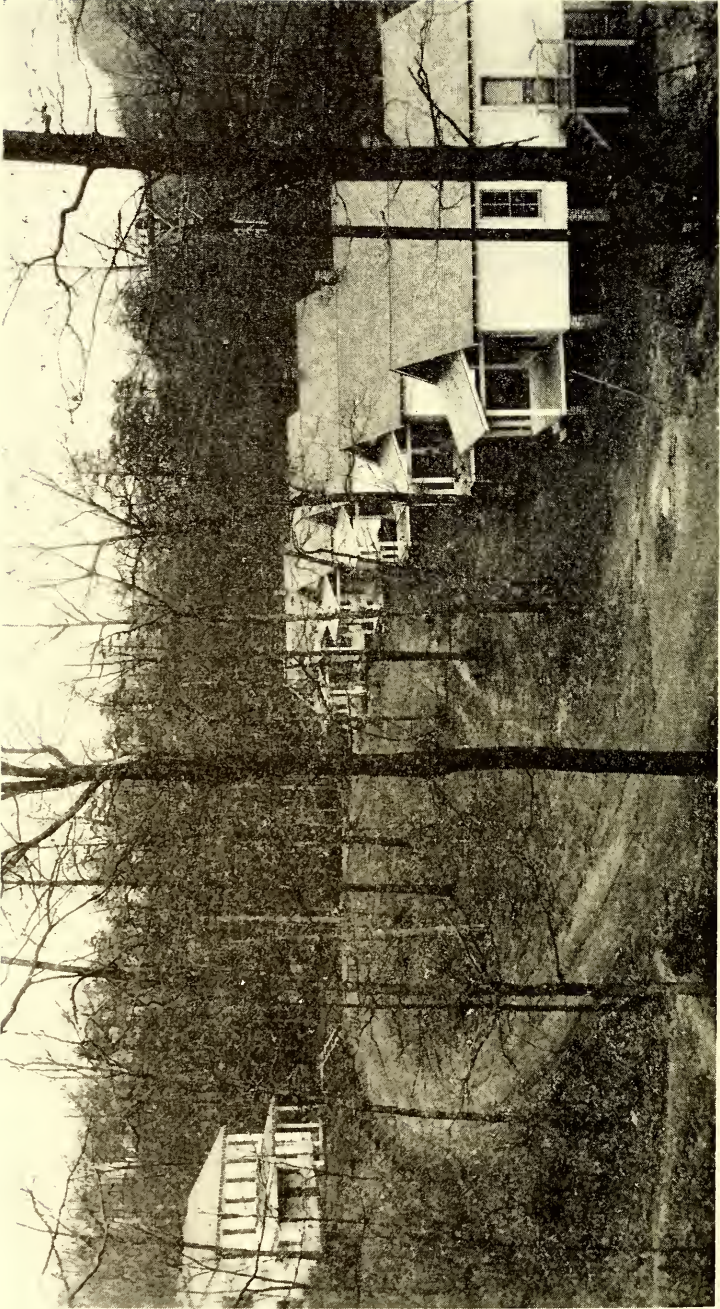
Normal Sunday School Vocational Training, Sept. 2-Sept. 10.

The original corporation of the Southern Baptist Assembly still existed, and it was necessary to co-ordinate the rights and privileges of the stockholders with the Education Board. The stockholders met with representatives of the Education Board, on August 4, 1920, and transferred to the Education Board 248 shares of stock, giving it the controlling interest in the corporation.

The officials of the Education Board were not finding it easy to carry on the summer program and at the same time meet other Assembly obligations. The income from the 75 Million Campaign, plus the income from the hotel, was not sufficient to pay the program expense and other operating costs. During these first few years of the campaign, there was available only \$23,319.82 as the Assembly's pro rata share. Obligations of all types had amounted to \$32,024.27. As a result, the Education Board had to advance to the Assembly \$10,359.30 during the years 1922 and 1923.

Dr. W. C. James, who had served as corresponding secretary of the Education Board since July, 1920, resigned July 10, 1924. Dr. J. W. Cammack was elected as his successor and began his work on October 1, 1924. He made his headquarters on the Assembly grounds during the summer for the next few years. There he had a splendid opportunity to observe the needs of the Assembly. The denomination owes a debt of gratitude to these officials who gave so much of their time in an effort to get the Assembly more firmly established on a paying basis. This fact is evidenced by the progress of the next few years.

The Education Board, in its report to the Southern Baptist



Springdale Cottages
Constructed 1925-26

Convention of 1924, made this observation: "The Assembly has been hampered by lack of funds with which to develop the property. We need a good hotel, an auditorium and a number of cottages that could be rented. The resources of the Assembly, coming from the Campaign, have gone for payment of obligations before the Board assumed charge."

The committee appointed to review the report of the Education Board made the following recommendation:

We recommend that the Convention instruct the Education Board to prepare a definite, practical schedule of its plans and needs for the development at Ridgecrest of a great Summer Assembly for Southern Baptists and that there be made to it a sufficient appropriation by the Committee in charge of the next campaign to enable it with funds from the future campaign to properly finance the undertaking. We ought to make this enterprise worthy of our strength or abandon it. It deserves to be made a rich contributor to our Baptist life. We cannot afford to maintain it other than adequately.

In November, 1924, the committee on Ridgecrest from the Education Board made recommendations which were approved as follows, according to the minutes of that meeting:

The committee approves the plans shown in preliminary blue print drawn by Thrower & Breeze of Charlotte, N. C., providing for a combined dining room, kitchen, lounge and auditorium, the dining room to seat 300, and the auditorium to seat 600, in addition to three class rooms which may be opened into the auditorium, providing the total amount necessary to put the building in usable condition for the season of 1926 does not exceed \$35,000.00

At the January, 1925, meeting of the Education Board, Rev. R. F. Staples was elected business manager. He began his work immediately, and the Assembly will always be indebted for the fine service rendered by him throughout the next ten years.

At its meeting on February 3, 1925, the Education Board approved the borrowing of \$40,000.00 for repairs and capital improvements as previously approved and to repay funds advanced by the Education Board. A mortgage was given to secure this loan. With these funds Mr. Staples was able to make many of the needed repairs and improvements. A temporary auditorium was built just back of Pritchell Hall. Later remodeled and used as a staff dormitory for girls, it is now a hotel unit known as Hillside Annex. Some recreational areas were also made available.

In its report to the Southern Baptist Convention in Memphis, Tennessee, May 13-17, 1925, the Board urged even more extensive developments.

The need for a new hotel and a permanent auditorium and dormitories is very urgent. Under the present financial situation, the committee on building has cut out every item that was not essential to continuing their work, and while the improvements costing \$250,000 are immediately and urgently needed, the program of improvements this Spring has been cut to \$35,000. . . .

Because of a lack of proper conveniences and facilities at Ridgecrest for caring for those who would have come to us, many of our people have been securing quarters at the Assembly grounds of other denominations, and at the Y.M.C.A. Assembly. Our Board has approved a plan of development to begin at the earliest time possible, which consists of:

- (a) A new and larger hotel
- (b) A permanent auditorium
- (c) Two additional dormitories
- (d) Library and missionary building
- (e) Several cottages
- (f) Improvement of roads
- (g) Light and water plant

For these permanent improvements a million dollars might be economically and worthily invested. For a beginning of this work we should have at least \$300,000. . . .

We have secured the advice of six non-Baptist, disinterested real estate firms, who are familiar with the situation, as to the value of the present holdings of the Education Board at Ridgecrest. The figures we have accepted are lower than the lowest estimate placed on the property by any one of the six firms, and is not over 50 per cent of the value placed by some of them.

Present estimated value:

(a) Lots and Park Land	\$367,200
(b) Pritchell Hall	31,000
(c) Improvements this year	35,000
(d) Equipment	7,500
	<hr/>
Total	\$440,700

. . . The total indebtedness on the property is \$44,071.86. Of this amount \$9,071.86 is for debts assumed by our Board when it took over the property and for improvements made prior to 1925. The balance of \$35,000 represents the amount spent for necessary improvements this year.

The Convention approved the proposed development program. The Education Board, at its annual meeting at Ridge-

crest, July 1, 1925, authorized its committee on Ridgecrest to carry out the instructions of the Southern Baptist Convention to sell \$300,000 in bonds, or as much thereof as in its judgment seemed immediately necessary for improvements.

The next two years were to see the greatest period of expansion since the Assembly had been organized. Only \$150,000 in bonds was issued, even though the Board had authority for a larger expenditure. Construction was started on Rhododendron Hall, which included a new dining room and kitchen facilities on the first floor and a beautiful new auditorium on the second floor. This building was connected with the roadway adjoining Pritchell Hall by a covered double-decker overhead bridge.

Just to the rear of Rhododendron Hall two small cottages to serve as servant's quarters were erected. Still further to the rear the five Springdale cottages were built and across from them, a cafeteria building which has since been converted into hotel facilities known as Springdale Annex. A new day for Ridgecrest came with these added facilities. A home for the manager and the ten "Bird Huts" above Lake Dew were built during this period. Mr. Staples and his staff did a magnificent job. The Education Board reported to the Convention in 1926 expenditures of \$81,501.13 and in 1927, \$68,348.13, all of which was used for construction purposes.

Because the 75 Million Campaign had not been as successful as the leaders had expected, several of the convention agencies had incurred large obligations which they were not able to meet. The Southern Baptist Convention, at its annual meeting in Houston, Texas, May 12, 1926, authorized the following:

That the Convention instruct the boards and activities to proceed immediately with arrangements for carrying their debts over a reasonable period if this is necessary, if by extending their obligations over a period they can be taken care of gradually without the necessity of too great curtailment in the immediate operations of these boards and activities.

The Education Board availed itself of this action and arranged to refinance many of its obligations. A new bond issue of \$345,000 was issued, secured by a mortgage on the property at Ridgecrest and the Indian school and orphanage at Nuyaka, Oklahoma. A report of this action was made to the Convention in May, 1927.

For three years Dr. J. W. Cammack had not only served as corresponding secretary of the Education Board, but he had also given much of his time in working with Mr. Staples in the construction program. In May, 1927, a call came to him from Averitt College, Danville, Virginia, to serve as its president. He accepted the invitation and resigned his work with the Education Board, May 19, 1927. Dr. Rufus W. Weaver was elected as his successor, July 6, 1927.

The Convention, meeting in Chattanooga in May, 1927, appointed a committee to study the affairs of the agencies of the Convention and to report at the next session. This committee reported favorably on the affairs of the Education Board, but there was a difference of opinion on the part of some members of the body. A motion was made by Dr. Charles E. Maddry, of North Carolina, that the Education Board be discontinued. After full discussion this motion was referred to a special committee of ten, which was to report back to the Convention. The committee was unable to agree and so advised the Convention the next day. Dr. Maddry then reintroduced his resolution, which was adopted as follows:

While reaffirming our abiding interest in Christian Education and our loyalty to our Baptist schools, yet, under the existing financial conditions in our general missionary and benevolent work, we feel that the following changes in our methods of promoting education are desirable.

Therefore be it resolved by this Convention:

1. That the Board of Education as now constituted be discontinued, and in lieu thereof, the Convention create an Education Commission composed of one member from each state. This commission shall organize itself by the election of a chairman and secretary, who shall serve without compensation. The duties of this commission shall be to stimulate and nurture interest in Christian Education, to create educational convictions, and strive for the development of an educational conscience among our people. To this end the Commission shall gather and organize facts and statistics in support of Christian Education and send them out to the Baptist people of the South through the medium of our denominational papers, through the distribution of tracts and other forms of publicity. In short, this Commission shall be both eyes and mouth for Southern Baptists in all matters pertaining to education.

2. That the Executive Committee of this Convention be recognized as the successor in law to the Board of Education, and that all of the interests and obligations of the Education Board, financial, legal and

otherwise, be and are hereby committed to the Executive Committee of this Convention.

5. That the Education Board, as heretofore existing, and the Executive Committee of this Convention be and are hereby instructed to effect these changes as early as may be practicable, conserving all the legal interests involved.

Growth always brings added responsibilities. This is true of business, the church and Sunday school, and it likewise proved true with the Southern Baptist Assembly. These expanded facilities—an auditorium, dining room, kitchen, and housing for guests—immediately required expanded water facilities. In the fall of 1927 and the early part of 1928 the Education Board built a concrete reservoir with the necessary chlorinating system and installed a complete sewerage system. This expansion necessitated an additional obligation over and above the already existing bond issue of \$345,000. The cost of the water system was \$31,941.84; it was financed through a series of seven notes, due in November of each year, each note in the amount of \$4,563.12. These facts were noted by the Board in its report of April 30, 1928.

With the transfer of the property of the Southern Baptist Assembly to the Executive Committee, the Education Board listed assets with a valuation of \$605,416.84. The figure was based on the appraisal previously referred to and the improvements made from the proceeds of the bond sale. The liabilities listed against the Assembly property were \$345,000 in bonds and the unpaid notes for the water system.

The action of the Convention in discontinuing the Education Board brought to a close the second era in the history of the Southern Baptist Assembly. The denomination is indebted to the Education Board and its officials for the improvement and expansion of the Assembly during their administration. From funds made available, they had invested approximately \$205,000 in the properties, but they had taken over from the original stockholders assets of an equal value, or more.

The Executive Committee and the Sunday School Board, 1929-1944

THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION, in its meeting in Chattanooga, Tennessee, May, 1928, discontinued the Education Board. The Executive Committee of the Convention was designated "as successor in law to the Education Board and all of the interests and obligations of the Education Board, financial, legal and otherwise." A great number of details would be involved in carrying out the instructions of the Convention. One of the immediate problems was maintaining the property of the Assembly and planning for the summer program in the years ahead, and the Executive Committee was without the necessary staff to handle these details. They immediately turned to the Sunday School Board for help, asking that the Board assume responsibility for the program for a period of three years. This request was approved by the Board in March, 1929, and a successful program sponsoring all phases of denominational life was conducted.

After this first year of operation, the executives of the Board recognized the maintenance problems which were going to be involved if the property was to be adequately maintained. Even though no responsibility was assumed for maintenance, a substantial sum had to be spent during the first year. Dr. I. J. Van Ness reported to the Sunday School Board in September, 1929:

I wish to recommend that the Sunday School Board say to the Executive Committee that the condition of the property and the charges connected with its management will require all the revenue in sight for this and the succeeding year. . . . There are some improvements which will be made if the property is to be available for an advanced program. . . . The most important, however, are: that the buildings shall be painted. They ought not to go through another winter. As there was a margin of funds left over, I ventured to tell the manager of the property to proceed at once before the bad weather

comes on to repaint the buildings, deeming this, as I stated, necessary to their preservation. . . .

It is my conviction that the Sunday School Board, having entered upon this enterprise, should endeavor at the end of the three years to turn the property back on a paying basis, if at all possible. This will require all the revenues from this year and from next, which latter must be anticipated.

The second summer (1930) saw another successful season as far as the program was concerned, with the hotel almost breaking even without any allowance for depreciation or maintenance of the property. Because of the heavy indebtedness on the property in the form of a mortgage, it was not possible to offer any inducements for churches and individuals to purchase property for building purposes. Dr. Van Ness, in his report of October, 1930, made these further observations:

The hotel does not furnish sufficient facilities to make an adequate income to do more than balance the accounts. . . .

Under these circumstances, as has been recited, I do not feel that the Board should make any definite commitments on the Ridgecrest management beyond next summer . . . pending the time when a readjustment of the indebtedness can be made so that Ridgecrest shall bear only its own proper proportion of this indebtedness and be able to dispose of property to individuals with some assurance of permanence.

The Board sponsored another good program for the third summer, at the same time making substantial investments in maintenance and upkeep of the property over and above the income from the hotel. At the end of the three-year period the Executive Committee was still without facilities for handling the program activities; it was also having difficulty in meeting existing obligations. A special committee on Ridgecrest from the Executive Committee made a new approach to the matter and presented recommendations to the Southern Baptist Convention in May, 1932, in which it requested that the Sunday School Board take over Ridgecrest at the cost of buildings, equipment, and property as listed, totaling \$204,366.84. A deed in fee simple would be given the Board for the Ridgecrest property when the Convention could lift the mortgage against the property. Pending the time of lifting the mortgage, the Board was asked to pay its pro rata share of interest and maturities of \$281,000.00 bonds then outstanding, and that such amount paid on the prin-

incipal would be counted as part payment on the total price, namely, \$204,366.84. The Sunday School Board was also asked to pay the insurance on Ridgecrest property under terms of the mortgage, and pay two outstanding sprinkler notes of \$4,563.12 each.

The Sunday School Board, in its meeting, June 8, 1932, replied as follows:

Recognizing the seriousness of the financial emergency now upon Southern Baptists, and feeling a deep sense of denominational responsibility for all our obligations, financial as well as moral and social, yet at the same time being deeply conscious of our responsibilities to the whole denomination for maintaining the financial integrity of the Sunday School Board and safeguarding its appointed program in our Baptist life, we, the members of the Sunday School Board, feel:

1. That we cannot accept the proposition presented to us by the Executive Committee whereby the property at Ridgecrest would be transferred to us;

2. That a committee should be appointed to work with the Executive Secretary of our Board, keeping the problem of Ridgecrest under advisement, and to confer with the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention with a view to aiding them in devising a feasible plan of handling the emergency now upon them as a result of the debt on Ridgecrest, any action by the two to be reported to the next Southern Baptist Convention as per the instructions of the Convention at St. Petersburg.

Even though the Sunday School Board was not in a position to assume the indebtedness on the Assembly property, it did continue to operate the program and keep the property in good repair. It should be remembered that these were the years of the greatest depression through which our country had ever passed. Because of this fact, the Executive Committee was unable to meet the maturing obligations of interest on the bonded indebtedness. It again requested help from the Sunday School Board, and two payments of interest totaling \$14,860.00 were made by the Board in 1933. Likewise, the Board agreed to operate the Assembly and look after the property for the year 1934. This arrangement was continued for the year 1935. More was involved than planning and supervising the program, which alone involved a large expenditure of money. Repairs and improvements of the property were a constant necessity.

The original charter of incorporation was issued to the Southern Baptist Assembly, and all business transactions had been

under this name. In June, 1935, the Sunday School Board requested that the official and legal name be changed to "Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly." This request was approved. Prior to this action, the Executive Committee had requested the Convention in 1934 to authorize it to dissolve the corporation. This request was also approved.

It seems proper to pause for reflection at this point in the history of the Assembly. The end of 1935 closes the period of Mr. R. F. Staples' service as manager of the business affairs and property of the institution. When he entered upon his duties on January 1, 1925, he had only the original hotel for lodging guests. Neither was there an adequate auditorium or sewerage and water facilities.

Working in close co-operation with Dr. J. W. Cammack and the Education Board, Mr. Staples used funds which were provided through the first bond issue of \$150,000. With the aid of a landscape architect, the first real improvement in the roads, walkways, and the grounds in general was made. Likewise, Mr. Staples planned with the architect and supervised the building of the combination dining room, kitchen, and auditorium building known as Rhododendron Hall. Springdale Annex, used as a cafeteria; the five Springdale cottages; the water and sewerage system, with a reservoir and chlorinator for purifying the water; and the manager's home were all built under his supervision. For six years he co-operated with the Sunday School Board in keeping the property and grounds in good repair. The denomination will always be indebted to him for his untiring efforts. He was succeeded by Mr. Perry Morgan, who for many years had been connected with the Sunday School and Training Union departments of the North Carolina Mission Board.

Dr. T. L. Holcomb was elected executive secretary-treasurer of the Sunday School Board in June, 1935. Under his leadership for the next eighteen years the Assembly went through one of its greatest periods of expansion. He was quick to observe that operating the Assembly on a year-to-year basis was not going to be the answer to the problems involved. No long-range plans could be made. The challenging programs which were being offered by the Sunday School Board had increased the interest in all phases of the work, and capacity crowds were in attendance each summer. The Committee on Ridgecrest from the

Executive Committee conferred with a similar committee from the Board. Out of this meeting came the agreement, reported to the Convention in 1936, whereby the Board pledged to "take full charge of the property at Ridgecrest, which we agree to use and keep up, and conduct a program each summer through the summer of 1940."

Continued progress was being made, and the Assembly was reaching multitudes through its programs for all phases of denominational life. The fullest co-operation was being received from all agencies of the Convention.

With the accelerated programs being offered, capacity crowds responded to such an extent that the kitchen and dining room facilities and the auditorium and classrooms could not meet the needs. In December, 1937, the Executive Committee requested the Sunday School Board to build an adequate auditorium with ample classrooms, remodel the old building to provide additional dining room facilities, and convert the old auditorium space into bedrooms, the cost not to exceed \$60,000.00. The Board approved this request at its annual meeting, December 16, 1937. It was again understood that the Board was not to be repaid for any funds expended for maintenance of the property. Provision was made, however, that in the event of the sale of the property the Board was to be reimbursed for funds used for permanent improvements.

One of the reasons for making provisions to refund the Sunday School Board for funds used in permanent improvements was the fact that it was also asked to take full charge of the property for a ten-year period, or through December, 1950. A reduction in the financial obligations of the Convention during the next few years made it possible to alter some of these safeguards. The Executive Committee, was, in 1942, able to lift the mortgage from the Ridgecrest property and refinance all of the indebtedness of the Convention with a loan from the First National Bank of New York City.

The water system was being taxed to capacity by the enlarged facilities; in addition, more cottages were being built on the grounds by private individuals and churches. The Assembly had acquired a number of cottages and renovated them, making available additional facilities for guests. In 1940, through negotiations with the officials of the Black Mountain and Asheville



Pritchell Hall
Remodeled and modernized 1925-26



Rhododendron Hall
Built 1925-26 with a dining room and kitchen on first floor and auditorium on second floor; remodeled 1938 with bedrooms on second floor

water system, arrangements were made to secure additional water if necessary. This plan required an expense of approximately \$6,000.00. Additional classroom space was also necessary; the first floor of the auditorium annex was built in 1941, and the second floor was added in 1948. Cottage and hotel facilities were again being filled to capacity. "Crestridge," a hotel unit of thirty rooms, all with private baths, was completed in 1942 at a cost of approximately \$15,000.00.

Through the dynamic leadership of Dr. James E. Dillard and his work with the "One Hundred Thousand Club" and the slogan, "Debt Free in Forty-Three," all of the obligations of the Convention were paid. There were better days ahead for all phases of the denominational program. The Executive Committee was therefore ready and willing to release all responsibility for Ridgecrest and the affairs of the Assembly. In its report to the Convention in 1944, the following recommendation was made:

1. That the Convention authorize and instruct the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention to transfer to the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention by deed the property it holds at Ridgecrest, North Carolina, known as the Southern Baptist Assembly, to be held in trust for the Convention just as the property is now held by the Executive Committee, the Sunday School Board to assume all obligations implicit in this ownership.

2. That it is the will and the instruction of the Convention that the Ridgecrest property be operated as the Southern Baptist Assembly, representing all phases of the Southern Baptist Convention work and that all agencies of the Convention co-operate with the Sunday School Board to this end.

5. That the details necessary in completing this transfer shall be worked out jointly by the Executive Committee and the Sunday School Board, and be reported to the Convention.

The provisions of the above recommendation were carried out and title to the Ridgecrest property passed to the Sunday School Board. This action brought to a close fifteen years of the very finest co-operation between the Executive Committee and the Sunday School Board.

The history of this third era of the Assembly would not be complete without a reference to the splendid service rendered by Dr. George W. Truett. For many years the last two weeks of the Assembly program featured his magnetic sermons

at the noon hour and the evening hour. Following his death on July 7, 1944, the Sunday School Board requested Dr. Hight C. Moore to prepare suitable resolutions of appreciation. These were read at a special service at Ridgecrest, July 10, 1944, and from them we quote the following:

**“Know Ye Not That There Is a Prince and
a Great Man Fallen This Day in Israel”**

WE HONOR HIM WHO HONORED GOD—

PEERLESS PASTOR of a great and growing church for nearly half a century with shepherd heart and hand leading his flock into the pleasant pastures and beside the still waters; comforting them in the valley of the shadow; preparing them to “dwell in the house of the Lord for ever”;

PRINCE OF PREACHERS, he was a pulpit orator of the first caliber, speaking the truth in love “with the tongues of men and of angels,” holding multiplied thousands spellbound, as in his patriotic address on the Capitol steps in Washington in 1920, and in his presidential address to the Baptist hosts assembled in 1939 at Atlanta from the four quarters of the globe;

BELOVED PRESIDENT OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION for three years (1927-8-9), impartial with the gavel, inspiring in his leadership, progressive in his plans, profoundly spiritual in his contacts, widely influential in his impress;

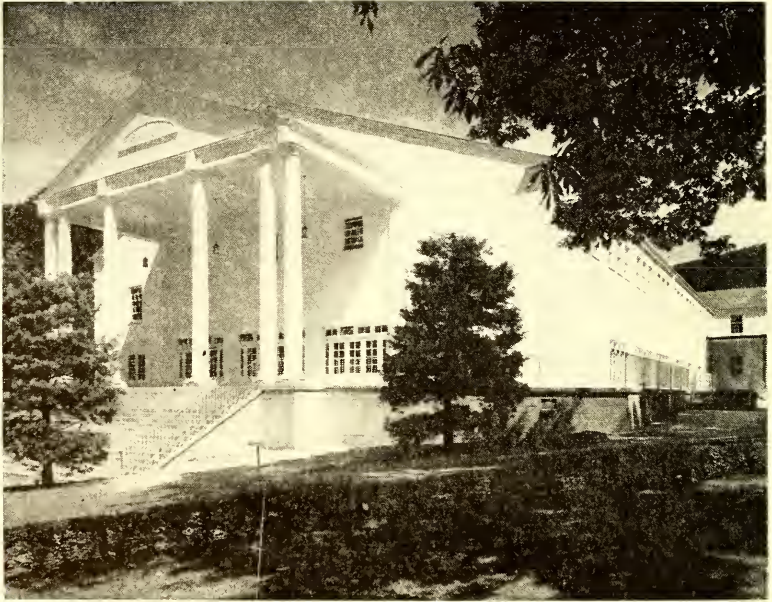
CHRISTIAN COSMOPOLITAN, he was recognized and renowned throughout the world which he traversed through all continents and all hemispheres, east and west, north and south, an ambassador of international good will, a trusted messenger from the King of kings, a herald of the good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people;

POWERFUL PERSONALITY of marvelous magnetism, whose massive intellect was incandescent, whose majestic feelings were aflame with celestial fire, and whose masterful will throbbed with dynamic power, Spirit-harnessed for human betterment and divine glory;

MIGHTY MAN OF VALOR, he hated sin with a holy hatred, fought evil without fear or ferocity, attacked and overthrew wrong in the name of the Lord God of hosts, and built castles of truth and goodness by enlisting courageous hearts in the cause of right;

HEAD OF A HAPPY HOME, his loved ones were dearer to him than life; and worthy indeed was she who walked by his side through those gracious years, while children and children’s children will all and ever rise up to call him blessed and thank God upon every remembrance of him;

PROPHET OF GOD to a lost world, blending Sinai with Calvary, he denounced the wrongs that ruin the race, warned against the wrath to



Auditorium
Constructed 1938-39, remodeled 1953
Present seating capacity 3,500



Springdale Annex
Constructed 1925-26 as a cafeteria building, later remodeled
into bedrooms; new wing of bedrooms with private baths
added in 1949

come, demanded the repentance that turns from sin, and urged to saving faith in him who "died for our sins according to the scriptures";

FRIEND OF MAN, fellow helper to the truth, fellow laborer with all who labor in the Lord, he ministered with equal fidelity to the intellectual and the illiterate, the millionaire and the miser, the loftiest and the lowest, the distinguished and the despised, the tiny tot and the tottering grandsire, the Congressman in the Capitol and the cowboy in the canyon, the saint who wants to be better and the sinner who wants to be good; knowing and showing, as he always did, that "God is no respecter of persons". . .

Ridgecrest and the Sunday School Board, 1944-1957

FOR THE EIGHT-YEAR PERIOD from 1935 to 1943, prior to the transfer of the Ridgecrest property to the Sunday School Board, the Assembly had enjoyed a growth in all phases of its work, especially in the expansion of its physical assets. During this period Mr. Perry Morgan, as manager, had rendered invaluable service. However, in the early part of 1943, due to Mr. Morgan's illness, Mr. J. N. Barnette, of the Sunday School Department of the Board, was asked to serve as acting manager for the season and again for the summer of 1944. Nowhere could the Board have turned for one who was more familiar with the whole denominational program and so beloved by the leaders of the Convention. Mr. Barnette did a superb job during these two years.

Because of his health, Mr. Morgan asked to be relieved of the heavy responsibilities of his position in December, 1944. He continued as an employee of the Assembly and was assigned the managership of the boys' camp. He was also in charge of all real estate owned by the Assembly. He remained in this position until his retirement, January 1, 1955.

Among the many fine services rendered the Assembly by Mr. Morgan was his constant alertness to available property which adjoined the properties already owned. During 1943 negotiations were carried on whereby the Hemphill property, consisting of a main building of two apartments and a number of cottages, all overlooking Royal Gorge, was purchased. The next year thirty-one lots, on which there were sixteen cottages, were acquired.

For the summer season of 1945 Mr. Barnette was again asked to serve as manager, to be assisted by Mr. Versil Crenshaw. Preliminary plans were made and everything was moving on schedule, but unexpected difficulties were just ahead. Our country had been at war for four years, and all travel was on a

restricted basis. After a conference with the director of transportation in Washington, D. C., the officials of the Sunday School Board agreed that it could not do otherwise than to co-operate with the defense program of our country. So for the first time since 1909 there was not a program of activities at Ridgecrest in the summer of 1945.

In seeking a qualified man to succeed Mr. Morgan as manager, the Sunday School Board elected Mr. Willard Weeks, who had been educational director of the Second Baptist Church of Houston, Texas, in December, 1945. However, he did not feel led to accept the position. The Board then turned to Mr. Robert Guy, who had had considerable hospital administrative experience with the Baptist Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia, and then at the Veterans' Hospital near Black Mountain. His release from military service was delayed, and Mr. Barnette again served as manager for the summer of 1946.

All that year preliminary plans for a new dining room were studied—the second floor to be used as classrooms. An appropriation was made in December, 1946, and the contract awarded in March, 1947. Up to this time all buildings except the auditorium had been of frame construction. This new building is of brick and concrete, and it is one of the most attractive and spacious on the grounds, making possible the serving of nearly twenty-five hundred people for each meal. With these enlarged dining room facilities it was also necessary to expand the kitchen space and equipment. This work was done the next year.

In his capacity of manager of real estate, Mr. Morgan recommended the purchase of additional property, consisting of sixty-three acres of the Old Field Gap tract and the J. J. Bailey tract, all located on the western edge of the Assembly grounds and fronting on the main highway.

Hospital administration still had its appeal to Mr. Guy, and he resigned as manager of Ridgecrest in October, 1950, to return to his chosen field of activity. The Board again turned to Mr. Willard Weeks, not only because he was thoroughly familiar with all phases of the denominational program, but also because of his training in the field of engineering and construction work. He was admirably equipped to lead in the further expansion program of the next few years and on out into the future. He accepted the position and began his work in November, 1950.

For many, many years one of the most popular places on the Assembly grounds was a little frame building just back of Pritchell Hall. At first it was just a covered shed. Later it was enclosed. Familiarly known as "Nibble Nook," it was the gathering place of young and old for cold drinks and other light refreshments. Always it was taxed to capacity. The management recognized the need of a more adequate building, not only as a place for refreshments, but there were other needs just as urgent. Under the leadership of Mr. Weeks, plans were started in 1951 for another of the more permanent buildings, this one to be known as the "Center Building," named not only because of its central location but also because it was to be the home of a larger and more complete "Nibble Nook," the Baptist Book Store, barber shop, beauty shop, and a headquarters office for the Relief and Annuity Board. Built of brick and reinforced concrete at a cost of approximately \$60,000, it has proven a wise and needed investment.

Because of the growth of the Assembly and its popularity with the thousands of Baptists who were taking advantage of the splendid conference programs, the auditorium and classrooms were taxed to capacity. The people themselves urged increased facilities and demonstrated their earnestness by individual contributions in substantial amounts. Thus was started on a voluntary basis a campaign for funds to enlarge the auditorium. During the year 1952 approximately \$33,000 was contributed for such a fund. Responding not only to the appeal of the contributors but also realizing the necessity for more space for the general meetings, the Board at its meeting on September 10, 1952, appropriated the necessary additional funds and authorized the enlargement to be completed for the opening of the summer program in 1953. The enlargement of this auditorium, one of the most adequate to be found in the South, was another forward step in the development of the Assembly. With the auxiliary auditorium to the rear of the stage, there is a seating capacity of approximately four thousand. The cost of this enlargement was \$111,000. Special services of dedication for the completed auditorium were held August 23, 1953.

The annual meeting of the Sunday School Board in December, 1953, brought out the needs for another advanced step in the Ridgecrest development program. Preliminary studies were



Dining Hall
Seating capacity 2,500, second floor used for
classrooms
Constructed 1948-49

Center Building
Constructed 1950-51, houses Nibble Nook, Baptist
Book Store, barber shop, beauty parlor, and office
of Relief and Annuity Board



made for a larger and more adequate reservoir. The Assembly was still using the original installation built in 1927-28. Estimated cost of a reservoir to hold eleven million gallons of water was \$50,000. This expenditure was authorized in March, 1954, and immediate construction was started shortly thereafter. Another auxiliary concrete reservoir on the opposite mountainside was constructed in 1955, and a third one is contemplated and will likely be built in 1957-58.

Another major project was also given consideration at the close of 1953. The need for better facilities for ministering to the children of the cradle roll, beginner, and primary ages was stressed by the leaders of both the Sunday School and Training Union Departments. Again voluntary offerings were made to start the building, but a project of such importance would take time and study. The assignment for this study was made to the Education Division of the Board.

The annual meeting of the Sunday School Board in December, 1953, brought to a close the administration of Dr. Holcomb as executive secretary-treasurer. The special committee to secure his successor recommended Dr. James L. Sullivan, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Abilene, Texas. Under his dynamic leadership the denomination can expect even further growth in the Assembly operations. This is evidenced by the progress already made during the first few years of his administration.

At the December, 1954, meeting of the Board, further expansion of the water system was approved. Likewise, the building of the first of a series of efficiency apartments was approved, and the new "Florida Cove" unit of eight apartments—each to accommodate six people—was constructed and used for the season of 1955. The popularity of this type of accommodation for family groups has met a long-felt need, and other buildings have been remodeled with similar accommodations.

After months of study by the workers of the Education division of the Board, final plans and specifications for the new Children's Building were approved and the necessary appropriation authorized. Construction was started in the fall of 1955. Even though not quite complete in all details, it was ready for use during the summer of 1956. It is now the outstanding building on the entire campus, being of brick and masonry construction, with all of the latest equipment for use in the most



Johnson Spring
A favorite spot for prayer and meditation



Bird Huts
Constructed 1925-26 to accommodate families and church groups

up-to-date teaching techniques for younger children. It will serve to help and bless the hundreds of leaders and workers as they seek to guide in the training of the boys and girls who will be our leaders of the future.

The Baptist denomination should forever be grateful to the Sunday School Board for its ministry through the Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly. In 1929 it picked up the torch which had been lighted by the founding fathers and has held it aloft for the past twenty-eight years. The assets of the Assembly when transferred by the Executive Committee to the Sunday School Board were conservatively estimated at \$348,859.40. As of December 31, 1956, the listed assets, after depreciation, amounted to \$1,526,194.00. The Board has made a large financial investment in the Assembly, but the spiritual values which have accrued through the years are far greater. The ministry of the Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly in the years out yonder will be even larger than during these first fifty years.

Ridgecrest Managers

B. W. Spilman, General Manager and General Secretary	Sept., 1907-1909
E. L. Hon	1910-July, 1911
E. F. Mumford	Aug., 1911-Mar., 1913
C. E. Brewer	June-Aug., 1913
Jesse Daniel Moore	Sept., 1913-1915
B. W. Spilman, General Secretary, and E. L. Hon, Acting Manager	1916-1917
H. B. Craven, Business Manager	1918-1920
Livingston Mays, Corresponding Secretary	1919-1922
Albert R. Bond, Corresponding Secretary.....	1921-1927
R. F. Staples	1925-1935
Perry Morgan	1936-1944
J. N. Barnette, Acting Manager	1945-1946
Robert Guy	1946-Oct., 1950
Willard K. Weeks	Nov., 1950-to date

Spiritual Values from Ridgecrest

THE EVENTS RECORDED in the previous pages tell all too well that the record of early Ridgecrest was one continuous story of struggle against tremendous odds—almost like making bricks without straw. Yet Ridgecrest survived, and always will survive, because “the things which are unseen are eternal.” “It was the ‘magnificent obsession’ of the founders and fathers,” wrote Dr. Hight C Moore in *The Story of Ridgecrest*, “that gathering multitudes might here through all the years meet Jesus in the mountains; that with him and with each other they might cherish and cultivate eternal friendship; and that wearied workers longing for the tonic of bracing air, aspiring summit, and distant view, might hearken to the Master’s word, ‘Come ye apart . . . and rest awhile!’”

Spiritual values have been foremost through every era of the history of Ridgecrest. When reporting to the annual meeting of the Sunday School Board in December, 1937, Dr. T. L. Holcomb wrote:

FIRST THINGS FIRST—Spiritual things are given first place at Ridgecrest. Whatever else we do, our aim is first of all to minister to the spiritual life of those who come to the Assembly. Our desire and aim is to create and maintain an atmosphere in which a Christian can grow in soul and spirit, and be more useful in Kingdom work. An effort is made, of course, to minister to the recreational and social side of life and to provide physical comforts for all who come to the conferences, but these are not foremost in our efforts to make the assembly a spiritual force from the top of these great hills of God to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Five years later, Mr. Perry Morgan, in his annual report to the Ridgecrest Committee of the Board, voiced the same truth:

SPIRITUAL RIDGECREST—“But the things which are not seen are eternal” said the Apostle Paul. In that “land beyond the river that we call the sweet forever” only will we come into complete knowledge and under-



Florida Cove Apartments
Constructed in 1955 with eight efficiency apartments accommodating
six people each



Children's Building
Constructed 1955-56 and designed for modern teaching techniques
for Cradle Roll, Nursery, Beginner, and Primary children

standing of what is being done on top of those hills of God, amid scenes of rugged beauty that thrill the heart and soul. There the sons of men meet the Son of Man in a personal, vital and living way. There the laughter, love and lilt of lively, cheerful, charming children from our churches find strength in the religion of our regnant Christ. There young people facing decision hours, and years of life planning, find the strength needed for undergirding them in the world of confusion and chaos. At this crossroad they take the road that leads

Like a river deep and long,
With the current ceaseless, strong,
Like the cadence of a song,
To the peace that Jesus gives.

Peace that leads them to the goal of happiness and spiritual health. The spirit of Ridgecrest . . . cannot be adequately described or summed up. In a world of confusion, at a time when people's hearts are stirred up and when their vision is blurred, with deepest unrest in their souls, only a courageous and determined and serious spirit could permeate the meetings and steady those who came to Ridgecrest with determined purposes to seek that which reinforced their hearts and souls. God surely was with us. The outlook for Ridgecrest is still bright. Clouds of war, financial upheavals, social disruptions and other disturbances besetting our beleaguered world do not darken the horizon. We are engaged in a work that is eternal and as important as life itself. Ridgecrest will continue to uphold truth, right and righteousness. . . . We have an abiding conviction that God is leading and that we still have work to do, that Ridgecrest must be as a lighthouse, letting its rays of light, sunshine and blessing go out from the crest of this beautiful ridge to all valleys and vales and rivers below, even unto the ends of the earth.

Charles Cagle wrote of "Rich Ridgecrest" in *The Ridgecrest Story*:

The spirit of Ridgecrest defies conformity. No written rules are posted, no "do's and don'ts" haunt your dreams, no glowering overseer dominates your life there—you are *free!*

Why? Because Baptists are Christians and Christians do not have to be policed and threatened to do the right thing. Christ has given us many axioms, but one of the greatest is: "As you would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." Ridgecrest is the proving ground for that one.

Can you imagine living in an atmosphere of Christianity so prominent that the most minor vice is a major sin! . . . But the air abounds in smiles and handshakes. The closer communion with God through priceless prayermate experience, the mass singing that thrills the most unmusical, the hours of recreation that tax the most energetic, and the happiness and peace of every day bring an indescribable joy.

Ridgecrest expands Christian experience. Spiritual horizons are broadened. New visions of world needs are brought into focus. Life dedications for Christian service are crystallized. Searching hearts find the will of God for their lives. Lasting Christian friendships are formed.

Let us ever be thankful for the founding fathers of Ridgecrest. Let us remember also those who during the succeeding years maintained it, enlarged it, beautified it, and enriched it with their Christian labors. Let us dedicate ourselves to follow in their way and build a greater Ridgecrest for the generations yet unborn.

Some Interesting Places and Experiences

WHEN THE PROPERTY was purchased, there was no post office or railway depot for Ridgecrest. The little telegraph station was named Terrell for an engineer stationed there. A few miles to the east of Ridgecrest was a small rural post office named Terrell. Since the property was in the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Board of Directors suggested the name "Blue Mont," and the first piece of publicity material went out under this name. The first surveyor's map also listed the property the same way. The Southern Railway reported a railway stop in Robeson County named Blue Mont and was therefore unwilling to accept the new name. Complications existed in the delivery of mail, freight, and express. The directors voted to change the name to "Skymont." Within a few months this name too proved unsatisfactory. Finally, the name of "Ridgecrest" was adopted.

Dr. Spilman tells the story:

One morning I met Dr. Hight C Moore coming from his little cottage, Laura Lodge, named for his wife, and I called to him, 'I have the name for our Assembly Grounds.' To which Dr. Moore replied, 'Laura thought of a name last night too.'

So we compared notes—Ridgecrest, the crest of the Blue Ridge, . . . the rain falling on the east . . . flowed into the Atlantic, that falling on the west flowed into the Gulf of Mexico. The Board adopted Ridgecrest as the name.

Johnson Spring

The story of how Johnson Spring was found and developed as a place of worship comes from Rev. J. Jeter Johnson.

Near the close of a beautiful day in August, 1922, a little lad was walking with his father as they followed a mountain trail just across the road from the present Springdale cottages. There was dense undergrowth all around, and as he stepped slightly off the trail into a hole of water, leaves, and roots, the boy exclaimed rather excitedly, "Daddy, there is water here. It must be a spring.

Let's come down here in the morning and see if the water is good."

They did return the next day, and with the necessary tools cleared out the undergrowth, roots, and other debris until a clear crystal stream was bubbling from its hidden source in the earth. With all the ingenuity and resourcefulness of a ten-year-old boy, an improvised dam was built so that the water could be accumulated and made available for drinking purposes. A larger area was cleared in order to make the spring accessible. The boy was charmed as father and son worked together on their new-found treasure. During the morning he said to his father: "Let's cut away some more brush and make some seats of poles, so when people hear of the spring and come here for water, they can sit down and rest and talk." Was he dreaming dreams and seeing visions?

At the end of the summer season this lad and his family returned to their home in Camden, South Carolina. He would not be privileged to visit the spring again. Tragedy struck the little country schoolhouse the next spring, and he with many others was lost in a fire. His father, Rev. J. Jeter Johnson, now a resident of Ridgecrest, and others of the family have continued to give almost perpetual care to the place so dear to the heart of the lad. It has been beautified and is one of the choice spots on the Assembly grounds for prayer and meditation. Large and small groups gather in the dew-laden atmosphere at morning watch and worship with the "hidden" music of marimba and violin, or mixed quartet, the birds adding a note to the melody and the devotional speaker directing their thoughts Godward. "Johnson Spring," named for William Jeter Johnson by an Assembly manager, should always be a reminder of a little lad who loved nature and God.

Dew Drop Inn

Dr. Spilman himself tells about Dew Drop Inn in a newspaper article published in 1941.

"Dew Drop Inn was an old shack by the railway track on the north side of the track near the present railway station [just across the road from the present post office and the Harris store]. This shack had an interesting history. It had been the office of the chief engineer who constructed the railway extension from Old Fort to Swannanoa Gap, including the seven tunnels. When

they moved out Mrs. Lydia Cheesman moved in and made her home there so she would be near the telegraph operators and the passing trains. The woods around those parts were full of all manner of wild 'varmints' and often wilder men. . . .

"Dew Drop Inn, during the summer of 1908, was a busy place. Mr. J. Edward Hudson, young, thrifty, full of energy was 'first trick telegraph operator,' which means he went on duty at 8 A.M. and was off at 4 P.M.

"Another of our group was Mr. Byrd P. Gentry, Principal of the High School at Kinston, who had charge of road construction. . . .

"Mr. R. B. Moore of Morganton, contractor who was in charge of the erection of the houses. With him Mr. Bolick and three carpenters . . .

"I was also in the group. There were three rooms all in a row. We slept on cots in two rooms and cooked and ate in the back room.

"Mr. Bolick and his men kept the camp supplied with wood and water, the latter being brought from a spring at the west end of Swannanoa Tunnel. Moore cooked breakfast, Hudson cooked supper and I cooked dinner, ran the office which was mostly in a steamer trunk in a corner of the kitchen.

"Gentry was dishwasher. He had for a dish rag a half of a fair size towel. About once each week he washed his dish rag in boiling hot water and good soap, then he would set in for another week of scrubbing dishes, pots and pans. We had a huge coffee pot which held about twice as much coffee as eight hungry men could drink. We put in fresh grounds each three and a half days—then washed the pot and started all over again. One day Gentry lost his dish rag, and vowed vengeance on the stray puppy which had dragged it off. He duly installed a new fresh dish rag and three days later found the old one in the coffee pot. We all lived and did well."

Lake Dew

In the summer of 1919 Rev. J. H. Dew contributed \$200 with which to construct a dam and build a small lake. He made further contributions for its upkeep, and his son, Joe Dew, continues to make donations from time to time. Surrounded by beautiful trees, under which there are chairs and benches to be used for brief periods of prayer and meditation, it is a beauty spot

on the Assembly grounds. Ducks spend many peaceful hours on its placid waters. It is the central gathering place at the close of many of the evening services, when, with a beautiful bonfire in the background, Scriptures are read by a leader and songs are sung by the group. After a closing prayer, the thoughtful worshippers wend their way to hotel and cottages for a restful night of sleep. The "Lakeside Service" is beautifully described in this verse:

A blazing fire reflected in Lake Dew, faces blending
in the mellow glow,
The voice of a today's prophet ringing from the
rough log tower,
A vesper hymn resonant in the cool night stillness,
And all time suspended—the mind caught up in a
moment of eternity
With the sudden, sure knowledge of the presence
of God.

—Freida Culbertson Burts in *The Ridgecrest Story*

Kitasuma Mountain

Dr. Spilman tells how Kitasuma Mountain got its name:

"Years before the Assembly was established the Japanese Ambassador to the United States was in Asheville with several of his attachés. He expressed a desire to see the Blue Ridge Mountains at close range. Swannanoa Gap was suggested. An order was secured to stop the morning train at Terrell. He and his party went out and left the train at Terrell.

"He asked a man near the little telegraph office how he could secure the best view of the surrounding country. The man suggested Young's Ridge and pointed to it. He volunteered to guide the party to the top.

"Standing on the top of the mountain the Ambassador looked east and saw the slope of the Blue Ridge as it dipped into the piedmont country miles away. He turned south and was amazed at the wonder of it all. Then he saw the valley stretching away to Beaucatcher Mountain, the eastern boundary of Asheville.

"Then he turned north. There loomed Mount Mitchell, the highest spot of earth in America east of the Mississippi. The whole Black Mountain range spread out before him, fourteen mountain peaks more than six thousand feet above sea level.

"With a sweep of his hand that way he said to his attachés,

what the guide understood to be 'Kitty Zuma.' Our friend, the guide, scattered the news that the Japanese Ambassador had given Young's Ridge a new name and Kitty Zuma it was when we bought the land to the foot of it.

"In 1910 when the Southern Baptist Convention was in session in Baltimore the president of our theological school in Japan, a native Japanese, was there. I asked him what Kitty Zuma meant. He did not quite get it. But he said, 'The nearest sound to Kitty in Japanese is Kita (pronounced Keeta) and Zuma he probably said Suma. Kita in Japanese means north and Suma is a beautiful landscape, location.'

"So Kitasuma it is, these thirty-three years [now more than fifty years] a place of pilgrimage for numberless thousands of people young and old to experience one of the most marvelous scenic panoramas as a reward for a few minutes climb."

Memorial Park

In recent years a number of retired missionaries and other denominational workers have decided to make their permanent homes at Ridgecrest. From this group there came the suggestion for a "Memorial Park" as a final resting place when the summons comes to meet their Master in a better land. The Executive Committee of the Convention, in 1942, in co-operation with the Sunday School Board, set apart a suitable tract of about four acres on the western boundary of the Assembly grounds for this purpose. The park will have no monuments; all graves will have markers level with the ground. Stone columns have been erected at the entrance, adding much to the beauty of the grounds. The Assembly cares for the roads and walkways. Already a number of God's own have found rest in Memorial Park.

Dr. Spilman Takes a Horseback Ride

When the surveyors and engineers began laying out the Assembly grounds in the fall of 1907, Dr. Spilman was a constant attendant of the group as they went hither and yonder over the land which had been purchased. Again Dr. Spilman writes in a newspaper article:

One day with one of the young engineers as a guide, Mr. Tucker, Mr. H. B. Craven who owned some adjoining land, and I rode horseback over the boundary trail of the entire property. The trip required

about one half a day and was the roughest ride I ever expect to have. We went up mountain sides, down into valleys, through jungles and briars, and on and on we went. When we were through with it the horse which I rode, I am sure, was never the same again; and I was not for many weeks. I do not recall that I have been horseback riding since.

One must remember that Dr. Spilman was just about as big one way as he was the other and weighed approximately 260 pounds.

Dr. Spilman Learns a New Game

The evenings at Ridgecrest during those early days must have been long and lonesome for this group of men who were camping in Dew Drop Inn. There were no lights on the grounds, and we can imagine that the hoot owls, the crickets, and other night animals filled the air with all their noises.

On one of these long, lonesome evenings, Dr. Spilman and some of his associates were visiting in the home of "Mother" Moore, as those who knew her best called her. She was the mother of Dr. Hight C Moore, Dr. Jesse Daniel Moore, Gene Moore, and one or two other brothers and sisters. Mr. Frederick W. Monish, of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and Dr. Millard A. Jenkins, who was spending the winter at Ridgecrest recuperating from a long illness, were in the group.

Dr. Spilman writes in a newspaper article of 1941 about the evening.

Mr. Monish asked J. D. Moore, Dr. Jenkins, and me if we had ever played Rook. None had. So we set in for a game of Rook. Mrs. Moore, mother of Dr. Hight C Moore, J. D. Moore and others . . . was an interested onlooker.

When we had played Rook a while, Mr. Monish suggested a game of Brooklyn Bridge. None of us knew the game or had ever heard of it. But we set in for it. It had a real snap to it and Mrs. Moore sat up long past her usual bed time watching the game. And we three ministers were making quite good progress under the instruction of the Tuscaloosa deacon.

When we had played far into the night Mr. Monish asked us how we liked the new game. We were all delighted. Mr. Monish put his Rook cards in his little hand bag and turned loose a jolly laugh which might have been heard far out in the hills. "I never heard until tonight," said Mr. Monish, "of any game named Brooklyn Bridge. For two hours we have been playing poker."

"Daddy" Morrow Met the Trains

About the only transportation to Ridgecrest in the early days was by train. When many of the Assembly guests arrived at Ridgecrest, they were met at the little station by a familiar character of the neighborhood, "Daddy" Morrow. Using an old-fashioned surrey, he transported the guests to the hotel or boarding houses. He then returned and delivered the baggage. "Daddy" Morrow must have believed in a big family, because he had twenty-one children.

When the crowds were large, "Daddy" Morrow found it necessary to call on Mr. J. M. Lewis, who was the Assembly farmer and had charge of the mules, "Dan" and "Jake," owned by the Assembly. They were often put into service in transporting baggage and other shipments for the Assembly and its guests. As time passed and funds were scarce, the Board of Directors found it necessary to take special action and order the sale of the mules and all of the farm equipment.

Ridgecrest Sold to Avoid a Lawsuit

The summer of 1915 was a perplexing one. Some of the bills had to be paid. Small loans were secured, for which members of the Executive Committee signed the notes personally, but only small obligations were cared for. Furniture for the hotel had to be bought from a firm in Charlotte, North Carolina, to the amount of more than two thousand dollars. Later in the summer a representative of the furniture firm appeared in Dr. Spilman's office demanding that immediate payment of the account be made or suit would be brought against the Assembly. Several of the members of the Board of Directors had summer cottages on the grounds. They were called together to consider what should be done. They authorized a note payable November 1, 1915, endorsed by six or seven men, any one of which could have advanced the necessary money if needed. The representative refused to accept the note, repeating his threat of a lawsuit.

The Assembly owed Dr. Spilman fourteen hundred dollars for money he had advanced at different times. The Board of Directors decided to deed all of the property not already mortgaged to Dr. Spilman. A deed was drawn on the spot. While this was being done, a member of the Board called the clerk of the court in Asheville and asked him to keep his office open thirty minutes

later than usual in order that the deed might be recorded that day. Automobiles were few and far between, but one was found, and the deed was taken to Asheville and recorded.

When the representative of the furniture store went to the courthouse the next day to file his suit, he was advised that the Assembly did not own any property except that on which there was already a mortgage. A member of the Board left for Charlotte and personally called on the furniture firm and made satisfactory arrangements for paying the account. In due time the Assembly settled its obligation to Dr. Spilman, and in 1919 he deeded the property sold him, in addition to a lot on which he owned a nine-room residence, back to the corporation. Ridgecrest was again saved from the brink of disaster.

Camp Ridgecrest for Boys

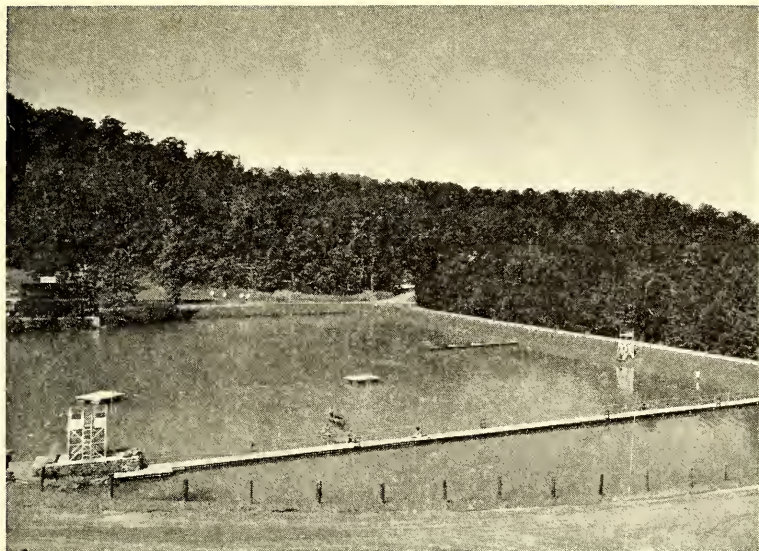
UNDER THE ADMINISTRATION of the Education Board, a beginning was made to have a summer camp for boys and girls. The initial step was the building of a fifteen-acre lake, now known as Lake Ridgecrest. The long-range plan called for a girls' camp on one side of the lake and a boys' camp on the other side. Under the leadership of Mrs. J. M. Dawson, then of Waco, Texas, a girls' camp, known as Camp Swannanoa, was operated in the summer of 1926 and in 1927. A large two-story residence was purchased from Dr. B. W. Spilman; it was used as a camp headquarters building. A number of cabins and other facilities were built. However, with the transfer of the business affairs of the Education Board to the Executive Committee in 1928, the camp was discontinued.

When the Sunday School Board was asked to take charge of the Assembly in 1929, the administration immediately recognized the challenge of making available a camp for boys. Under the leadership of Mr. Noble Van Ness, who was very active in Boy Scout work at that time, plans were made for a boys' camp in the summer of 1929. Mr. Frank E. Burkhalter, who for years had been an outstanding leader in boys' work, served as director for the first summer. From this modest beginning, Camp Ridgecrest for Boys has operated continuously each summer for the past twenty-seven years. There are now thirty-seven buildings in the camp area. It is recognized as one of the best and most efficiently operated camps in the Southland and is a member of the southeastern section of the American Camping Association.

America's most precious possession is today's boy, who will be tomorrow's man. The only reason a boys' camp exists is in the interest of the development of the boy physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually. How can this character-molding be best done at camp? The leaders at Camp Ridgecrest still believe that example is the best teacher. To this end only the finest, most consecrated Christian young men are selected to give guidance to



Entrance to Camp Ridgecrest for Boys



Lake Ridgecrest
Used for boating and swimming



A Boys' Camp cabin

this precious possession. Through the years Camp Ridgecrest has met this test, and hundreds of boys and men have been blessed because of it.

Health is a chief concern of the administrative staff. Everything possible is done at the camp to assure the highest degree of health and happiness. Examination of each camper is made by the camp physician at regular intervals. Excellent facilities in the way of cabins, dining room and kitchen, and recreational areas are all available. A well-planned program of sports of all kinds, including swimming, boating, hiking, riding, rifle shooting, and archery as well as all kinds of camp crafts, make camp life a real joy and pleasure.

The spiritual life of Camp Ridgecrest is given a major place in the daily program. The worship periods are designed with great care to make the boys feel an atmosphere of "at-homeness" in the universe and a consciousness of God in the daily routine. Each counselor is expected to live a sermon in everything he does, says, and thinks. Each staff member is on the alert for moments when young spirits are reaching upward and when it might be appropriate to help give them a clear picture of their Saviour. Such moments strengthen the bonds of love and friendship between the boy, his counselor, and their God.

Camp Ridgecrest has a capacity of about 170 boys. It is operated on two five-week sessions during June, July, and August. Mr. Harry McCall, Jr., is director of the camp.

Directors of Camp Ridgecrest for Boys

Frank E. Burkhalter	1929
Charles W. Burts	1930-1938
John W. Hughston, Jr.	1939-1940
J. D. (Red) Franks, Jr.	1941
Darrell C. Richardson	1942
Richard C. Burts, Jr.	1943
J. W. Hill	1944
Perry Morgan, Manager and Director	1945
Chaplain Nat. H. Brittain	1946-1947
James R. Howlett	1948-1949
George W. Pickering	1950-1955
Harry McCall, Jr.	1956-to date



Entrance to Camp Crestridge for Girls

Camp Crestridge for Girls

THE LASTING VALUES which were evidenced from the operation of Camp Ridgecrest for Boys created a desire on the part of the executives of the Sunday School Board and the management of Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly to make available equal facilities for Camp Crestridge with a definite religious atmosphere.

Therefore, the Sunday School Board, in December, 1953, made an appropriation of \$150,000 for building facilities for Camp Crestridge. Preliminary studies were made of a camp site during the summer of 1954. With this survey made, construction of the camp buildings was started in the fall, and the camp began its operations on June 1, 1955. Included in the facilities are eight cabins for junior girls and eight cabins for senior girls. The main building of the camp area is the beautiful dining room and kitchen with ample space for social activities. It is also used for worship services and other camp gatherings. There is an adequate administration building and counselors' lounge. For outdoor sports there are tennis courts, softball diamonds, a riding ring, and a lake.

The facilities of the camp will take care of ninety girls for each of the two sessions of five weeks each. The camp is operated during June, July, and August, with Miss Arvine Bell as the capable director.

The purpose of Camp Crestridge, while the girls play, camp out, work, and live together, is to give each camper opportunity to "lift up her eyes unto the hills." It is hoped that as she does, she will turn away with a new understanding of the words of the psalmist: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein." As she applies this understanding to her own life, she will be able to say positively and proudly, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"



A cabin at Camp Crestridge for Girls



Administration Building, Camp Crestridge

Every care is given to the physical, mental, and spiritual life of each camper. Only the choicest, most consecrated young women are selected for counselors. It is the sincere desire of the director and the staff that each camper will advance in truth, growth, courage, perseverance, and purity while at Camp Crest-ridge. To this end the director and staff dedicate themselves to give each camper guidance in reaching these goals.

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