

Inventory to the Baptist Student Union Collection

AR 33



Pictured here are Baptist Student Union workers from Greensboro, North Carolina in 1923. At left is the outside entrance to the Department of Student Activity at the Forest Avenue Baptist Church. At right, members of the BSU from the North Carolina College for Women meet in the “college hut” to discuss upcoming events.

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I. Historical Note

Though the Baptist Student Union (a Baptist collegiate organization now called Baptist Collegiate Ministries) has roots dating back to 1905 at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, it officially became a mission of the Baptist Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources) in 1921. Frank Hartwell Leavell was the first at the Board to oversee the national program and defined the BSU as “the connecting link between the college and the local church.”¹ Baptist Student Unions encouraged students to become involved in a local church while they were away to college and local churches in and around universities frequently provided services to college BSU’s. Baptist Student Union programs were present at both Baptist and non-Baptist colleges and universities and usually offered weekly Bible studies and provided various opportunities for volunteer community service. Additionally, students were given the opportunity to volunteer for mission activities, which were offered during spring and fall breaks and over the summers.

The Baptist Student Union program grew considerably throughout the twentieth century. By the end to the 1920s, the program had developed a more structured nature across the United States, with its most heavy concentration of involvement located in the South. States began holding statewide and regional BSU retreats and the Southern Baptist Convention sponsored its first annual Baptist Student Union conference in 1926. Increases in college enrollments after the Second World War prompted the Sunday School Board to take closer examination of the BSU in the 1960s. In 1962, the Board restated the BSU objectives, and in 1968, the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention commenced a two-year study on the nation’s Baptist Student Unions and concluded that though oversight of the organizations would remain with the BSSB, additional financial support was necessary for BSU’s to continue meeting their objectives. In 1980, 1,138 campuses across the United States had BSU programs.²

¹ Keegan, G. Kearine. “Baptist Student Union” in *The Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*. Vol. 1 (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1958), 124.

² Roselle, Charles M. “Baptist Student Union” in *The Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists*. Vol. 4 (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1982), 2108.

II. Scope and Content Note

The Baptist Student Union Collection is an artificial collection compiled from several Baptist history files and consisting of one and a half linear feet of material (thirty-three folders contained in three document boxes). The collection documents activities of the Baptist Student Union across the United States from 1926-1993, with the bulk of the materials in the collection dating from the 1930s and 1940s. The Baptist Student Union Collection contains several announcements and programs from banquets and other BSU functions, Baptist Student Union conferences at the Ridgecrest Baptist Conference in North Carolina, and historical materials on the national BSU during the twentieth century.

Many of the materials in the banquet and program files of the collection were donated to the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives by Davis Collier Woolley (director of the SBC Historical Commission from 1959 to 1971), who served as the Student Director at Auburn University in Alabama from 1935 to 1940. Additional BSU materials are located in the Frank Hartwell Leavell Collection (AR 181) and the Donald Bradford Harbuck Papers (AR 633) of the SBHLA. The Leavell Collection contains materials on the BSU in its infancy, as Leavell served as the first head of student department at the Baptist Sunday School Board, while the Harbuck Collection consists of much latter materials (mainly from Arkansas) from the 1970s and 1980s. The Executive Committee Records (AR 627) contain minutes and evaluations of the 1986 BSU Study Committee. The collection is arranged alphabetically.

III. Series and Folder Listing

Box 1

- 1.1 All Southern Baptist Student Conferences – 1930-1938
- 1.2 Annual Reports – 1941, 1953
- 1.3 Banquets
- 1.4 Banquets – Alabama
- 1.5 Banquets – Louisiana
- 1.6 Banquets – North Carolina
- 1.7 Banquets – Tennessee
- 1.8 Baptist Student Work in the Southern Baptist Convention – 1970
- 1.9 Bowman, Norman. “50th Anniversary of Student Work” – 1972
- 1.10 Conferences – National – 1926-1930
- 1.11 Directors
- 1.12 Foreman, Louise. “The Student Movement in the Churches”
- 1.13 History – South Carolina
- 1.14 History – Tennessee – University of Tennessee

Box 2

- 2.1 May, Lynn E. & A. Ronald Tonks. “Southern Baptist Student Work: A History”
- 2.2 Nametags
- 2.3 Programs – Alabama
- 2.4 Programs – Florida
- 2.5 Programs – Georgia
- 2.6 Programs – Kentucky
- 2.7 Programs – Louisiana
- 2.8 Programs – Mississippi
- 2.9 Programs – Oklahoma
- 2.10 Programs – Tennessee
- 2.11 Programs – Texas

Box 3

- 3.1 Ridgecrest Conference Center Retreats – 1936-1942
- 3.2 Ridgecrest Conference Center Retreats – 1946-1958
- 3.3 Ridgecrest Conference Center Retreats – 1960-1968
- 3.4 Ridgecrest Conference Center Retreats – 1971-1978
- 3.5 Ridgecrest Conference Center Retreats – 1979-1988
- 3.6 Songs
- 3.7 Student Ministry Plan Books – 1991-1993
- 3.8 Study Committee Proceedings – 1968-1969