TENNESSEE BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HOMES, INC.

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Tennessee Baptist Children's Homes

A Baptist Orphanage originated (**1891**) through the concern of Georgia Eastman of Nashville, Tennessee. Mrs. Eastman expressed her idea to her husband, Roger, and they discussed the matter with their pastor at First Baptist Church, who suggested it be presented to the Nashville Baptist Pastors' Conference.

On April 28, 1891, Mrs. Eastman, accompanied by other women from her church, met with the pastors. The pastors advised the women to launch the undertaking and promised their support and co-operation. An organization committee met May 5, 1891, at First Baptist Church, Nashville. The orphanage was formally organized and first Board of Managers elected. On May 11, the Board of Managers appointed a Men's Advisory Board, and in June the two boards merged.

A Mr. Buttorff, of Edgefield Baptist Church, owned a large brick building known as the Railroad Hotel (also known as the Hotel Delaware) on Delaware Avenue in West Nashville. The building was large enough to house 50 or more persons. He offered to sell the building for $15,000, and it became the first permanent building for the Baptist Orphans' Home. Buttorff then gave the first $500. At this same meeting, Old Mill Creek Baptist Church sent $13.80 as the first church gift to the Baptist Orphanage. A payment of $3,000 on the property and the filing of the charter were completed October 13, 1891.

Earlier, the Board of Managers voted to present the undertaking to the Baptist State Convention which was to meet in Clarksville, October 15–17, 1891. The Convention Committee recommended that the "*objects of the Orphans' Home are to care for, educate, and provide homes for unprotected children, but not exclusively of Baptist parentage. Being a noble charity and a Christian work, we unhesitantly recommend and urge upon this Convention to make it one of its objects.*" The Convention unanimously adopted their report and endorsed the home, but it was not until 1894 that it came under the authority of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

The **Baptist Orphanage** opened its doors to receive children on November 16, 1891, in the Hotel Delaware building in West Nashville. Mrs. Stella Gardner was employed as the first matron, and T. T. Thompson served as the first financial agent speaking to the churches in behalf of the Orphanage. The first child received into the Home was Dessie L. Allen, an eight-year-old girl from Cocke County, in East Tennessee. Four other children were admitted by the opening day. The following year, a total of 22 children were receiving care.

In the spring of 1896 a disease, first diagnosed as "sand itch," plagued the children. The infected children were isolated and several attempts by local physicians failed to provide a cure. A U.S. health officer came from Washington came to examine the children and the living quarters. He diagnosed the disease as pellagra, caused by an easily corrected vitamin deficiency.
By 1898, the Orphans' Home was free of debt. This came about through the concerted efforts of the pioneering Baptist women and fine leadership of Baptist pastors.

In1911, the Board voted to purchase a 75 acre farm from Major C. T. Cheek (of Maxwell House Coffee fame) for $12,000. Cheek, an Episcopalian, then donated $5,000 toward the purchase price. The farm was located 12 miles south of Nashville on the old Franklin Interurban Street Car line. A major motivation behind the move was the overall health of the children. Influenza and mold disease had become a problem in the Nashville location and a doctor recommended a move to the clean air of

the country. At that time South Brentwood was a rural area served by the Franklin Post Office, and still recovering from the ravages of the Civil War. It was not yet the thriving horse farm area it would become after the Great Depression and WW II.

The construction of three large dormitories on the new site provided the housing for the Baptist Orphanage. The move to the new campus was completed on **June 7, 1912**. The Board purchased an additional 60 acres of land that same year to provide space for other dorms. One building would serve as the central dining room, school and church. The boys' building was completed around 1930 through a unique campaign by the Woman's Missionary Union. Eight hundred thousand (800,000) coupons of Octagon Soap were redeemed to erect and furnish the building.

Over time, the more official name, Tennessee Baptist Orphan's Home, came to be used. The Board purchased additional land for the home, increasing the campus and farm to 478 acres (larger than Maryland Farms would ever be). In **1953**, the name of the organization was changed to Tennessee Baptist Children's Homes, Inc. (TBCH)

In 1960, with the incorporation of the City of Brentwood, the TBCH "moved" from Route 5, Franklin, to 1310 Franklin Road, Brentwood by simply changing the address. Some old-timers still refer to the ministry as "the Children's Home in Franklin", but it is, and has been since 1911, on land now in the City of Brentwood.

In 1961, the State of Tennessee granted a license to the TBCH to function as an adoption agency. The position of Director of Social Work was created and social workers were added to the staff. Also in the 60's, a new plan changed the operational concept from dormitories to private homes so that the children could be cared for in a more personal manner.

In 1967, the Board of Managers became the Board of Trustees and the president became chairman of the board (today the president does not serve as chairman). When the Tennessee Baptist Convention Building was completed in Brentwood in 1969, the Children's Homes' Central Office (now called State Office) was moved to the TBC building on Maryland Way.

Through a very successful Middle Tennessee Capital Funds Campaign in 1970, and the sale of 372 acres of the Brentwood campus land, funds were made available (along with some sizeable wills and special gifts) to build ten cottages (7 bedroom ranch-style homes) and three other buildings on the Brentwood campus. The current housing developments on the South side of Wikle Road and on the West side of Franklin Road were made possible due to this sale. A much later sale of some 40 acres immediately to the East of the campus leaves the TBCH with an approximately 60-acre campus, and with no plans to sell additional land.

The Jarman Building (see photo), made possible by a gift from Maxey Jarman of Genesco Shoe Company fame and long time TBCH Board member and benefactor, was renovated in 1982 for office space for the Brentwood campus. This building had been a dormitory for the teenage girls. The other remaining older building was once a campus hospital. It was later used as an apartment for the director of cottage life and his family, and more recently, has been renovated to function as a Tutor-lab for the children.

The Tally School Building, which housed the campus school and administrative offices for the Brentwood campus, was razed in 1983. It had been a fully functioning school for children through the 10th grade. The Children's Home church (which concept is no longer functioning) also met in that building. In 1997 a new TBCH state office building was erected on the site of the old school house, and once completed, the state staff moved from the TBC building into the new offices of the TBCH.

Now, each resident attends public school and each cottage chooses which of the several excellent Baptist churches in the area to attend.

State-wide, the TBCH operates other campuses in Bartlett (near Memphis) and in Chattanooga. Additionally, there is a Boy's Ranch in Millington (West Tennessee) for teenaged boys, and several cottages in East Tennessee.

This brief history has dealt with the campus and buildings in Nashville and Brentwood. It would require many volumes to tell of the hundreds of staff people, house parents, social workers, office personnel, cottage life directors, teachers, cooks, farmers, truck and bus drivers, recreational directors and others and their tremendous contributions to this ministry. Hundreds of Board members have given selflessly of their time and energy in travel and meetings to give us the very best in child care.

But the most important people are the children. They are what the TBCH is all about. These would number in the tens of thousands and could equal the population of some of our middle-size Tennessee cities. Exact numbers are not available due to the loss of older records in a fire. Most of the alumni have benefited by their years at the Homes and are successful men and women in today's society.

In modern times, the population of children is limited to no more than six children per cottage and to those who are old enough for and qualified to attend public school (K – 12). All of the children are enrolled at Lipscomb Elementary, Brentwood Middle or Brentwood High Schools. The TBCH does, however, offer each of its high school graduates the opportunity to remain on campus and work towards a debt-free vocational or college education, funded by scholarships, grants, and direct TBCH aid from a college fund.

The funding of the TBCH is a story all its own. The organization never has received any money from the Federal or State government. All funds are given by interested individuals and churches, and also by businesses and corporations. Southern Baptist churches make up the largest donor base. In 2008, the Cooperative Program (the SBC/TBC missions funding method) will provide approximately 22 percent of TBCH unrestricted revenue and the Mother's Day Offering for the TBCH will likely comprise another 28 percent. The remaining 50 percent must come in direct gifts of money, estate gifts, grants, or gifts in kind. An annual golf tournament, 5-K race, and car show bring in much needed revenue for items not in the regular budget (education, activities, and recreation). Information regarding the support of the TBCH is available at www.tbch4kids.org.

This year, 2008, brings the Tennessee Baptist Children's Home to within three years of being in Brentwood for 100 years. As an institution, affiliated with The Tennessee Baptist Convention, the Tennessee Baptist Children's Home continues to have its objective: ministry in the name of Jesus Christ to neglected, abandoned and/or abused children (and their families) while leading them to become whole persons in Jesus Christ.

TENNESSEE BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HOMES

1310 Franklin Road
Brentwood, Tennessee 37027

The following selected photographs are from a personal album donated to the home in 2007. Many of the album's contents date back to the World War I era (c. 1915).

The Jarman Building – Brentwood Campus Office

The Station and Car

The Parents Home

Filling the Silo.

The Cement Drinking Trough

The Home's Only

Snowbound.

A corner of the Domestic Science

The smile that won't come off

Black Diamonds

All ready for Church

Busy Stenographers

The Misses

The Kaiser had better look out!

George.
A good sailor for Uncle Sam

Baseball team
U.S.S. Delta.

Baptist Children's Home celebrates anniversary

Area churches help century-old service grow from home for four orphans to modern youth facility

The Tennessee Baptist Children's Homes is celebrating its 100th anniversary with the publication of its history. In appreciation of a century of devoted support, the ministry is presenting a copy of the book to every Baptist church in the state.

In 1891, four children were received into the care of the Baptist Orphans' Home: Dessie Allen, Robert Dennis, Laura Patton, and Elizabeth Patton. Many changes have come to the ministry in the 100 years since its founding — to its buildings, its programs, and even its name. The periods of struggle, growth, and expansion are traced in "Tennessee Baptist Children's Homes: A Century of Care," 1891-1991.

"We are pleased to give each Tennessee Baptist church a copy of our history," said Dr. Gerald L. Stow, TBCH executive director. "It is largely because of the support of our churches that this ministry has ben able to serve children in need for all these many years."

The ministry was founded as an orphanage in Nashville, primarily through the efforts of Mrs. Roger Eastman, a Baptist Women's Missionary Society leader and a member of First Baptist Church, Nashville.

She organized the founding committee of the Baptist Orphan's Home, and remained a vital part of the ministry during its early years.

The book details the Orphanage's move to Franklin in 1912, and much later campus expansions to Memphis and Chattanooga. Interesting campaigns are noted, such as the 1920s drive to pay for the construction of the Orphanage hospital through the collection of Octagon Soap coupons.

First-person memories are recorded in a special section of the history. Included are the recollections of Jacob Dixon, a 94-year-old Walland resident who was placed in the Baptist Orphanage in 1906.

"One of my jobs was to get up at 3 a.m. in the morning and build a fire in the cook stove," recalled Dixon in an interview. "When it got going, I'd crawl behind it and go back to sleep. When the girls got the first biscuits baked, one of them would wake me up and give me one all buttered up. Those were the best biscuits I ever ate."

The history also traces the tenures of the ministry's five full-time administrative heads: W.J. Stewart (1911-1941); William Clarence Creasman (1942-1961); James Merryman Gregg (1962-1975); Evans B. Bowen (1976-March 1984), and Gerald L. Stow (April 1984-present.)

TBCH today provides residential care to children on three main campuses (Franklin, Memphis and Chattanooga), satellite cottage homes (Johnson City, Kingsport and Burrville), and a Boys Ranch (Millington.) Alternative Homes for Unwed Mothers are located in Greeneville and Franklin.

Fourteen young girls and their teacher pose in front of the Eastman Building, one of the first three dormitories built for the Baptist Orphans' Home in what was then Franklin, precursor of the Baptist Children's Home in Brentwood.

For more information about the history or any TBCH programs, please contact the TBCH Central Office, 5001 Maryland Way, Brentwood, Tenn. 37027. The phone number is 615-371-2000.