

Handing Down Our Story

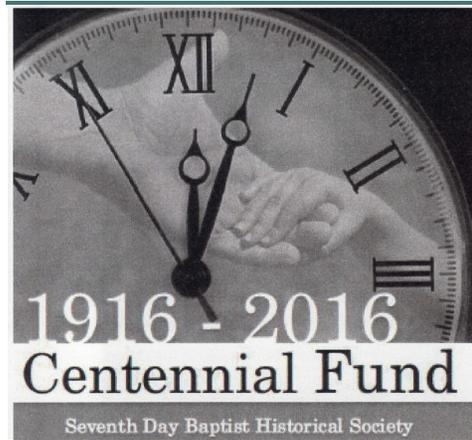
1976-1985

This is the centennial year of the Seventh Day Baptist (SDB) Historical Society. The society is issuing bulletin inserts to remember each decade of its history. In the annual reports of 1976-1985 come stories in pairs: two historians, two library locations, two Bible events.

In 1976, after seven years as historian, Al Rogers retired and turned the reins over to Tom Merchant. One of Mr. Merchant's first assignments was aiding in the celebration of the American Bicentennial at General Conference in Houghton, New York (the same location for the Historical Society Centennial celebration this year!). For the American Bicentennial, the Historical Society presented a slide lecture on the monastic community at Ephrata and displayed facsimiles of Revolutionary War-era SDB documents.

Mr. Merchant's writing and speaking engagements included submitting written testimony to the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and attending a Commission hearing on religious discrimination. In addition, in recognition of normalized relations between the United States and China, Mr. Merchant wrote a series of *Sabbath Recorder* articles in 1979 on the 100 years of SDB missions in China.

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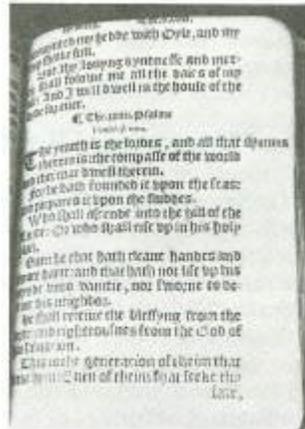
hired in 1982. Another staffing change took place in 1981 with the hiring of Janet Thorngate as the assistant librarian.

In the midst of all of these staffing changes, another big change took place. In 1981-82, the location of the SDB denominational headquarters, including the Historical Society library and museum, moved 900 miles west to Janesville, Wisconsin. After months of recordkeeping and packing in Plainfield and another full month of unpacking in Janesville, it was back to the routine business of writing, speaking engagements, teaching, and providing reference assistance for the historian and librarian.

So...two historians (Merchant and Smith), two locations (Plainfield and Janesville), and now two Bible stories. In 1981, when the denominational headquarters office was still in Plainfield, there were two instances of theft. One of the items stolen was a Bible published in 1549 presumed to be the property of John Rogers of Smith-

field, England, who was burned at the stake for his religious beliefs in the 16th century.

Thanks to the offer of a reward and immunity from prosecution, the Historical Society secured the return of the Bible and other stolen articles. Mr. Smith put the Bible to use during National Bible Week in 1983: he placed the 434-year-old Bible and 49 other Bibles on display for the public. The display brought 100 visitors and a story in *The Janesville Gazette*.



The 24th Psalm in the 433 year old Cranmer New Testament.

Please help the Historical Society continue to share the denomination's dynamic history with SDBs and non-SDBs alike. Learn more about the goal and the details of the Centennial Fund in the Centennial Fund flyer available through your church or the SDB Historical Society (www.sdbhistory.org).

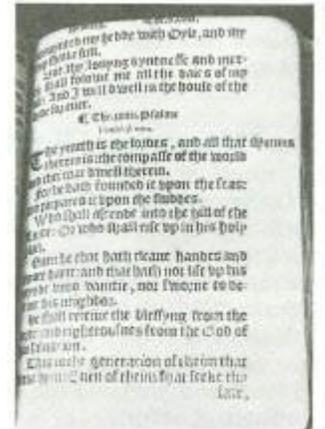
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