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Ron Ellison

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GENESIS AND FIRST THREE PASTORS OF CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH BEAUMONT, TEXAS, 1900-1908

by Ron Ellison

The earliest roots of Calvary Baptist Church, Beaumont, can be traced at least to 1900. This paper examines Calvary's origin and the ministry of its first three pastors and seeks to place these events into a proper historical perspective. The congregation's and pastors' early labors are delineated, beginning with the establishment of a Sunday School class that grew into a mission, which, in turn, became a separate church.

By March 1900, First Baptist Church, Beaumont, sponsored a Sunday School in the Cartwright Addition on the Southside of the city from which Calvary Baptist Church evolved. After becoming Cartwright Mission, it was organized as Grand Avenue Baptist Church in 1904, changed its name to Park Street Baptist in 1908, and finally to Calvary Baptist in 1924. The city's moral and spiritual virtues were nurtured by this congregation. The church, organized three years following the Spindletop oil boom of 1901 which brought thousands of workers to town, immediately found themselves involved in an unbelievable amount of mission work for their Lord.¹

By and large, Beaumont's inhabitants were content with contemporary conditions as the new century dawned. There was "a chamber of commerce, solid citizens, culture and magnolias." Its population was rather cosmopolitan, consisting of approximately fourth blacks, many Jewish merchants, and quite a few Italians. "Almost every other white man and most of the Negroes spoke a Louisiana patois." Nederland, located south of Beaumont, boasted a population of Dutch settlers. Although more Southern than Southwestern, Beaumont did have a few cowpokes. It seemed a pleasant place to live, with few animosities and prejudices, and could be well-described as a model American small town.² Imperceptible changes were underway in December 1900 Beaumont, and the next month would bring monumental and rapid transformations in the city's life for which it could hardly have been prepared.³

Prior to August 31, 1885, Patillo Higgins, a pistol-toting maverick, made his living with a team of oxen dragging logs out of the woods to the Neches River. On that eventful Monday morning, Higgins, drawn to the Beaumont Opera House where famous Texas evangelist W. E. Penn was preaching, found new life in Christ and was baptized that same evening into the membership of First Baptist Church. He became a Bible student, taught Sunday School, and cultivated a friendship with George W. Carroll, who, along with George O'Brien, helped finance Higgins' dream of finding oil three miles south of town. Although he drilled three dry holes, Higgins remained undaunted. Unable to secure additional local financing, he advertised in a manufacturing journal. A geologist, Captain Anthony F. Lucas and his partner I. M. Guffey of Pittsburgh, responded to Higgins' plea, furnishing more capital. This team's

¹"Ron" Ronald Coleman Ellison lives in Beaumont, Texas. A version of this paper was presented at the East Texas Historical Association in Nacogdoches on September 25, 1993. It received the 1993 Texas Baptist Historical Society's award in the unpublished paper category.

doggedness was rewarded with the Spindletop discovery.⁴

The Spindletop oil field was the "greatest economic boom to southeast Texas" after its "Lucas Gusher" blew in, just three miles south of town, on January 10, 1901. This spectacular event changed Beaumont forever. Thousands came to work in the oil fields and overnight Beaumont became a boom town. The town's population of 9,427 in 1900 more than doubled to 20,640 during the next decade, with at least 10,000 additional people in Jefferson County.⁵ Instead of letting rooms daily, oil workers rented them by the hour; "chairs in hotel lobbies were rented for months in advance," and food prices multiplied fourfold. To glimpse the strange sights in town, tourists by the hundreds rode excursion trains that ran between Houston and New Orleans. Oil flowed at the rate of 75,000 barrels per day, and in the first year the field produced 3.5 million barrels. Such a high yield affected not only Southeast Texas, but impacted the world price of crude, eventually driving it as low as three cents per barrel.⁶

Beaumont Baptists founded the First Baptist Church in 1872. Sixteen years later, on Friday, February 10, 1888, it and three other area churches organized the Southeast Texas Baptist Association (SETA), at First Baptist, Beaumont, so they could better minister to settlers along the Texas and New Orleans Railroad between Houston and Orange.⁷

In December 1898, prior to the upheaval precipitated by the oil discovery, First Baptist Church, with about 300 members, and the only Baptist congregation, was supplementing the salary of part-time colporteur, Miss Sue Cochran. Previously, the Texas Sunday School and Colportage Convention had recognized Southeast Texas as "ripe for harvest" and in May sent Cochran, an 1891 graduate of Baylor Female College (now the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor at Belton), to work as a "Bible woman" in Beaumont and Sabine Pass. In September 1898, she worked with the children at Sabine Pass Baptist Church and organized a Sunbeam Society which was "in a flourishing condition." But Sabine Pass Church withdrew its support of \$5 per month in January 1899, so First Baptist assented to pay this amount toward Cochran's expenses. By the next January, First Baptist was impressed that Cochran had "earnestly[,] studiously and ... prayerfully discharged the duty laid upon her." The congregation realized that the work in Beaumont and vicinity "demands her undivided time and attention and believing with the help of God and the cooperation of Christian people[,] many souls may be saved." So, First Baptist, in conjunction with the state office, agreed to support Cochran full-time. She probably worked in the Cartwright Addition in the southern part of Beaumont as early as January 1900 or perhaps sooner. Cochran distributed Bibles and New Testaments there in February and by March had established a Sunday School; present-day Calvary Baptist Church had its genesis in this modest work. First Baptist rented a building for \$2.50 per month in which the Sunday School met. Needing additional assistance for her mission endeavors, Cochran, in the October 1900 business meeting, sought aid from First Baptist for "at least eight families who were in need of help," and "the night services were appointed as a time for a free will offering for the poor." In spite of

tempestuous conditions in 1901, Cochran continued her services with the church until December 8.⁸

Several major petroleum companies, such as Gulf (now Chevron), Humble (now Exxon), Mobil, and Texaco, emerged from the Spindletop field, and southeast Texas Baptists resolved to meet the spiritual needs of thousands of people employed in oil-patch industries. Their task was often complicated by company policies which required the plants to operate around the clock, an unprecedented practice in the area. This work schedule made it appear that most of the employers had "little or no regard for the Sabbath, ... [because] large numbers of men are forced to work on Sunday or be thrown out of employment."⁹

During the initial year of the oil boom, Beaumont's First Baptist Church supported Cartwright and Magnolia missions and also spread the Gospel to the oil field workers. J.A. Smart served First Baptist as pastor from January 1895 until Cochran vacated her position in December 1901, when he resigned his pastorate and continued the work as the church's city missionary at three missions. Already he had been busy preaching in the first two missions and on Sunday afternoons at Gladys City, the oil field town where most of the roustabouts lived. Beginning in December 1902, the Baptist General Convention of Texas aided First Baptist in supporting three missionaries in the city. It encouraged the church to take "active and immediate steps to organize the Mission[s] at M[a]gnolia and in the Cartwright Addition into churches and to locate one of the three men ... at each of said Missions or prospective Churches." Also in December, First Baptist elected J. M. Roden to tend the Cartwright Mission, where he served through August 1903. The following month, First Baptist named Smart and Thomas Harold Feagin city missionaries. Smart ministered to the Riverside and Spindletop missions while Feagin, longtime missionary and moderator of SETA, cared for both Cartwright and Magnolia missions.¹⁰

Feagin presented an interesting perspective of both missions' activities on January 31, 1903. His report to First Baptist indicated that while the collections were not "as good as was [sic] expected," the work at the missions was greatly improved. The congregations, showing more interest in the work and becoming better organized, led Feagin to anticipate "a great harvest in the future." He requested his home church members to show "an interest in all your prayers."¹¹ The first details of the work exclusively at Cartwright Mission revealed that during November and December 1903, Feagin preached twenty-five sermons and delivered eleven other religious addresses, and received two members for baptism and seven by letter. Early in 1904, he opined that there was plenty of work to do which looked encouraging. Feagin was learning to love his people "more and more" and they appreciated his labor with them. He was "praying the Lord to lead me in my work that His Name may be glorified and many souls saved this year."

Sensitive to the needs of thousands of oil industry employees, First Baptist, Beaumont, apparently was sponsoring five missions in town and one

at Gladys City by 1904.¹³ On July 3 Feagin assisted in organizing Grand Avenue Baptist Church from those who worshiped at the Cartwright Mission. He stated that he established the church, consisting of fifty-one members, with the "assistance of Pastor McCall and the deacons of First Church."¹⁴ However, First Baptist membership rolls indicate fifty-three members were granted letters to Grand Avenue on June 19 and three others were probably on the rolls by July 15.¹⁵

Feagin, born in Ellistown, Mississippi, on October 6, 1857, after accepting Christ as Savior when sixteen years old, united with Mt. Gilead Baptist Church, Union County, Mississippi. Moving to Hempstead, Waller County, Texas, in 1876, he married Susan F. Dennard on November 24, 1878. Cross Roads Baptist Church in Collin County licensed Feagin to the ministry in April 1888. He probably relocated to Evergreen Association in 1889, and on Sunday, September 15, 1889, Friendship Church in Waller County ordained him. Feagin served as pastor of five churches from 1891-93 and also as associational missionary and colporteur for nine months in 1893. From 1893-95 he was missionary pastor at Third Baptist Church, Houston [by 1908 the Tabernacle Baptist Church], which was then in SETA. During 1895-1908, Feagin continued to serve his Lord as an outstanding SETA missionary, consistently bringing more souls into the kingdom than any other worker, while simultaneously ministering to several part-time congregations. He was reputed to be "one of the best missionaries in the State and did more to lay the foundation for the Baptist cause in Southeast Texas than any other man." He presided as associational moderator from 1901-08 and held membership in the Masonic and Woodman of the World lodges.¹⁶ As Grand Avenue's pastor, he felt the church had a great woman's society, a good Baptist Young Peoples' Union (BYPU), and the only other thing they needed was "to get the Baptist Standard [sic] into every home."¹⁷

Feagin had begun ministering to the worshippers at Cartwright Mission in September 1903, but following its organization as Grand Avenue Baptist Church, continued as pastor only three months. Joining after its organization, he likely preached there on a limited basis while serving as SETA missionary.¹⁸

While still Grand Avenue Baptist's pastor, and fulfilling his role as associational moderator, Feagin welcomed messengers to the SETA meeting in 1904 at First Baptist Church, Beaumont, on Thursday, September 22. As he presided, Grand Avenue Baptist introduced a petitionary letter seeking associational membership. Its request was granted and moderator/pastor Feagin extended the hand of Christian fellowship to its five messengers.¹⁹

Feagin probably resigned his pastorate in September and during this month First Baptist pledged \$300 to supplement the salary of Grand Avenue's minister, conveying the care of the Riverside Mission to the new church. In October, Grand Avenue requested assistance in locating a new pastor, so First Baptist appointed a two-man committee to work with the congregation.²⁰

The call went to P.N. Bentley, who began his work on June 1, 1905. During the three previous years Bentley had ministered to the Deweyville

Baptist Church. Previously, he pastored at Henderson for four years and at Center for ten years. Bentley was born in Athens, Alabama, on November 27, 1846, professed faith in Christ at the age of twelve, and came to Texas. He was educated at Gilmer, studying under Professor Morgan H. Looney, and was a Confederate veteran. In 1885 Bermuda Church in Shelby County called Bentley to the work of the Gospel ministry. Bentley taught school several years while caring for various congregations. He, like Feagin, was a Mason and Woodman of the World.²¹

Members of Grand Avenue Baptist Church welcomed their new leader and in a short time they were "coming together" in a way that made Bentley feel "quite hopeful in regard[s] to the work." During his first month as pastor, he received six new members and the congregation observed the Lord's Supper. Relationships with other city churches were good because, according to Bentley, "Perfect harmony and good will" existed between Grand Avenue Baptist and First Baptist as well as Second Baptist, which later became Magnolia Avenue Baptist Church, and there was no friction or ill feeling between them. The new minister looked forward to cultivating "a spirit of love, comity and co-operation with the other [city] pastors and churches."²²

Five weeks after Bentley's arrival the church treated his family to a "pounding," leaving them with a full pantry, which led the pastor to expect "the kindly spirit evinced by the night's experience [would], grow and strengthen, and bring forth fruit to the honor and glory of God."²³ Bentley must have been an exceptional pulpiteer, at least in the mind of one member who claimed that his "pastor can preach anywhere; he is one of the best preachers in Texas."²⁴

The first revival the Baptist Standard reported during Bentley's tenure continued for three weeks in November and December 1906. J.M. Wright of Lufkin preached the first two weeks, and John Mare, newly arrived SETA missionary, assisted Bentley during the final week. This effort left Grand Avenue Baptist Church "strengthened and edified" with nine new members."²⁵

In July 1907 Elbert P'Pool from Central Baptist Church, Jacksonville, preached in a revival while J.W. Johnson of First Baptist Church, Beaumont, led the singing, resulting in a "glorious meeting" during which the congregation was greatly revived and thirty-one souls were saved. Bentley declared P'Pool "a gospel preacher of great power" who "showed himself wise and tactful in all that he did," and recommended him to any church or pastor who needed help in a meeting.²⁶

P'Pool, while back in town to supply at First Baptist Church in August, also held a series of services at Spindletop, that lasted about ten days. Following these preaching endeavors a "rapid succession" of meetings was scheduled in the city's Baptist churches.²⁷

Bentley was active in area meetings and Workers Institutes held on fifth Sundays, days set aside for general conferences. At this time the vast majority of churches held only half-time or quarter-time services each month, leaving fifth Sundays free, when apparently even full-time churches held no services.²⁸

Grand Avenue Baptist Church's first deacon ordination was held on July 8, 1907. On that Monday evening, Thomas Brand, G.R. Buckner, and B.F. Simmons, none of whom were charter members, were ordained. With the addition of these men, Grand Avenue Baptist had five deacons; three were "young men full of energy and activity," while the other two were more mature and "will be able to supply the conservatism necessary to temper the energy of [the] young men." The pastor, pleased with his diaconate, hoped and believed they would "prove second to none in point of faithfulness and efficiency."²⁹

Bentley worked with the new deacons only two months. On Thursday evening, September 5, Guffey Baptist Church was organized at Spindletop with thirty-six charter members, all except one coming from Grand Avenue Baptist. And Bentley, who had preached at Guffey Baptist on Sunday afternoons for six months, accepted the congregation's call to serve as their first pastor.³⁰

Bentley's tenure at Grand Avenue Baptist yielded a good harvest. From June 1905 to September 1907, some fifty-two people joined by baptism and approximately 107 by letter, raising the total membership from fifty to 167. Expenses for all purposes increased from \$87.65 to \$1,481 while ninety were enrolled in Bible Study with an average attendance of sixty by September 1907. Meanwhile, the pastor led various associational activities and worked as a part-time missionary from 1906-08.³¹

Grand Avenue Baptist quickly found a new leader because the *Beaumont Daily Journal* announced on Saturday, October 5 that "Rev. M.J. Derrick, the new pastor[,] will take charge of the work Sunday and will preach both services."³² Born in Mississippi in 1864, Derrick attended Mississippi College and Southern Seminary and was pastor at Yazoo City, Mississippi, from 1899 until probably 1906. Since November of the latter year, prior to his arrival in Beaumont, he had led the flock of First Baptist Church, Palacios. Derrick attended the September SETA gathering, where he observed, "Taking the work and spirit of the meeting together, it has never been ... [my] privilege to attend a better [assemblage]." He was further impressed that all the preachers were "earnest[,] good men."³³

Later in October 1907 evangelist Len G. Broughton held a city-wide revival in which the First Christian Church and Baptist congregations collaborated. In lieu of evening worship on October 12 and 19, these bodies urged their members to attend the services in the auditorium under Duke's Hotel.³⁴

Derrick, writing in an issue of the *Baptist Standard* in the spring of 1908, provided a perspective on Grand Avenue Baptist Church and the posture of Beaumont Baptists. After tending his congregation for six months, he acknowledged it was about the size of the Magnolia Avenue Baptist Church and described it "as noble a band as it has ever been our privilege to serve." He further noted that "There is the very best fraternal spirit among all our churches" and he dreamed of "great things to happen here for our redeeming Lord."³⁵ The church "undertook [his] full support" when it called Derrick and paid him for two months, but "The panic [of 1907] came on" and they had to

"apply for \$15 per month as aid." Conditions improved, however, and by March 1908 all expenses were paid, they exceeded their missions goal, and membership stood at 175.³⁶ Derrick felt that the church "goes to her utmost limit" and thus encouraged, disclosed plans to build a new house of worship. F.M. McConnell, one of Texas' leading pastors and evangelists, scheduled a meeting at Grand Avenue Baptist (renamed Park Street Baptist by April) on May 1 with one of its members, F.T. Outlaw, to lead the singing.³⁷

The spiritual awakening for which Derrick had prayed materialized. He preached in night services for a week prior to the scheduled revival, May 3-17. Overflow crowds compelled the members to build a tabernacle that would seat 600 people. McConnell's preaching was of "a high grade" and he was "safe, sound and consecrated." Likewise, Outlaw's singing was "very fine and much appreciated." During these three weeks, twenty joined by experience and baptism and nine affiliated by letter. During the eight months since Derrick began his pastorate, Grand Avenue/Park Street Baptist received fifty-three members and "the work is considerable [sic] on the up-grade."³⁸ Notwithstanding this great revival, Derrick, for unknown reasons, doubtless vacated the care of his church in September.³⁹

When the association met at Beaumont's First Baptist Church in October 1908 a committee on nominations, comprised of one messenger from each congregation, recommended electing new officers since general missionary and moderator Feagin had lost his life in July. His tragic death had "so shocked and disheartened the Board that no effort was made to fill his place [prior to the annual gathering]."⁴⁰

Feagin, the faithful, dedicated, and assiduous SETA missionary was killed just as he concluded a Friday evening revival service at the China Baptist Church on July 3, precisely four years after founding Grand Avenue Baptist. He was "exhorting sinners to come forward and accept Christ," had "just finished shaking hands with a young man," and was almost ready to dismiss the congregation when lightning struck the stove flue, jumped to "the wire that conducted gasoline [sic] to the lamp directly under which he was standing, and killed him instantly and shocked many others."⁴¹

Accolades for Feagin described him as "an earnest and consecrated minister" who "commanded the love and respect of his fellow ministers and of the public at large."⁴² Possessing only a limited formal education, he had studied the Bible diligently, employed all the helps possible, and consequently "was able to preach the gospel with acceptance to the most intelligent audiences." He had delivered the annual association sermon in 1894 at First Baptist Church, Orange. J.F. Dobbs, SETA missionary in 1908 who conducted Feagin's funeral, testified that he had "never been associated with a more true yoke-fellow, or a higher type of Christian manhood" and maintained that Feagin's "first thought in every transaction was the cause of Christ." Fifty-year-old Feagin was survived by his wife and children – five sons and one daughter, ages twelve to twenty-seven. His memorial service drew one of the largest crowds in Beaumont, and people expressed their appreciation for him

by filling the spacious auditorium of First Baptist Church. After the Masons administered the last rites, they laid his body to rest in Magnolia Cemetery.⁴³

Just three and a half months after Feagin's death, Grand Avenue Church's second pastor also succumbed. Bentley, nearly sixty-two years old and pastor at Guffey Baptist Church, ended his life by taking poison on Saturday, October 17, 1908, only five days prior to the SETA annual assembly. His body was discovered in his Polley Hotel room in Center, which had been his home for ten years during a former pastorate.⁴⁴

Mrs. Tobe (Achsa) Hahn, Bentley's daughter, drove him to the Beaumont train station on Friday morning. Planning to attend a Baptist meeting in Groveton, he instead changed his destination to Center. Some friends had noticed that Bentley "appeared to be laboring under a mental strain and depression," but none knew its cause and he gave no "intimation of a purpose to terminate his life, if he entertained such an idea at the time." However, prior to leaving Beaumont he withdrew his bank deposit and "appeared to the cashier ... to be laboring under suppressed excitement." He wrote several letters at Center, which he mailed at 3:00 Saturday morning, and then apparently ingested the poison which caused his death between 4:00 and 6:00 a. m. In a letter to J. T. Norris, president of Center's Farmers National Bank, Bentley stated "he had come to Center to lay down his burdens and wanted to be buried here simply and quietly," but gave no other explanation for taking his life. He desired neither Masonic nor Woodmen of the World rites, although he was affiliated with both fraternities. His widow and four married daughters survived him.⁴⁵

Bentley "was widely known and loved by all who knew him or came in contact with his strong and pleasing personalities [sic]." He was an earnest, conservative, and consecrated minister. "He loved God and lost men" and expounded the Gospel "eloquently and forcibly," denouncing sin as rebellion against God while appealing to the sinner "with the widest mercy and charity." He preached the annual association sermon in both 1904 and 1905, and he often wrote anonymously to the press to address public questions and moral problems in a forceful and pleasing style.⁴⁶

Even though the lives of Grand Avenue Baptist Church's first two pastors ended violently and rather close together, both Feagin and Bentley had contributed immeasurably to the growth of the congregation which had begun with the small Sunday School class that Sue Cochran started in 1900. They, along with Derrick, constructed a solid foundation for the church's future expansion. By 1994 Calvary Baptist Church would be one of the largest congregations in southeast Texas, and it continues to spread the Good News of Christ throughout the region.

NOTES

¹Cartwright Mission became Grand Avenue Baptist Church in 1904, Park Street Baptist in 1908, and finally Calvary Baptist in 1924 according to the *Baptist Standard* [hereinafter cited as BS]: July 28, 1904, p. 12; March 26, 1908, p. 8; and March 13, 1924, p. 3. See also M.J. Derrick

to J.B. Gambrell, April 21, 1908 (Baptist General Convention of Texas [hereafter cited as BGCT] Historical Collection, file #468, Roberts Library Archives, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Fort Worth, TX [hereinafter cited as SWBTS]). The earliest extant church minutes date from January 1930.

³James A. Clark and Michel T. Halbouty, *Spindletop* (New York, 1952), p. 53, cited by William R. Estep, *And God Gave the Increase, The Centennial History of the First Baptist Church of Beaumont, Texas 1872-1972* (Fort Worth, 1972), p. 69. Also quoted by John W. Storey and Ronald C. Ellison, *Southern Baptists of Southeast Texas, A Centennial History, 1888-1988* (Wolfe City, TX, 1988), p. 47.

⁴Estep, *And God Gave the Increase*, pp. 67-69; Storey and Ellison, *Southern Baptists of Southeast Texas*, pp. 47-48.

⁵Estep, *And God Gave the Increase*, pp. 44-48, 67-69; Storey and Ellison, *Southern Baptists of Southeast Texas*, p. 47.

⁶Estep, *And God Gave the Increase*, pp. 67-70; Storey and Ellison *Southern Baptists of Southeast Texas*, p. 48.

⁷For further descriptions of Beaumont at this time, see Judith Walker Linsley and Ellen Walker Riensta, rev. ed. *Beaumont, A Chronicle of Promise* (Woodland Hills, CA, 1987), p. 80; Storey and Ellison, *Southern Baptists of Southeast Texas*, pp. 47-48.

⁸Storey and Ellison, *Southern Baptists of Southeast Texas*, pp. 23-24.

⁹See Sue Cochran's Correspondence and Reports, May 4, 1898-November 3, 1900 (BGCT Historical Collection, Roberts Library Archives, SWBTS); Estep, *And God Gave the Increase*, pp. 72-73; Eleanor Jones, *Forth From Her Portals: The First 100 Years in Belton, University of Mary Hardin-Baylor* (Belton, TX 1986), pp. 11, 42; *Texas Baptist and Herald*, May 21, 1891, p. 1; BS, September 22, 1898, p. 9; J.M. Carroll, *A History of Texas Baptists* (Dallas, 1923), pp. 805, 925; SETA, *Minutes*, 1898, Tables; First Baptist Church, Beaumont, *Minutes*, January 7, 1899 [probably 1900], pp. 16-17; February 11, 1900, p. 12; March 11, 1900, p. 19; October 14, 1900, p. 14. The January 7 minutes probably should have been dated 1900 since that was Sunday and the other business meetings were held on Sundays during this period. The pages for January 7, 1900, are numbered 16 and 17; February 11, 1900, is p. 12; March 11, 1900, p. 19; May 13, 1900, p. 20; etc.

T.H. Feagin, pastor of Turtle Bay Baptist and Sweet Home Baptist Churches, highly complimented the work of Texas Bible Women in general and particularly Sue Cochran, who accompanied him and his family to these churches in May 1899, and ministered to the ladies and children as he preached. See BS, June 1, 1899, p. 9, for this interesting account that includes Feagin and Cochran, both of whose work was so historic in the founding and growth of Calvary Baptist Church.

This author researched the *Belton Journal* and the *Journal-Reporter*, 1898-1901, in the Texas newspaper collection at the Eugene C. Barker Texas History Center at the University of Texas at Austin and located no correspondence from Sue Cochran during the time she was a "Bible woman" in Beaumont.

¹⁰Linsley and Riensta, *Beaumont*, p. 82; Storey and Ellison, *Southern Baptists of Southeast Texas*, p. 48; SETA, *Minutes*, 1900, Tables; Michael Killien, telephone interview by author, Beaumont, August 29, 1994. Moreover, the Spindletop field enabled Sun Oil to grow from a small company into a major one.

¹¹First Baptist Church, Beaumont, *Minutes*, January 7, 1899 [probably 1900], pp. 16-17; December 8, 15, 22, 1901, p. 29; May 8, 1902; December 9, 18, 1902; June 10, 1903; July 8, 1903; September 9, 1903; December 9, 1903; SETA, 1901, Tables; Storey and Ellison, *Southern Baptists of Southeast Texas*, pp. 49-50, 55-56; Estep, *And God Gave the Increase*, pp. 73, 223. See these last two sources for additional information on this period. George W. McCall served as pastor of Beaumont's First Baptist Church from February 1902-February 1905.

¹²First Baptist Church, Beaumont, *Minutes*, p. 6 [after January 13, 1904]. This was a partial report [possibly because it was not yet the end of January] of Feagin's work during the quarter ending January 31, 1903 [evidently 1904].

¹³First Baptist Church, Beaumont, *Minutes*, February 10, 1904, pp. 12-13; BS, February 18,

1904, p. 9. Feagin had collected \$6.00 for Buckner's Orphans' Home, \$5.00 on his salary, and \$32.38 for Sunday School, paid out for literature and expenses. Seventy-five scholars were enrolled in six Sunday School classes with an average attendance of thirty-two.

¹³Estep, *And God Gave the Increase*, p. 73.

¹⁴Estep, *And God Gave the Increase*, p. 74; BS, July 28, 1904, p. 12; Storey and Ellison, *Southern Baptists of Southeast Texas*, p. 50.

¹⁵First Baptist, Beaumont, *Chronological Register and Record of Changes for the year Beginning December 9, 1903*, (n.p., microfilm); *Minutes*, June 19, 1904, n. p.; Estep, *And God Gave the Increase*, p. 74, stated that thirty-four members were granted letters to Grand Avenue on June 19. He must have obtained these names from the written account of the business meeting of June 19, because his membership roll lists reveal fifty-six persons who were most probably members of the new church by 15 July.

¹⁶George W. Lasher, ed., *The Baptist Ministerial Directory* (Osford, OH, 1899), p. 252; Collin County Baptist Association, 1886-90, Tables; Evergreen Baptist Association, 1889-94, Tables; SETA, *Minutes*, 1893-1908, Tables; BS, September 10, 1908, p. 10; Storey and Ellison, *Southern Baptists of Southeast Texas*, pp. 55-56; *Beaumont Enterprise*, July 4, 1908, p. 5; *Beaumont City Directory*, 1921-22 (Houston, 1921), p. 294.

¹⁷BS, July 28, 1904, p. 12.

¹⁸BS, September 15, 1904, p. 10; July 13, 1905, p. 12; February 15, 1906, p. 12; SETA, *Minutes*, 1904, p. 14; Storey and Ellison, *Southern Baptists of Southeast Texas*, pp. 55-56.

¹⁹SETA, *Minutes*, 1904, pp. 1-3, 14-22. Feagin, not listed as a charter member of Grand Avenue Baptist, evidently joined later. During its short life of less than three months as a church, July-September 1904, Grand Avenue had supported only activities within its fellowship and its building could seat 200 people. Although its membership totaled fifty-six by July 15, the 1904 SETA Tables indicate fifteen members had joined while none left. These fifteen could include the three who joined by July 15, which means that a minimum of twelve others joined for a total of at least sixty-eight members in September when the association statistics were compiled, not forty-eight as the tables indicate.

²⁰SETA, 1904, Tables; First Baptist, Beaumont, *Minutes*, September 7, 1904, p. 36; October 6, 1904, p. 40; October 16, 1904, p. 42.

²¹SETA, *Minutes*, 1906, pp. 21-22; 1907, pp. 28-29, 34-35; 1908, p. 22; Tables, 1902-08; BS, July 13, 1905, p. 12; *Beaumont Enterprise*, October 18, 1908, p. 2; Lasher, *The Baptist Ministerial Directory*, p. 67; Storey and Ellison, *Southern Baptists of Southeast Texas*, p. 56. After arriving at Grand Avenue Baptist Bentley received an associational salary supplement in excess of \$100 for both 1906 and 1907.

²²BS, July 13, 1905, p. 12.

²³BS, July 20, 1905, p. 9.

²⁴BS, March 15, 1906, p. 9.

²⁵BS, December 20, 1906, p. 8.

²⁶BS, July 11, 1907, p. 9; August 15, 1907, p. 6; August 22, 1907, p. 7. Twelve of these additions came by baptism, two of whom were brother and sister, about fifty years of age. Offerings brought in some \$213.

²⁷BS, August 22, 1907, p. 7.

²⁸BS, January 10-June 20, 1907, *passim*.

²⁹BS, August 1, 1907, p. 11, J.L. White, pastor at First Baptist, Smart of Magnolia Avenue Baptist, and Bentley comprised the presbytery. Smart read the Scriptures: Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and White preached an impressive message detailing the deacons' duties and responsibilities, their relationship to the church and pastor, and the importance of their ministry. Smart then led in prayer after which the laying on of hands concluded the service.

³⁰BS, September 12, 1907, p. 8; March 26, 1908, p. 8; SETA, 1907, Tables. Forty-nine members lettered out of Grand Avenue Baptist in 1907, most of whom went to Guffey Baptist. Others may have left First Baptist, where sixty were lost by letter, twelve were "erased," and two

excluded. Nonetheless, Grand Avenue Baptist boasted a net gain of sixty-seven, ending the church year with 167 members.

³¹Storey and Ellison, *Southern Baptists of Southeast Texas*, pp. 52-56, SETA, 1905-07, Tables. The closest figures to June 1905 are found in the September SETA annual minutes.

³²*Beaumont Daily Journal*, October 5, 1907, p. 2.

³³BS, October 3, 1907, p. 10; March 26, 1908, p. 8; J.S. Rogers, *History of Arkansas Baptists*, (Little Rock, 1948), p. 238; Correspondence and reports between M.J. Derrick and J.B. Gambrell, December 15, 1905-April 21, 1908 (BGCT Historical Collection, file #468, Roberts Library Archives, SWBTS). Derrick received \$15 per month from BGCT while pastor at Grand Avenue/Park Street Baptist Church.

³⁴*Beaumont Daily Journal*, October 12, 1907, p. 6; October 14, 1907, p. 3; October 19, 1907, p. 6.

³⁵BS, March 26, 1908, p. 8. See also M.J. Derrick to J.B. Gambrell, April 21, 1908 (BGCT Historical Collection, file #468, Roberts Library Archives, SWBTS). Grand Avenue Baptist changed its name to Park Street Baptist between March and April 1908 because Grand Avenue was renamed Corley Avenue and Park Street was the nearest major thoroughfare.

³⁶BS, March 26, 1908, p. 8; T. Harry Williams, Richard N. Current, and Frank Freidel, *A History of the United States Since 1865*, (NY, 1960), pp. 300-01.

³⁷BS, March 26, 1908, p. 8; Robert A. Baker, *The Blossoming Desert: A Concise History of Texas Baptists*, (Waco, 1970), p. 168; Carroll, *A History of Texas Baptists*, p. 880.

³⁸BS, May 28, 1908, p. 14. A total of seventy souls made professions of faith in Christ; more were expected to join, while others likely would unite with other churches.

³⁹BS, August 27, 1908, p. 3. See SETA, *Minutes*, 1908, and Tables for more information on this period. Even though the church supposedly became self-supporting on September 1, 1907, the association supplemented Derrick's salary during 1907-08. Park Street Baptist gained forty-five members during 1908, but lost thirty by letter and erased ninety-four, for a net loss of seventy-nine, leaving only seventy-seven on roll. Some problems possibly prompted members to move from First Baptist, Grand Avenue/Park Street Baptist, and Magnolia Avenue Baptist churches, during 1907-08, which may have influenced Derrick to resign. However, the ninety-four members who were erased from Grand Avenue/Park Street Baptist could have been more important in bringing about Derrick's resignation because they represented a considerable number of the congregation.

The *Beaumont Enterprise*, September 2-October 30, 1908, mentions Derrick at Park Street Baptist as late as September 2, p. 8. However, he is *not included* with the other ministers in conjunction with the city-wide Everybody's Revival beginning on September 10 and lasting until October 12. Moreover, M.A. Love was called as pastor of Park Street Baptist according to the *Beaumont Enterprise*, October 17, 1908, p. 6.

⁴⁰SETA, *Minutes*, 1908, Tables, passim.

⁴¹SETA, *Minutes*, 1908, pp. 18, 22; *Beaumont Enterprise*, July 4, 1908, p. 5; BS, July 9, 1908, p. 12; September 10, 1908, p. 10.

⁴²*Beaumont Enterprise*, July 4, 1908, p. 5.

⁴³BS, September 10, 1908, p. 10; *Beaumont Enterprise*, July 4, 1908, p. 5; Storey and Ellison, *Southern Baptists of Southeast Texas*, p. 221. In thirteen years of missionary work before his death, Feagin reported delivering 3,574 sermons and addresses, baptized 674 people, received 496 by letter, organized ten churches, and ordained three ministers and fourteen deacons. He made some 6,365 religious visits, collected \$6,972 to construct churches, and married sixty-four couples.

⁴⁴*Beaumont Enterprise*, October 18, 1908, p. 2.

⁴⁵*Beaumont Enterprise*, October 18, 1908, p. 2; interview with Asa and Y-Etta Tatum, April 28, 1993.

⁴⁶*Beaumont Enterprise*, October 18, 1908, p. 2; SETA, *Minutes*, 1908, pp. 18, 22; Storey and Ellison, *Southern Baptists of Southeast Texas*, pp. 56, 221.