



November 2024

Executive Report to the Board of General Ministries,
sitting as the American Baptist Historical Society

Archives

JACS

The Japanese American Confinement Sites (JACS) project has been the primary focus this year, with Project Archivist Brice Bongiovanni and Digital Collections Specialist Jenny Manasco doing most of the work for the project. The project includes digitizing materials from collections held by ABHS that relate to the experience of Japanese Americans interned during WWII and the work of Northern Baptists with them. These materials belong to the archives of the American Baptist Home Mission Society and the Woman's American Baptist Home Mission Society, in manuscript collections, and in the archives of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (IM).

In June, Brice and Jenny traveled to Seattle and Los Angeles to scan records for the project. In Seattle, they scanned records held at the University of Washington including the Emery Andrews Papers and the Betty Fukuyama Papers. Records from Japanese Baptist Church completed the scanning trip to Seattle. In Los Angeles, they spent two days at Atherton Baptist Homes and two days at Gardena Valley Baptist Church scanning church records (Evergreen and GVBC) and collections brought by individuals. These collections included a scrapbook of Roy Ishihara's career as a Baptist Minister. Roy was one of the students that John Thomas' office helped enroll in college and relocate from the internment camp. There was also a scrapbook from a soldier in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, a collection of hand carved and painted bird pins, and numerous family letters and documents.

The next phase of the JACS project is designing an online exhibit and a traveling exhibit, which will be on display at the Omaha Biennial. This project will conclude in October, 2025.

NAGPRA

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) was passed by Congress in 1990. In December 2023, the Department of the Interior announced final implementation rules that went into effect in January 2024. NAGPRA mandates the repatriation of Native American human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Various collections held by ABHS include items that *may* be considered cultural patrimony, most notably several feathered headdresses. Archivist Mariah Hamby has done detailed research on ABHS-held artifacts in order to compile the summary required by NAGPRA. There will be several further steps to comply with the NAGPRA process.

Ancestry.com

Since 2022 ABHS has been engaged in a collaboration with the genealogy company, Ancestry.com. The first set of records digitized, ABFMS missionary biographical files and sailing cards, are now live on the Ancestry.com website. After the agreed-upon exclusion period of three years ABHS will be allowed to share the Ancestry-produced digital files on the ABHS website. Digitization continues on the second set of records, Original Church Records.

ABHS has received on deposit the archives from Central Baptist Theological Seminary (CBTS) in Kansas City. This represents a new model of partnership in archives preservation, and the beginning of a new revenue stream as laid out in the Strategic Plan.

Funding and Fundraising

Donations

Annual Fund donations through September total \$57,239, putting us on track to meet our year-end goal of \$75,000. \$26,275 were designated as matching funds for the JACS project. Memorial gifts to the endowment total \$775.

Grants

Funding for the Japanese American Confinement Sites project was provided by the National Park Service JACS Grant Program, which required raising matching funds at a ratio of 1:2. We received a grant of \$119,153 from NPS. In 2023 the Finance Committee designated a portion of an estate gift from Roberta Stevens to go toward the JACS grant matching funds. Added to a donation from the Brokaw Gift Fund and ABHMS, we had \$31,885 of the required \$59,577 in hand by the end of 2023. With a grant from the Wilbur Warner Fund of North Shore Baptist Church in Chicago, a gift from the American Baptist Churches of Los Angeles, the Southwest, and Hawai'i, and a few donations from individuals, ABHS matching funds now total \$67,110.

We did not receive funding on a proposal submitted to the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), "Preparing for Future Accessions by Upgrading and Increasing Collections Storage." ABHS proposed to improve and increase collections storage in our archival vaults by purchasing and installing additional storage systems. We are revising our application in response to reviewers' comments for submission in the next grant cycle (January).

Outreach

We continue outreach to congregations and regions by means of church anniversary certificates.

Another aspect of outreach is hosting visiting groups. A group from First Baptist Church of Albany, NY, visited in February as part of their Civil Rights Tour. In April we had two groups visit: Northside Drive Baptist Church senior adult group and a group from Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church in Norcross, Georgia, who were taking a class in Baptist history. A group from Georgia Chin Baptist churches visited in May to see the exhibit on the Copes' missionary work. Members of the Board of International Ministries came for a tour of their archives in June. In August we welcomed the Asian American Pastors Colloquium to ABHS.

We are working to make stronger connections in the wider Atlanta community. As in recent years, ABHS was a sponsor of the DeKalb County (GA) History Center's luncheon program in honor of Black History month. I attended a retirement banquet for Rev. Dr. Douglas Stowers of Mount Calvary Baptist Church, Atlanta in April, and a presentation by the Atlanta City Council honoring former Associate General Secretary Al Brinson in May.

Administration

Kay Eland has retired after 25 years of service to ABHS. For many years Kay took care of recording donations and making sure bills got paid. In that role she got to know many ABHS supporters and represented ABHS well. We decided to consolidate staff by moving the Financial Secretary position from

King of Prussia to Atlanta. During the transition period Executive Director Priscilla Eppinger took on bookkeeping responsibilities.

The job posting for the Financial Clerk position yielded several qualified applicants. After careful screening and interviews, we hired Gusmar Chavarría as Financial Clerk. GChavarría began work with ABHS on September 3, 2024.

It continues to be an honor and a blessing to minister with ABHS.

Respectfully submitted,
Priscilla Eppinger
Executive Director