

Forgotten Baptist leader gains new respect_61305

June 10, 2005
Posted: 6/10/05

Forgotten Baptist leader gains new respect

By Marv Knox

Editor

COLLEGE STATION—A Texas Baptist statesman who didn't live long enough to become "elder" has received renewed respect recently.

The burial place of Lafayette Lumpkin Foster beneath a spreading oak tree on the southeastern edge of the Texas A&M University campus has been restored.

Foster died of pneumonia in December 1901, less than a month after his 50th birthday. But he packed loads of living into his five decades.

Lumpkin Foster

He arrived in Texas from Georgia at age 18 and attended Waco University. Soon he settled in Groesbeck, where he founded and published the Limestone New Era and helped start First Baptist Church.

Foster served three terms in the Texas Legislature, and at age 34, he was

elected speaker of the House. He later served as commissioner of agriculture, insurance, statistics and history, and was one of the first members of the Texas Railroad Commission.

Along the way, he served as president of the Baptist General Association in 1885, the last year before Baptist groups merged to form the Baptist General Convention of Texas. And he was BGCT president in 1890 and 1891.

Foster succeeded the legendary Gov. Sul Ross as president of A&M in 1898.

At the turn of the 20th century, Foster was leading a committee to create an A&M cemetery. Due to his unexpected death, school officials selected a burial spot adjacent to the campus. As A&M grew, the campus expanded, and the university relocated the graves to their present location, on the corner of an agricultural lot at the intersection of Marion Pugh Drive and Luther Street.

For a time, brush overtook the cemetery, where the remains of Foster and nine others with connections to the school are buried.

But some members of the A&M community feel Foster and the others deserve respect. With the university's help, they have cleaned away the brush, up-righted the tombstones, put up a fence and marker, and set a bench adjacent to the graves.

Baptists and Aggies who visit Foster's grave will find it where it has rested more than 60 years—directly beneath the aged oak.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and around the world.