

VIRGINIANA FILE JUL 25 1984

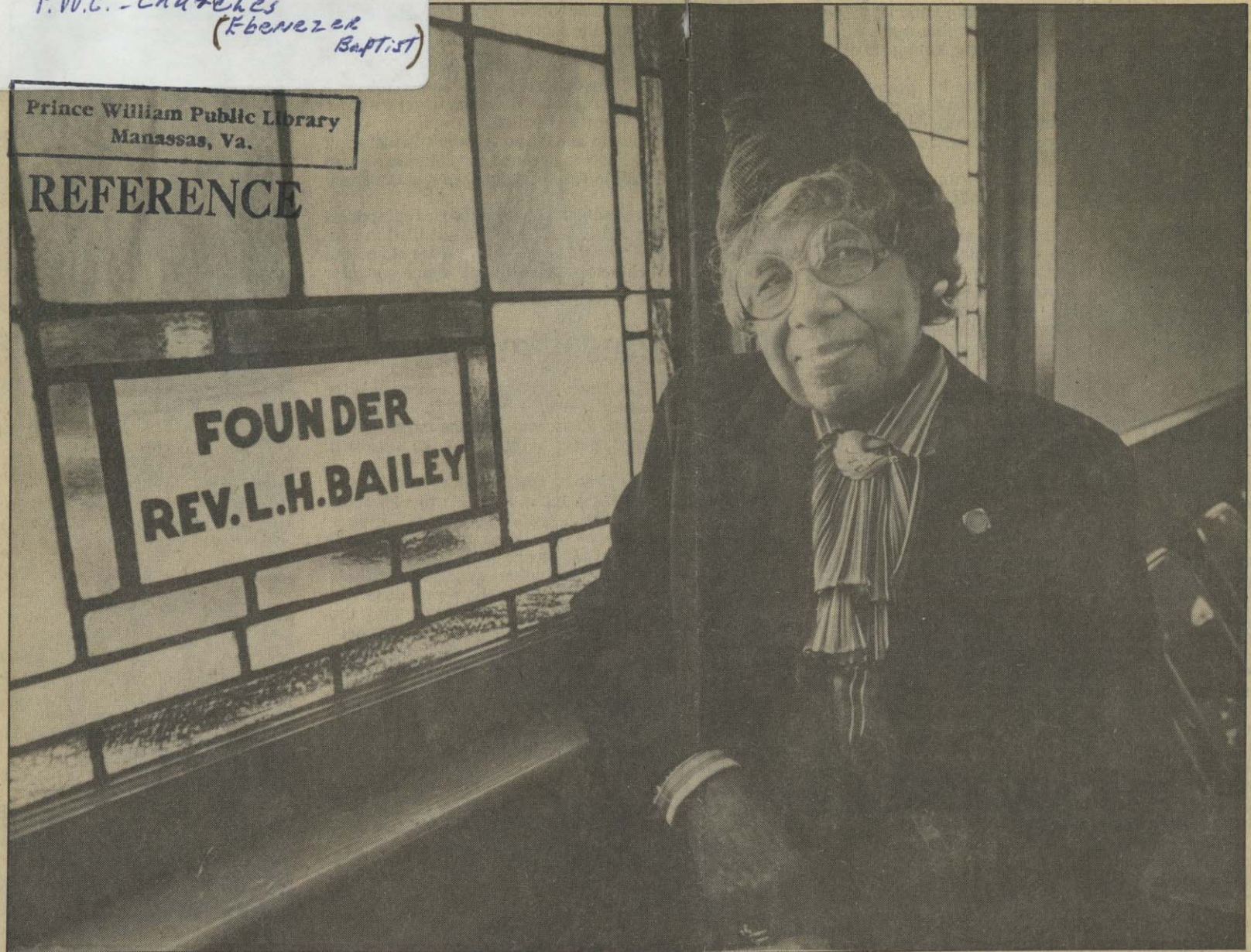
P.W.C. - Churches
(Ebenezer Baptist)

Potomac News 11/28/83

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REFERENCE

FOUNDER
REV. L.H. BAILEY



Photos by Clifford Owen — Potomac News

Annie Bailey Rose, daughter of the Rev. L. H. Bailey, founder of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Occoquan.

Ebenezer Baptist marks 100 years

Founding pastor was born a slave

By KEVIN DRAWBAUGH
Potomac News Staff Writer

Steadfast and unmovable after 100 years, the steeple of Ebenezer Baptist Church silently watched Occoquan awaken to another Sunday morning.

Indian summer whispered its last words into the misty air. Merchants fussed about their dewy storefronts, preparing for the daily tourist parade. Fishermen in pickups rolled into town for bait. A failing, but faithful, sun beat back the nascent chill of winter.

Birds came to life and sang, waking dogs, cats and, eventually, people. The river mist withdrew to its daytime banks and the town awoke, as it always does, to Sunday.

And, as they always do — as they have done for 100 years — members of the Ebenezer Baptist congregation assembled on the lawn of their house of worship.

The congregation celebrated its centennial this year. A full century of history makes the church one of Northern Virginia's oldest.

Some of the church's elderly members testify to this advancing age. But Ebenezer does not appear to be troubled by centenarian status. In fact, the squalls of infants and the voices of a childrens' choir during Sunday's service held out healthy prospects for Ebenezer's future.

Services began shortly after 11 a.m., with about 120 worshippers seated and listening attentively to Pastor James Russell's call to

til he was 21.

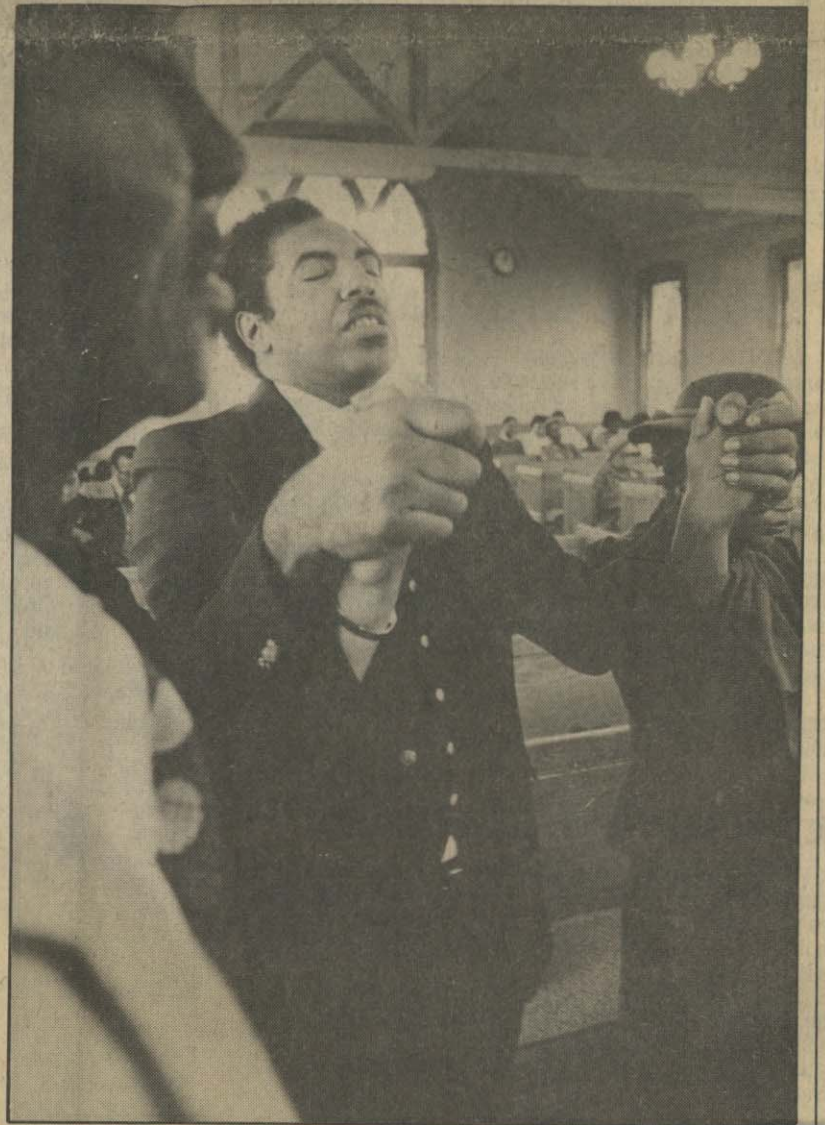
Reunited with his mother, Bailey took a railroad job and began learning to read and write under the guidance of a fellow railroad laborer. He later worked his way to Wayland Seminary and ordainment as a Baptist minister.

During his life, Bailey established Baptist churches in Occoquan, Burke, Conklin and Bristow. Ebenezer of Occoquan was the first, though, and he made it his home for many years.

Bailey's term as pastor stretched well into the 1920's. His daughter, Annie Bailey Rose, is now a trustee of the church.

In 1923, Ebenezer was destroyed by fire, but was quickly rebuilt. In 1949, Rev. John E. Morris took over as pastor. Additions were made, new furniture and accesso-

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Russell has been pastor of Ebenezer Baptist, the tiny church at the corner of Washington and Commerce streets in Occoquan, since 1978. He is ninth in a line of pastors that reaches back to the Rev. Lewis Henry Bailey, who founded the church in 1883.

Bailey began life a slave. Sold, while still in his youth, from an Alexandria slave pen to a master in Texas, Bailey did not get back to his Northern Virginia home un-

**Bailey's daughter,
Annie Bailey Rose,
is now a trustee
of the church.**

The Rev. James Russell

Bobby Winston, Deacon Board vice-chairman



Emmett Harris (left) and Keith Mitchell stand by as Emmanuel Newman presents tithes to the pastor during Sunday services at Ebenezer Baptist Church.

Ebenezer Baptist marks 100 years

CHURCH

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ries installed and 140 new members joined the church. Morris stayed until 1978, when Russell moved up from his assistant's position to become pastor.

Russell oversees the workings of the church, which lists 17 administrative and public service groups in its membership. He preaches to the congregation every Sunday in sermons that slide from comforting melody to arresting counterpoint like a violin concerto. Last Sunday's subject was "Walk-

ing in Truth."

Russell told of the man who decided to "tell somebody off, if you know what I mean," but who needed "a little drink before he could do it."

"Yes, yes," responded the congregation.

Such a man may say he is a Christian, but he is not, preached Russell.

"Sometimes I wonder," he said, at those people who go around calling themselves Christians and, at

the same time, are "using all kinds of languages and doing...all kinds of things." Those people, Russell said, are not "walking in truth."

"Amen," said the congregation.

And the junior choir took up another hymn. Their voices floated out over the town and gave pause to the eager merchants and the early boaters. Some things, they could think with comforting reassurance, really do last.