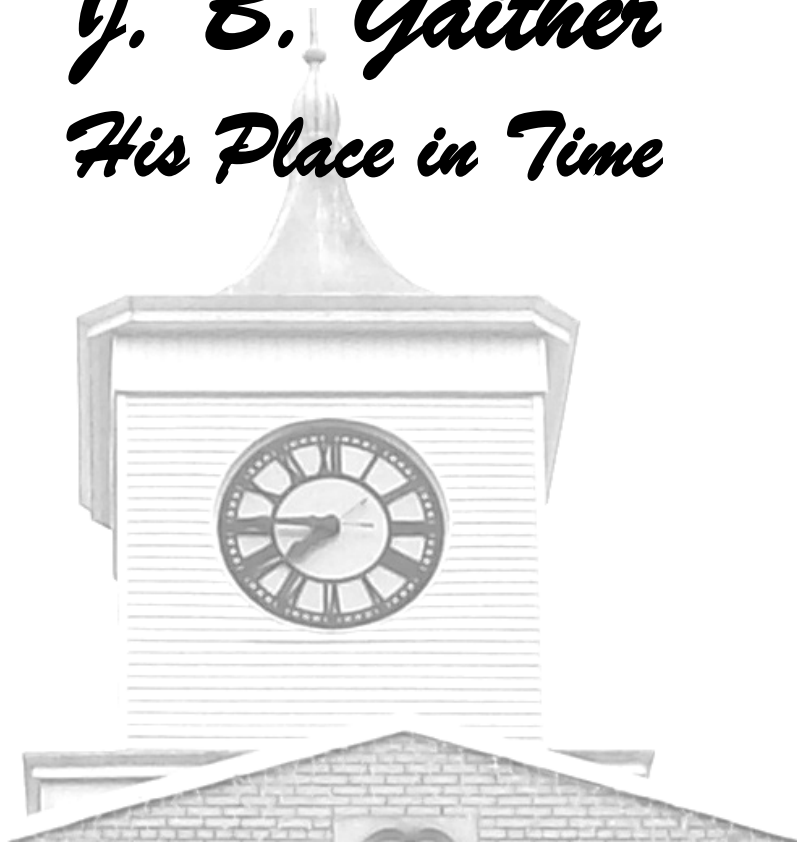


J. B. Gaither
His Place in Time



By Sandra Gaither Pitchford

The Early Years... Lawrenceburg, Tennessee

Being the fourth child of Wiley Thomas and Margaret Gibbs Gaither, John Burgess Gaither was born May 1, 1901 on a farm near Lawrenceburg, in Lawrence County, Tennessee.



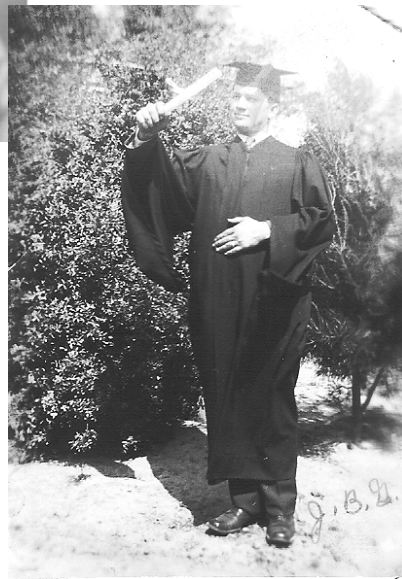
1906



W.T. & Maggie Gibbs Gaither, 1941
Parents of J.B. Gaither



John Burgess Gaither
Lawrence County High School
Senior Picture 1924
23 years old



JB was brought up in the church and obeyed the gospel under the preaching of J.E. Thornberry October 25, 1916.

At the age of sixteen (1917), he made his first talk during a Prayer Meeting at his home congregation in Lawrenceburg. A few years later, his first real preaching “appointment” was in a log meeting house at the Midway congregation near his birthplace November, 1926.

New Beginnings... From Tennessee to Ohio

When the summer of 1927 came around, JB went north to visit his brothers, Joe and Jim and their families, then living at New Philadelphia and Dover, in Tuscarawas County, Ohio. His two week visit turned into five years. When he arrived on his "vacation," he found work as an office clerk at the Iron Foundry (where one of his brothers worked). In the 1931 and 1932 diaries, he mentions visiting "Penn Mold" fairly often. We have reached the conclusion that Penn Mold was the name of the Foundry where he worked prior to 1931. Below are two entries from his 1931 diary:

January 7^x
Visit Bro. Lancaster, Sister
Rogers, Bro Barrett. Took
mother's iron to Dover to have
it repaired. Visited at
Penn. Mold. Tried to
arrange for meeting at which
Mary & I walked to Bible study
Lesson Rev. 9.

July 31
Up at 10:00 Spent most
of day with Mother &
Dad at Jim's. Dad & I
visited at Penn Mold.
Visited again at Jim's
in evening.

Full Time Ministry... Gainesboro, Tennessee

The years of the Great Depression were long and hard, but the memories that would be made in the rural hills of Jackson County, Tennessee would rank right up at the top in the highlights of the life of J.B. Gaither.

J.B. Gaither
Gainesboro
Church of Christ
In the 1930's



It was June 28, 1932 when JB and Mary moved to Gainesboro, Tennessee to work on a “half time basis” with the church there. While the economy was a challenge to most, JB rose to meet the occasion. His job might be part time, but there was nothing “part time” about his passion for preaching and being involved with people’s lives. He knew just how to supplement the income with extra speaking engagements, mainly in the form of gospel meetings.

Years of War and Peace... Springfield, Tennessee

Peace prevailed in 1939 when the Gaithers moved to the middle Tennessee town of Springfield in Robertson County, but their tenure there would see World War II come and go. It proved to be another trying era in which faith, family, fellowship and the flag prevailed.

Many blessings came to the Springfield church when they hired J.B. Gaither. Below are some excerpts from the records of the history of the Main Street Church of Christ:

A giant step forward was taken on November 5, 1939 when Brother J.B. Gaither became the first full-time preacher. Brother Gaither immediately held a gospel meeting, November 12-19 with no additions.

With the absence of elders, Brother Gaither provided the church with very strong leadership and many things were accomplished during the years he labored with the Springfield congregation.

In February of 1940 the church purchased a mimeograph machine and in March, the first issue of the "Reporter" was published. Although the "Reporter" was primarily evangelistic, it also served as the medium by which the congregation was informed of work and progress that was made.

In May of 1940 the church building was redecorated and some repairs were made. The expenses which included: repairing the plaster on the ceiling, painting a baptistery scene, installing new light fixtures, papering the auditorium and some small repairs, was \$97.25.

A note from Brother Gaither in the bulletin stated: "The entire congregation is to be commended for the unity and co-operation in repairing our meeting house and making it a suitable place for worship. May we so unite in all things for good. It proves how easy it is to do the things necessary to carry on the Lord's work."

The Mission Years...
Oneida & Jamestown, Tennessee
Whitley City & Berea, Kentucky

While living in Springfield, JB had held two gospel meetings in Oneida, Tennessee, in 1945 and 1946. Then in October 27, 1946 he resigned from his work at Springfield to move to Oneida, located in Scott County. From October until his work was finished at Springfield in December, he made trips between Sundays to Oneida to help with the building of a preacher's home.

For that house, he raised funds for the materials, drew the plans, and did much of the work along with Price Robinson and Barney Jeffers. He mentions much of the work in his diaries from the beginnings of the foundation to the final tasks of landscaping the yard.



Preacher's Home, Oneida Tennessee
J.B. Gaither Helped to Build

The Full House Years... Gallatin, Tennessee

December 20, 1948 found the Gaithers calling another place “home” in Gallatin, Tennessee which is in Sumner County. JB began what would be an eighteen year ministry with a congregation at the edge of town in the Number One Community. His starting salary was \$300.00 a month.

We are told that this little community was called “Number One” because it was the first stop on the street car route from Gallatin to Nashville. From the written history of the congregation, we read:

It is believed that Number One was named by the post office, however, some do not agree.

It goes on to say that JB was instrumental in changing the name of the congregation to “Nashville Road,” because he did not like the connotation that “Number One” gave to the church. However, any time this congregation is mentioned in JB’s diaries, he refers to it as “Number One.” That is what the family has always called it.

The Gaithers moved into their home in Gallatin, and nine days later, on December 29, JB began a radio program at the local station, WHIN. He was one of the pioneer preachers on that station. He began a thirty minute radio program two days a week and the program lasted more than twenty years. The broadcast reached into Macon, Smith, Wilson, Davidson, Jackson and even as far as Putnam and Clay Counties. After he moved away, he continued that program for three years by the request of the elders who supported it.

The Empty Nest Years...

Bells, Tennessee

The new downsize of house, possessions and family was found in the small west Tennessee town of Bells in Crockett County. JB's new work began there on January 8, 1967. His beginning salary was \$750.00/week.



Bells Church of Christ
Bells, Tennessee 1967

Besides the many friends and two married daughters, sons-in-law and five grandchildren left behind in Gallatin, they also allowed their youngest daughter, Sandra, to stay behind. She was a senior in high school with only one semester left of twelve years in the Gallatin school system. Ruby and her husband, Jim, agreed to keep her for a semester, thus making JB and Mary's nest empty for the first time in thirty-three years! There were two consolations with the new location at Bells. Frances and her family were only a few miles away in Jackson, and Sandra was planning to attend Freed-Hardeman College at Henderson which is just the other side of Jackson.

The Golden Years... Liberty at Fayetteville, Tennessee

In searching for a new job, JB had found that not many congregations wanted a seventy-four year old man, even if he did have forty-five years of experience in located work and seemingly good health. He didn't have to search too long though, to find new employment with the Liberty congregation in Lincoln County, Tennessee at Fayetteville. It was a congregation where he had a long term relationship, having held five meetings there over the past twelve years. The folks at Liberty knew exactly what they were getting. JB and Mary began their work with the Liberty congregation on August 15, 1975.



Liberty Church of Christ, Fayetteville, Tennessee
Old Community Center at left
Where fellowship meals were enjoyed

Just six years earlier, after finishing a meeting at Liberty, JB had written in his church bulletin, the "Bells Bugle,"

This was my fourth or fifth meeting at this place. I promised to return in 1974. I have been going to Lincoln County for a number of years. The people there cannot be excelled. It was good to have Sister Gaither with me to meet and get acquainted with a people whom I have known and loved through the years.

Obituaries...



World Evangelist, February 1985
“In Remembrance of a Gospel Preacher”
John Burgess Gaither, Sr.

Obituary written by J.B.'s Widow, Mary

John Burgess Gaither, son of the late Wiley Thomas and Margaret Lillian Gaither, was born in Lawrence County, Tennessee, May 1, 1901. He was reared on his father's farm and received his first schooling in a one-room rural school at Gaitherville, about two miles west of Lawrenceburg. He knew how it was to help on the farm and try to go to school. Things weren't too prosperous for a large family in those days. Before he was graduated from high school, he had to drop out and teach seven years. He enjoyed telling of his experiences while teaching all grades.

At age sixteen, J.B. made his first talk at Prayer Meeting at his home congregation in town at Lawrenceburg. From that time he was called on several times to speak and on to preaching. He soon had appointments around the county until he had his Sundays filled. He would tell people that he really didn't know when he stopped "talking" and went to preaching.

WENT TO OHIO

The summer of 1927, J.B. went North, as we called it back then, to visit two of his brothers and their families then living at New Philadelphia and Dover, Ohio. His two weeks turned out to be about five years' stay before returning to Tennessee to live. Upon arriving for his vacation, he found work at The Iron Foundry (where one of his brothers worked) as an office clerk. He worshipped at the same congregation as I, Mary Campbell, daughter of Richard Thomas and Nora Lee Campbell did, and that first Sunday I met my future husband. I just loved him from that first introduction and after he taught the class that morning, to me he was the best teacher I ever heard. I told him later (when it was safe) that I knew I would marry him someday. (I was only seventeen then.)

Not long after that J.B. was asked to preach, and his sermon was tops and from then on he was teaching and preaching a good bit for that church. But when this was noised abroad he began to get calls from various places to come help them.

My dad being so interested in converting people to Christ, and being a teacher and a good songleader himself, the two of them made a team and began through the week to go and preach wherever they could find an empty building to meet in. They took the gospel to many and as a result they were able to establish churches.

At that time, there were few churches of Christ in Ohio. Three years of steady evangelizing went on with much success.

GREAT ORGANIZER

J.B. truly was a very organized person, keeping records of most of his work, so I need only to get the ledger out and count the number of series of gospel meetings in which he preached which when counted comes to 542 recorded. This isn't including the one night appointments. Some of the places where he preached in meetings he went back as many as 10 to 15 times to preach in meetings. It was very rare he ever held one meeting only at a place.

These meetings carried him into some ten or twelve states. He loved the small churches and did work among them during all of his located work. In Jackson County, Tennessee alone he preached 133 meetings, the 100th at Gainesboro, which was a joyous one in particular.

GOOD RESULTS

Over the years, J.B. baptized 1,438; restored 841; conducted 913 funerals; and performed 203 marriages. He drove many miles to and from these appointments and seemed to be happiest when on the way to do the Lord's work.

Many were the comments about his preaching like, "You preach like the preachers did a long time ago," or "You preach more Bible than I've heard in a long time," or "That is what I call a good gospel sermon."

One lady told J.B. he just preached the scriptures, to which he replied, "How else can you preach without scriptures?" J.B. had a particular simple, plain delivery that was forceful and which attracted all who came to hear. All this made it easy to understand and to listen to him. No doubt, many souls were saved by the simple truths of God's word, which he so ably delivered to them. "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free." (John 8:32)

GOOD QUALITIES

J.B. Gaither was not only a good preacher; he was a living example of that preaching also. He loved people and people loved him and honored him for the truth's sake. He was not only a Christian gentleman but a good citizen of the land, who was careful to obey the laws of the land. He also was a loving husband, who put his wife on a pedestal so to speak, and always treated her like a queen and she upheld his wishes as if he were the king. Being the father of five

Mary Gaither... Years of Widowhood

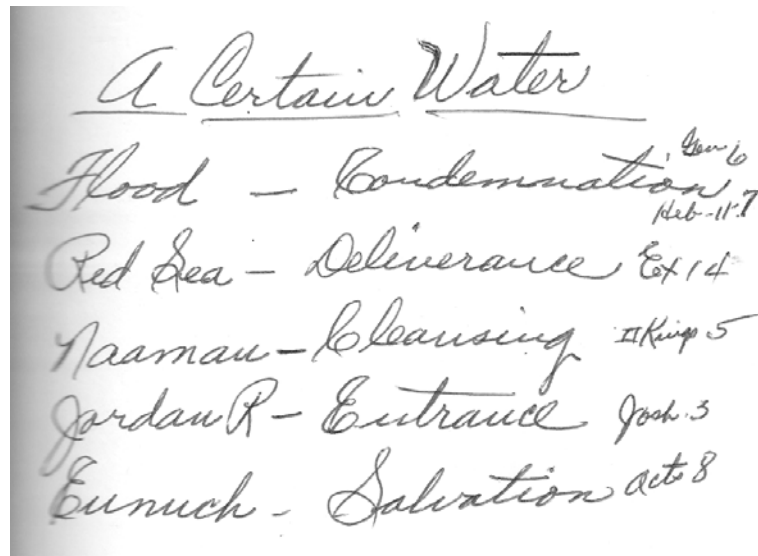


Mary C. Gaither

Though this book is the story of the life of JB, his “better half,” as he would say, lived on after him for nearly twenty-six years. It has been said that behind every great man is a woman. That is certainly true in this case, as she was a constant source of strength to him, supporting him continuously and unselfishly sharing him with others through the nearly fifty years they lived together. JB and Mary had a loving home where harsh words were never exchanged. It was a peaceful home, a secure place. There was no hypocrisy. As the old saying goes, “What you see is what you get.” That was the way with JB and Mary. They were the same at home as they were to others.

Sermons, Articles and Christian Education...

The family has many audio recordings of sermons, though most are of poor quality after so many years, some being transferred from old reel to reel tapes to cassettes. In this section, we are sharing every sermon, article and outline that we have in printed form.



A Favorite of Mary Gaither's

Stories, Quotes & Jokes...

Some of these stories are tales he told and others are stories that have been told on him.

Daddy often mentioned the example of the man who was either not in the church or was a wayward Christian. The man kept saying, "Oh, as soon as I get straightened out, I'll come to church." Well, he did finally come to church. He came in a wooden box carried by six men, and he was definitely straightened out! A quote from one of his bulletins: *A hearse is a poor thing to ride to church in.*

Daddy told the story of a man who paid him \$1 to marry him and his wife, and less than two years later, paid him \$5 to bury her! We thought it was a made-up story, but when I was reading through all his diaries, I noticed that a woman died two years after he had married them. I went back and checked his log book for the wedding and funeral and found that this story was indeed a true one.

As a young man of 30 in 1931, Daddy had a bicycle as well as a car. He mentioned riding the bicycle to get ice. One day a boy stole his bike. He chased him down and called the police. A couple of days later he went to court to settle the matter, and the bike was soon returned to him.

One night while preaching, the small building was filled to capacity. People stood around outside near the windows or sat in their cars with the windows down so they could hear. This was before the days of air conditioning, so it was no wonder that a cat got into the church building. The cat wandered around between the peoples' feet and legs, greatly distracting from the service. As it got close to a man by an open window, he picked up the cat and threw it out the window. Unfortunately, a woman was standing just outside the window, and the cat hit her on the head. The cat and the woman both screamed, but Daddy claimed he never missed a word of his sermon.

Taking Time for Clocks...



Logo on Clockmaker's Stationery, 1959

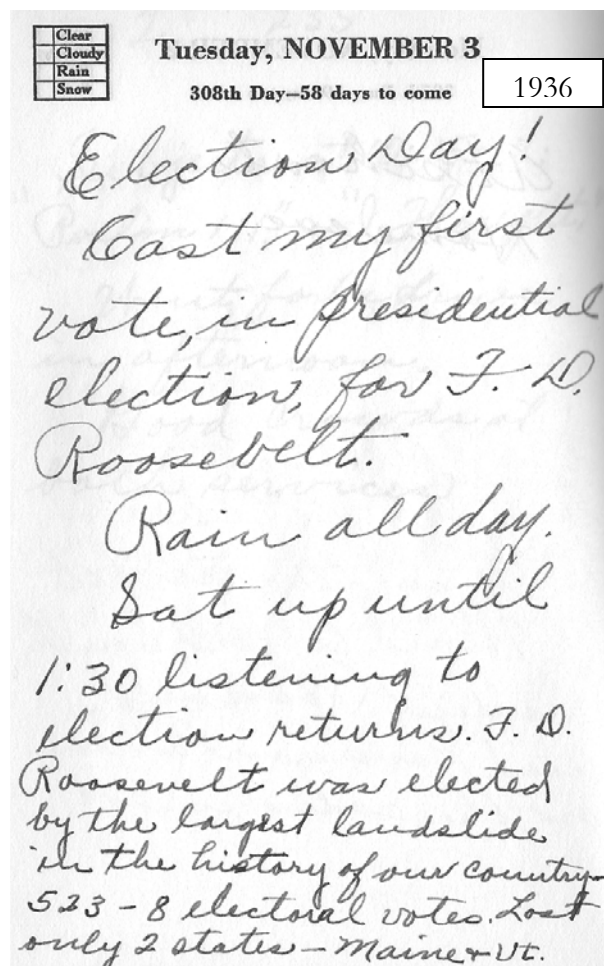
No one seems to know what sparked the interest JB had in timepieces. Perhaps it was a quotation like the one above or a scripture about time. Perhaps it was the words of an old hymn, "Time is filled with swift transition," or "Take Time to Be Holy." Whatever lit the flame, it burned steadily and brightly from the time he was about forty years of age until his death.

He found a lot of his clocks in little junk stores wherever he went to preach. Oftentimes, they were not working, and the case needed to be refinished. He bought, traded, bartered. If the person knew him, they would sometimes just give him an old clock since it was worthless to them.

When and where he learned to repair clocks is an unknown as well. The family only knows he was self taught, learning from trial and error and experience.

Historical & Political Notes...

JB was patriotic and very much interested in what was going on in political and historical circles. He took advantage of opportunities to witness history. Listed here are notes he made of what was going on in the world around him. He was loyal to his country and took his responsibility as a citizen seriously, and it shows in his recordings.



His Contemporaries...

One thing that stands out as you read fifty years of diaries of J.B. Gaither is the grand host of preachers with whom he came in contact. Occasionally, his handwriting was not clear or he simply noted “brother” with a last name, so I apologize in advance for any misspelled or incomplete entries.

Some names are based on assumption by context, so if you see a name listed that is/was not a preacher, just know that on at least one occasion, this man carried on some activity that makes him appear to be a preacher in the writings of J.B. Gaither!

While such a listing may not be interesting to everyone, it is hoped it will be to some. Some of these were a generation ahead of him and some were one and even two generations younger, yet they were all contemporaries of his and I believe merit a mention.

As much as he loved to be *in* the pulpit, he also loved to *hear* good sermons. Oftentimes, after he wrote that he went to such and such a place to hear brother so and so, he would write something like, “it wasn’t my kind of preaching,” “in a fine sermon,” “these modern preachers have forsaken the gospel,” “not enough scripture,” etc.

There has been no effort to edit this list with the consideration of whether or not these men were deemed by JB to be sound or unsound. It is merely a list of all that he mentioned in his daily writings who were, at the time of his writing (and to the best of my interpretation) preachers for the church of Christ.