



## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF RICKS INSTITUTE VIRGINIA, LIBERIA

Ricks Institute, formerly called "Zodokai Mission", was founded in 1887 by the Liberian Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention (LBMEC) seven years after the convention was established. Ricks Institute was named in honor of Mr. Moses Ricks, a Liberian Baptist farmer from Clay Ashland, who gave the single highest contribution of \$500.00 (five hundred dollars) to purchase the land where the campus currently stands. The Ricks Institute campus is in Virginia, Liberia, about twelve (12) miles east of the nation's capital, Monrovia.

Ricks Institute is a faith and learning community that is committed to developing students through the integration of spiritual, intellectual, technological, physical, emotional, cultural, and social dimensions of learning. Ricks is a Baptist-oriented institution and is primarily a boarding institution that has the capacity of hosting approximately 600 boarders. Ricks also offers day schooling to nearby residents. Over the years, the school has hosted students from a cross-section of Liberia and many other countries of the world. Its academic level runs from kindergarten through twelve grades. In 1974, a Business School was added, offering a Business Diploma. In 1978, the school expanded into a full-fledge Junior College. Although the LBMEC supports other Baptist projects/schools in Liberia, Ricks Institute has remained one of its major projects.

In 1960, The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) of the United States of America accepted an invitation from Dr. William R. Tolbert, Jr. who, at that time, was the President of the LBMEC. Dr. Tolbert later became the President of the Republic of Liberia and President of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA). The invitation to the SBC was to come and assist in the missionary and educational work of the LBMEC. From 1960 to 1989, the SBC made immense contributions to the development of the Ricks Institute campus. The SBC made financial donations and provided quality manpower and training in education. It orchestrated the development of campus facilities (i.e., engineering agricultural projects and providing tools and expertise in farming) and trained personnel. It also made transportation available for students, provided scientific equipment for the school's science laboratory, and gave heavy-duty appliances for the campus cafeteria.

The Southern Baptist Convention began phasing out in 1971 and ended its support in the late eighties. Although Dr. William R Tolbert, Jr. was influential in obtaining subsidy for the school from the Liberian Government during his tenure as the nation's president, this source was frozen in 1980 following the military coup that toppled the Tolbert Government. This civil disturbance also resulted in the execution of Dr. Tolbert and other LBMEC leaders. The LBMEC headquarters and records were destroyed in the ensuing melee. By the mid-eighties, the Junior College was subsequently closed due to lack of funding and campus facilities succumbed to destruction from the Liberian civil war that started in 1989. Today, the school is not at its full capacity due to limited resources.

Nationally, and internationally, Ricks Institute is known for its academic excellence and moral discipline. A high percentage of its graduates obtain higher education at colleges, universities, technical schools, and theological seminaries, excelling in many professional areas and maintaining respectable positions in the workforce. Ricks graduates work in the private sector as well as for the Liberian government and foreign governments. Some have graduated from the Liberian Baptist Theological Seminary and other Baptist seminaries, remaining involved in Christian ministries (evangelism and pastors of churches) at home and around the world. RIAA is therefore working hard to ensure that its Alma Mater continues to enjoy the prestigious and highly valued standards that will impact the lives of our current students.