



Bottskill Baptist Church History Minute

Church Historian Ken Perry

February 2026- Rev. Lewis N. Powell

This month's History Minute concerns one of our pastors whom many of us are familiar with, Rev. Lewis N. Powell (1) whose name appears above that of Elder Edward Barber (2) on the first window on the east side of the church.

Born at the beginning of the twentieth century, in Lebanon, Madison Co., N. Y., Rev. Powell was a son of Jay Powell (3) and Charlotte Niles (4). During his 87 years, he served our church for 26 years, from 1945- 1971. He was a graduate of Colgate University and the Colgate Rochester Divinity School and first served for 13 years in churches at Lebanon and Morrisville, N. Y., before coming to Greenwich.

In 1936, he married Mildred Day (5), a daughter of Erwin Day and Lena Evans Tracy. They had three children during their marriage, Roger, Pam and Gwen, who grew up here and graduated from the Greenwich schools.

One thing that many of us who knew him might not be aware of is that during his time in Morrisville, he wrote a column for the Madison County Leader (6) called "Among Our Boys," which contained news of community members who were serving in the armed forces during the Second World War. When he came here, he followed that effort by compiling Elder Tanner's Journal (7) as a bi-monthly newsletter to members of the church, informing them of various concerns, and introduced the newsletter, on Feb. 4, 1949, by speaking to the readers in Elder Nathan Tanner's voice, with Elder Tanner explaining something of his history within the church. He also compiled a book, Out of the North Country (8), that provided biographical sketches of some pioneer ministers in this area.

Although he served a decade less than James O. Mason, by the area increase in population, he left an immense record in terms of baptisms, marriages and funerals. Altogether, this record contained over 1500 meticulously kept entries. To give an example of how intimately connected his legacy still is, out of the 147 marriages he performed here, the first, on Apr. 21, 1946, was for James Paul Dube and Lillian Ann Smith, the parents of Judy McClay. One of the very last, which mentioned the members of the wedding party, in 1977, was for John Nulty, Jr. and Barbara Mattice, with our organist, Carol Herrington, as Matron of Honor.

If the enumerations are correct in his books, he performed 279 funerals in the 13 years before he came here and 558 in Greenwich, including eleven suicides, one a murder-suicide in 1954. In almost all of his entries, he included some personal remark about the individual he officiated for.

Of the 355 baptisms here, 13 of them on June 27, 1965, included myself, three of my Hartwell cousins, and several of my schoolmates. This was at a time following the ecumenicism of Vatican II, which introduced the

tolerance and validity of different faiths, a Baptist principle that became important for me in my own spiritual path.

The Powells are buried at the top of the hill in the Greenwich cemetery, next to their son Roger, who was a Vietnam veteran, but unfortunately, there are no images to show you of their monuments from FindaGrave, so perhaps someone could enter one in the future. They are located at the top of the hill overlooking the Soldiers' plot.

For their commitment to our church and for their memory, we remember Lewis and Mildred Powell and their children.