



Bottskill Baptist Church History Minute

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November 2025- The Church Within the Church

This month's History Minute concerns our Church buildings. [photos below]

The title page of our first book of Church Records reads: "*The First Book of Records of the Church of Christ in Saratoga upon Bottenkill Under the Pastorial Care of Elder Nathan Tanner*". Its first entry notes the place and date, "*Saratoga June 9th A. D. 1775.*" At that time, the town of Easton was a part of the Saratoga Patent and in the town of Saratoga. The location did not become a part of Washington County until 1791, when the town of Cambridge, then in Albany County, was also added. Cambridge then included Jackson and White Creek, which were set off as separate towns in 1822.

The first part of this initial entry reads:

"As a Number of Christians Being Gathered together as a Church to walk in the Rules of the Gosple [sic] according to the Laws & Ordinances of God and Being assembled at the Dwelling house of Nathan Tefft at a Church Meeting to act and Transact in the affairs of Christs Kingdom."

Nathan Tefft leased his farm along the Battenkill from one of the Dutch landholders living in Albany, in an area that now occupies the present Battenkill Country Club. He was born in 1717 and, as this headstone says, "Emigrated from Rhode Island in 1766," where a majority of the members of the original church came from. As he died in 1789, this marker was probably placed in the Galesville cemetery by a later descendant. This cemetery is found on a hill between the two bridges going west from Middle Falls on Rt. 29.

The earliest meetings were held either in Nathan Tefft's dwelling or barn, or in the dwelling or barn of other church members.

After meeting for several years in this manner, the next entry in the records notes a conference held at Elisha Coon's on "*September 21 A. D. 1782,*" with a number of proposals, the most significant being:

“Proposed whether to Build a Meeting house. Agreed it is Necessary. Agreed that Said Meeting House be Built by the Road Between David Pettys & Jeremiah Prosper Near the Bury [sic] place. Proposed that Joseph Reynolds Draw a Petetion [sic] to request General Schuyler to Give or Sell us a Grant of a piece of Land Sufficient for the Meeting House for the use of this Body”

The location in question was on the north side of the Col. Baum Road on the first rise above Co. Rt. 74. Below is an artist’s conception of how it might have appeared.

At this point, we come to another conference meeting, held November 16, 1782, at Thomas Bentley’s, the third proposal entered was:

“Voted that the meeting house to be built by this body be made 26 feet wide & 32 feet long.”

Now I don’t know if this was intentional or accidental, but using my tape measure, it became evident from the dimensions that we have a church within the church, the center pews and the aisles on either side containing those dimensions. We are now sitting within this original church.

Whenever we assemble in the center pews during communion, we sit within our first church, acknowledge and honor our founders. Whenever we join hands afterwards and sing a verse from “Blest Be the Tie That Binds,” we become the walls of that church, marking out the perimeter of this original church, and affirm ourselves as their legacies.

In February 1783, a committee of three, David Pettys, Elisha Coon and Daniel Ross, were appointed to direct the building of this meeting house, gathering the materials, teams, and assigned periods of labor from among the church members. Consider this, that in a raw wilderness a few short years after it was ravaged by war, a rude log house of worship was raised by our ancestors within the same year that the Treaty of Paris ended the Revolution. It was probably completed by September, when the treaty ending the war was also signed, creating a new nation in the world conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all are created equal.

When the original church became too small, a decision was made in October 1791 to choose a new location for the church. We have David Pettys, to some extent, for making here the next location, as he was willing to donate some land, but preferred the choice of a new site. It was decided that a new site be chosen. Two choices were presented:

“at the Mills at Esq. Whippels [sic]” or “where the Road that Comes by Wm Forsters Comes into the Road (that) Comes by the meeting house.”

It was really no contest. The village was growing, and the second choice was adjacent to the original church. Can you imagine having our church so far removed from the center of the village?

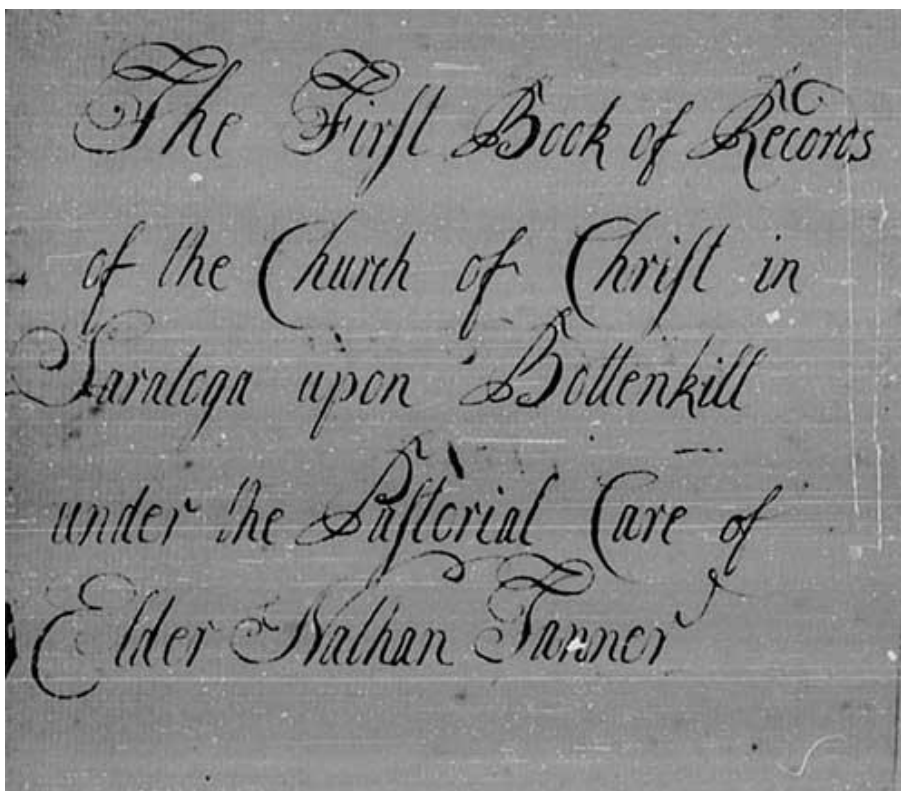
The vote was 9 for the former and 3 for the latter. And at the next meeting, it was disclosed that Esq. (Job) Whipple was willing to give half an acre "*adjoining Doctor Nortons on the North*" with the privilege of a burying ground.

Our next photograph is of this wooden framed church. If you examine the photograph, you'll note in the background the carriage sheds and in the bell tower a clock. It's a theory of mine that the clock found there may have been set into the brick church when it was first built and dedicated in 1865. An earlier photograph, however, shows that the windows that are now stained glass were once plain glass and that the rosette window here was made of solid wood with a floral design in relief. (Which raises the question, whatever happened to the clock?)

Looking at this brochure from 1912, which shows the brick church, you can still see the carriage sheds behind the church and a pine tree where our Nativity scene stands. Of the trees along the sidewalk, one still remains.

These were the three churches that housed our congregation.

[Cover of first book of minutes.](#)



Date of meeting for proposed meeting house.

September 21st 1792 at a conference
held at the Dwelling house of Elisha Coon
first opened the meeting by singing & prayed to God
Proposed that some of the Brethren be

Details of proposal.

Proposed whether to build a Meeting house
Agreed it is necessary
Agreed that said Meeting House be built by
the Road between David Betts & Jeremiah
Crosses near the Burying place
Proposed that Joseph Reynolds Draw a Site
line to Request General Schuyler to give or
sell us a grant of a piece of Land sufficient
for the Meeting House for the use of this Body
Voted that said Reynolds Draw a Subscription
paper to Propagate the Building of said Meet-
ing House
Thomas Benthly Serve with Br

Tom Barber's drawing, at age 11.



Minutes giving the dimensions.

Proceeded to
At a Conference Meeting held at the Dwelling
house of Mr. Tho. Bentlys Novem 16th 1782
opened the meeting by singing & prayer to God
1/ Garden Daley is admitted a member of this body
2/ Voted that the meeting house to be built by this
3/ body be made 26 feet wide & 32 feet long
A covenant mee

Second church, circa 1794; removed in 1865.



Third church, with glass windows; prior to addition of stained glass. Note that the rose window here is made of wood, with bas-relief design.

