

## **Bottskill Baptist Church History Minute**

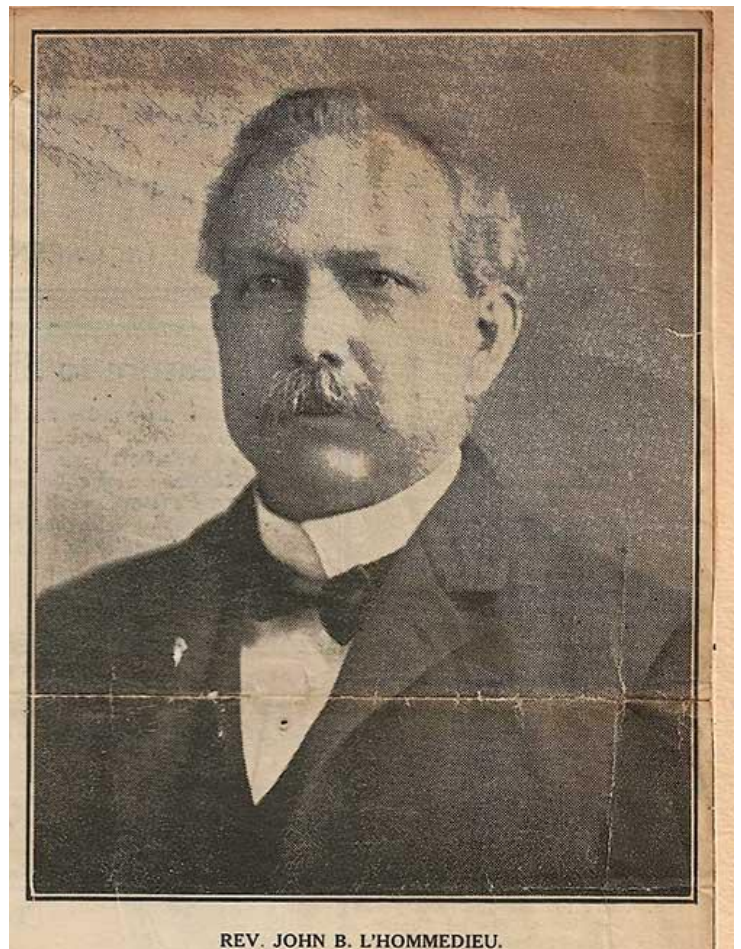
### **Church Historian Ken Perry**

**April 2026- Rev. John B. L'Hommedieu**

This month's History Minute concerns the Rev. John B. L'Hommedieu, the name found on the second window (2) on the west side of the church. His name, in Old French, means "the man of God," an appellation applied to those of the Huguenot faith. His service to this church began on the first day of the twentieth century, January 1, 1900, but ended prematurely a decade later, when he experienced a very aggressive form of pneumonia at the beginning of the year and by November, other health problems lead to his death.

Born at Long Grove, Long Island in 1849, he was a son of Phineas L'Hommedieu and Angeline Hawkins. Prior to his ministry here he began as a pastor for three years at Babylon, N. Y., which is about 20 miles west of New York City near the south shore of Long Island. He was next for ten years at Port Richmond, on Staten Island and then seven years at the Clinton Avenue Baptist of Newark, N. J. Altogether, he gave a total of thirty years as pastor to four different churches.

One thing that John Brewster L'Hommedieu left us was a brief history of the church from the 1908 meeting of the Washington Union Association. For a ministry that was steadily progressing but ended somewhat abruptly, that would appear to be the end of his legacy. That is, except for the unexpected discovery that I made about him while researching one of my own family ancestors.



Portrait of Rev. John B L'Hommedieu for his obituary printed in the Greenwich Journal.

The individual that I was looking into was a Quaker named Daniel Gould (c. 1625- 1716) who, for being a Quaker in Puritan Massachusetts was bound to a gun carriage and given 30 lashes "to drive the Devil out of his

soul.” After recovering enough to travel, he fled to a place called Shelter Island which, as you can see on this map, is literally sheltered between the two peninsulas at the end of Long Island.

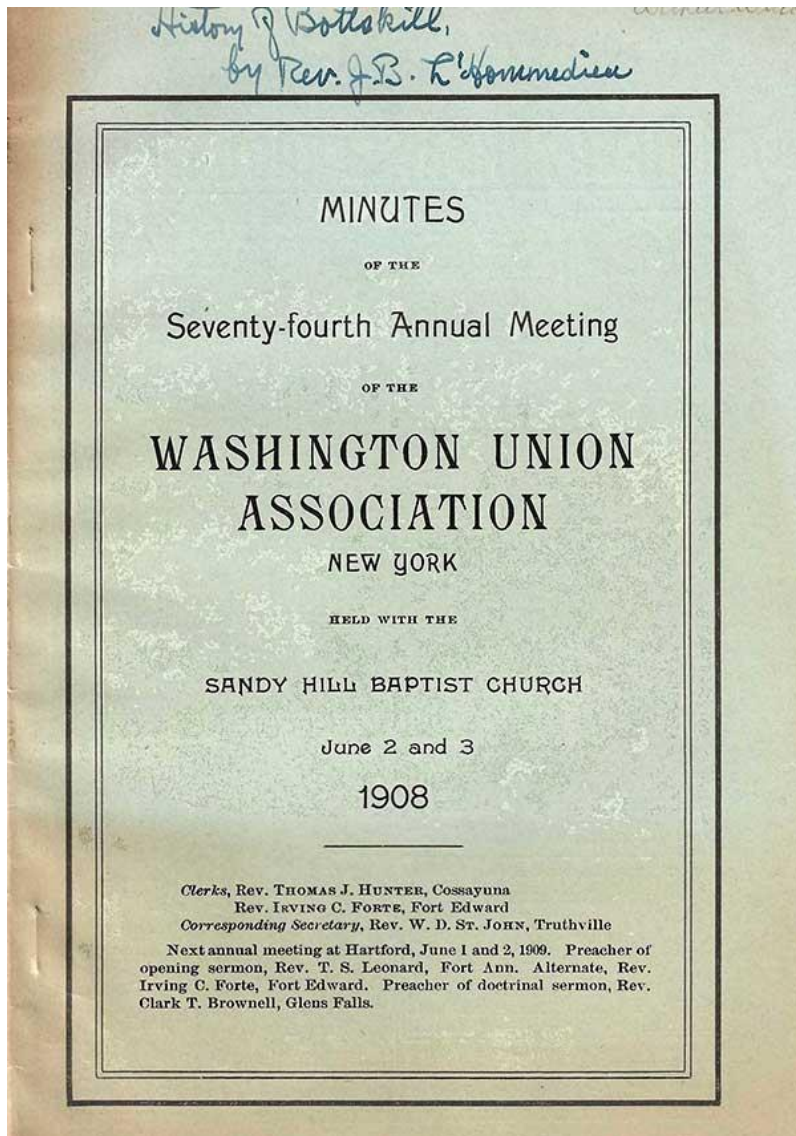
It was then owned by Nathaniel Sylvester, known as the “Lord of Shelter,” for providing sanctuary to those suffering religious persecution. At the same time, reflecting the historical ambiguities of early America,

Nathaniel also managed his plantation using Native American and African slaves.

In 1884, a monument was raised here inscribed with the names of those who were given sanctuary and for what cause.

Those named included Daniel Gould, but I also found Benjamin L’Hommedieu, Huguenot. And so, I immediately thought, what are the chances? Same last name, same location. It turns out that John B. L’Hommedieu is a direct descendant of Benjamin L’Hommedieu (c. 1657- 1749) in the 7th generation. Born in LaRoche, France, he fled his native country after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, which had provided some freedoms of worship and toleration the non- Catholics.

Like many of the other Huguenots at that time, he probably emigrated first to London, where many settled in the borough of Wandsworth, on the south side of the Thames. There is a memorial to them there which reads in part that the Huguenots buried there: “in 1685 left their native land for conscience sake and found in Wandsworth freedom to worship God after their own manner...”



Washington Union Association Annual Meeting Minutes from 1908. Collection of the Bottskill Baptist Church.

than infant baptism; tolerance of religious diversity; and, what we would call Soul Freedom, i. e., freedom of conscience.

One of the areas that these Huguenot refugees settled here was in downstate New York, which is why we have a city named New Rochelle, after the coastal city in France where many of the Huguenots lived. New Paltz, in Ulster County, is also a Huguenot settlement where, in the historic district on Huguenot Street, you can see some of their early stone houses, which are very similar in design to some of the colonial houses found in the area of Montreal and Quebec.

The Huguenots had many beliefs similar to our Baptist faith, such as believer’s baptism, rather

Our first President, George Washington, had a 3rd great grandfather, Nicholas Martiau, who was a Huguenot. In New York, John Jay, who drafted the treaty ending the Revolutionary War, was the second New York Governor and our first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, had Huguenot origins. And in Massachusetts, there is a silversmith by the name of Paul Revere, whose father was a Huguenot.

John Brewster L'Hommedieu is one of our five pastors found in the Greenwich cemetery, along with his wife, Mary Burr, their only son, Albert, and his wife Grace Richards. Their monument is in Section AA), directly opposite of the flagpole.



REVEREND  
JOHN B. L' HOMMEDIU  
1849 - 1910  
MARY E. BURR  
HIS WIFE  
1857 - 1923

Greenwich Cemetery  
Lot AA Sec. 13

Photo of the L'Hommedieu family  
memorial monument located in the  
Greenwich Cemetery, Greenwich, NY.

Without having read or heard any of his sermons, I believe that as a pastor, he was acutely aware of the importance of his heritage in connection with our Baptist faith. For this, we remember John B. L'Hommedieu.