

TURNPIKE TALES

by Jim Ford

"TURNPIKE TALES" #38 Part 2

(Historical items from the "Madison Bouckville Antique Week" region)

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The Madison-Bouckville area has been rich in history from the arrival of the first settlers to the present day. As an addition to the newsletter, we have decided to share some of that history in order that the patrons who travel to the Madison-Bouckville Show will have a better understanding of our truly unique region.

THE MADISON BAPTIST CHURCH

The Baptist Church Society in the Madison area was formed at an organizational meeting on November 17, 1798 at the home of Moses Phelps. The Phelps family lived at "Indian Opening." At the time there were 20 new members present. The church was founded officially on December 20, 1798 as the Second Baptist Church of Hamilton since we were still a part of the Township of Hamilton until February 6, 1807.

Services were held at the Phelps home until 1801, when a church was constructed by Paul Hazzard at the "Opening." (Indian Opening is between Madison and Solsville. Indian Opening Rd. indicates where a community once existed.) The location of the church was at the eastern end of the present cemetery grounds. This original Baptist church was painted yellow and ornamented with a great deal of carved work inside.

The Rev. Joel Butler was the first minister of the church. He served from 1799-1801. Records show that he was paid \$32.50 for his first year of service and \$35.00 for the second.

The seating capacity of the church was about the same as the present-day Baptist Church on North Street. Many of the early members drove yokes of oxen or rode on horseback to attend the services. Those services were lengthy, usually featuring a morning service, a break for lunch, and then an afternoon service as well. The church was unheated and many of the members went to Burton's Tavern between services to warm themselves beside the tavern fireplace.

In 1829, twenty-seven parishioners left to form a new church at Augusta, which is now extinct.

Discipline was strict in the early church. Members were excluded over the years for "sins" such as speaking harmfully against fellow members, challenging church doctrine, or even belonging to the Masonic Order. Two members were excluded in 1840 over slavery discussions and another over the fact that he said publicly that he believed "there was no devil."

A new Baptist church was built in Madison Village in 1833, since many parishioners wanted the church closer to the busy Cherry Valley Turnpike. As for the old "Indian Opening" church, it was sold to James E. Coolidge for \$100.00. The pews were sold in order to raise money for the construction of the new church.

The site for the new church was on land donated by John Lucas. It has been the site of the Madison Baptist Church ever since. Elijah Bicknell, of Morrisville, was the builder. It was constructed in the Federal style of architecture. The building had a wooden frame with interlocking joints constructed on a low stone wall. On the outside was white clapboard siding. A bell tower topped off the building.

Three Gothic style stained-glass windows were placed on each side of the sanctuary and one on each side of the front door. In 1835 a building next door to the church was purchased for a parsonage.

There was a high pulpit and pews with doors on them when the church was built. Between 1858 and 1860, the pulpit and seating were reversed and the doors on the pews removed. In 1861 the name of the church was changed to the First Baptist Church and Society of Madison. In 1880 there were 173 members.

Changes to the outside of the building were effected in 1904 when brothers George and Warren Lyon of Lyon Mills raised the building, created a higher stone wall, and made a basement. Also added to the outside were steps and roof over the front entrance and a portico of cement and cut stone was added to the side entrance.

The church bell, with the inscription "Jones and Hitchcock, Toy, N.Y., 1854" was placed in the tower c.1856. The bell is still in use. The first church organ was installed in 1866. The present organ was installed in 1914 and bears the name "John Gale Marklove."

The Madison Baptist Church continues to be an important religious organization in the Village of Madison.