

TURNPIKE TALES

by Jim Ford

"TURNPIKE TALES" #38 Part 3

(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 BOUCKVILLE METHODIST-EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Solomon and Justus Root, along with their families, came to the Town of Madison in 1806 from Grafton, Rennselaer County, New York. All were members of the Methodist-Episcopal church and enjoyed the doctrines and church service very much. Solomon located about one mile west of Madison Village and formed a religious class in his home.

In a short time a chapel was built by Solomon Root on the farm of his brother, Justus Root, one mile west of Bouckville. Justus donated the lot for the building and the religious class helped to construct what became known for many years as "Root Chapel." The chapel was located at the town line between Pine Woods and Bouckville. It continued to be the regular place of worship for the community until 1852. The present church in Bouckville was completed in 1853.

"This church ought to stand, it is so well Rooted." The quotation was read by Miss Helen Washburn in 1928 at the time of the 75th anniversary of the church. The reference "well rooted" referred to the Root families of pioneer days.

Settled in their new church in Bouckville, in 1852-1854 the ministering was done by circuit preachers, Reverends Clark and Graves the first year and Reverends Beebe and Higgins the second year.

When the church was built, it cost \$2,500. There was a large congregation present for the dedication of the church on August 31, 1853. The lot upon which the building stands was purchased from the Moses Maynard estate. James E. Coolidge was executor of the estate. The building contained a large main room, which in the early days was filled with representatives from nearly every family in the community; and a balcony above the entrance where a good-sized choir led the singing, accompanied by an old-fashioned organ.

The front of the church had two doors, one on either side of a large window. Also, two doors opened into the main room with two aisles leading in between three sections of pews. A coal or wood burning stove was on either side in the front section. The pews were dark colored with red cushions. In the rear of the church a row of horse sheds ran parallel with the road. In 1880 the church had a membership of 38 and attendance at Sabbath School numbered 90.

Early in the life of the church, it was decided to have a bell. The bell was purchased and cast by Jones and Hughes, of Troy, New York and brought to Bouckville on the Chenango Canal. It weighs 1,004 lbs. and turned out to be quite an engineering feat to raise the bell to the belfry, where it has hung ever since. It is said that it took the efforts of eight teams of horses in the bell raising.

The people were pleased with the tone of the new bell. It has reminded the people of the preaching services on Sunday mornings. It has sent out an alarm when there was a fire. For many years it was a time keeper, ringing every morning at nine o'clock, at noon, and at nine o'clock in the evening. It has ushered in Independence Day celebrations; announced the good news of the end of wars, and often in the earlier days it was tolled at the passing of loved ones in the community.

When the Congregational Church in Madison closed, the beautiful memorial windows were donated to the Bouckville church. They continue to be located there and are constant reminders of the tenets of the Christian faith.

The full windows are: The Crown Window, The Ten Commandments Window, The Star of Bethlehem/Easter Lily Window, The Harvest Window, The Holy Bible Window, and The Hope Window.

The remaining two windows are The Vestibule Windows. One is another Crown Window and the other is characterized by simple white flowers.

The Bouckville Church also houses a very unique plaque. It was given by Governor Aaron T. Bliss, of Michigan. He had been a Captain of Company D, 10th New York Volunteer Cavalry during the Civil War. It honors the men who fought with him from Bouckville. The tablet is of bronze, about three and a half feet high and proportionately wide, set in a green marble border. It was made by Tiffany. The members of Company D that were sworn in on October 11, 1861 are listed, as well as those who later joined.

In recent years membership has declined. One annual event at the church that we all remember was the annual church pie sale at the Madison-Bouckville Antiques Show.