

TAKING A PAGE FROM OUR OWN HISTORY

Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it...

Psalm 127:1a (KJV)

Editor's Note: This article is the first in a bicentennial series by WHBC Historian Bonnie Healy.

So here it is: The much-awaited Year 2015 has arrived. We begin a new year in our lives. We end a century in our church's life.

But like so many other times and places that come, 2015's arrival is not quite what we expected. Back at the 2013 annual meeting when a committee first formed to "think about" the bicentennial, we were thinking about strolling down the proverbial Memory Lane and hosting a party. Now, however, the year ahead is going to be so much more than history presentations or the Sept. 20 banquet.

In the wake of Pastor David Hess's death, a pastoral selection committee is working. The constitution will be reviewed. A new website created with a fresh vision statement. Adjustments will be made to new roles and new people in roles. The church will be painted. The bell tower evaluated.

Doesn't that sound like a tremendous lot of work? It's reasonable to ask if our church has ever faced quite such a challenging year.

The answer, if there is one, may be 1838. We remember that year as the time our cherished church building was built, but like our bicentennial, the year

1838 was so much more than a single construction project. It began as a painful year when the marriage of two churches was undone with all the necessary cuts to single threads that accompany any divorce. Baptists from West Henrietta had been united with Baptists from East Henrietta for 11 years when, in the bitter cold of winter, their growing dissatisfaction led to a petition for dismissal.

1838 ended as a joyful year when sister congregations were invited to recognize the new church as one of Christ's congregations among them. In between, our ancestors worked hard. They found new articles of faith and a new covenant, raised the needed funds to build and left us both shelter and beauty. They more than survived in 1838. They more than thrived. They were transformed from disgruntled to shining congregants. Their legacy to us this strange bicentennial is simply:

1. Treat other Christians respectfully. The United Baptist Church split was not entirely amicable, but the West Henriettans didn't just leave. They asked to go.
2. Act together for God. The West Henriettans sought dismissal "for the glory of God."
3. Act in the best interest of fellow Christians, regardless of feelings. The East Henriettans allowed dozens to leave, but stipulated that the new congregation must build a church. They thus wisely and effectively blocked a return to the log cabin and the past.
4. Build the future bravely and well. Even as we reaffirm our roots, we must embrace God's unexpected, transforming will.

Timeline to 1838

1810 – John Brininstool is the first settler on East River Road.

1811 – Michael Brininstool follows his son John to the area. The James McNalls, father and son, arrive.

1812 – War of 1812

1813 – Elder Weaver, a lay preacher from Mendon, begins to minister here.

1815 – A Baptist congregation forms in the riverside home of Isaac Nichols. Rev. Thomas Gorton, an ordained minister, is called to be its minister. Michael Brininstool is its one deacon.

1818 -- Henrietta becomes a town separate from Pittsford.

1818 -- The Baptists build a log cabin house of worship on East River Road.

1820 – Current Moose Lodge built as blacksmith and carriage shop

1821 – Monroe County forms. Henry Chapman builds first hotel in West Henrietta.

1827 – The church unites with Baptists in East Henrietta to form United Baptist Church in the village of East Henrietta.

Circa 1830 – A small band of West Henriettans briefly resumes worship in the log cabin with Rev. Thomas Gorton.

1831 – Second hotel later known as Cartwright Inn is built. General store is built.

1838 – West Henriettans seeking dismissal from United Baptist meet in the home of Elijah Nichols. United Baptist grants dismissal provided they build a church. They build on the northeast corner of the West Henrietta village.

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