

THE MYSTERY OF OUR ELDER WEAVER

This article is the third in a monthly 2015 series by church Historian Bonnie Healy.

We called him “Elder Weaver” so consistently that in time his title erased his given name. Elder Weaver was the lay preacher who ministered to pioneers in Henrietta’s wilderness as early as 1813 and probably earlier. He led the riverside Baptists until we organized in 1815 and called the Rhode Island-born Rev. Thomas Gorton.

Elder Weaver must have been a solitary figure who, on horseback or on foot, the Good Book tucked in a saddlebag or under his arm, traveled woodland paths to preach in cabins and barns. Who would we be if he had not done so? But who was he?

Only two clues hint at his identity. Former Henrietta Historian Eleanor Kalsbeck, in her book *Henrietta Heritage*, called the itinerant “Elder Weaver of Mendon.” The second clue is a mysterious burial in the cemetery of East Baptist Church at Pinnacle and Reeves roads. From 1827-1838 we were part of that congregation and met together in a brick church in East Henrietta. (A wooden structure built by the Methodist Episcopalians, who bought our old brick church, still stands on the site. Once the Trading Post, the building is now a dog grooming school.)

The man buried behind East Baptist Church is said to be Peter Weaver, who was born in 1772 in Rhode Island. His birth year would have made him about 40 when he started

WEST HENRIETTA BAPTIST

5660 West Henrietta Road
West Henrietta, NY 14586

Phone: 585-334-0497
E-mail: church@whbaptist.org

... Or who’s buried in Peter Weaver’s grave?



East Henrietta Baptist Church Cemetery

preaching in Henrietta. His parents, William Weaver and his second wife, Elizabeth Loveland, were married in 1771 in Second Baptist Church of Newport. So Peter Weaver was Baptist from birth.

His 1843 churchyard burial would mean he stayed with the eastside Baptists after the 1838 split, which a Mendon man would have done. Such residency might also help explain why in 1843 the East Baptists left the village and built so close to the Mendon line.

Peter Weaver’s record in the Weaver genealogy ends in 1810, when it is noted that he left Ancram, New York, and “went West.” In 1810, Henrietta was a western frontier.

These pieces all fit a hypothesis that the Peter Weaver buried in East Baptist Cemetery is our Elder Weaver. However, additional confusion is almost humorous. The Weaver woman buried at East Baptist is Margaret Reynolds Weaver, wife of William Weaver, Peter’s older half brother. (Records show

Margaret is also buried with William in Pine Hill Cemetery in Rush!)

Furthermore, Peter’s dates in the East Baptist Cemetery are curiously like his brother William’s in Pine Hill. Both are said to have been born in 1770, although Peter was actually a little younger. Peter is said to have died Dec. 26, 1843 and William Oct. 26, 1843. The question arises: Is Peter really William? William, whose documented New York wanderings disqualify him as our earliest elder?

More curious still is the Rhode Island birth and ancestry of both Elder Weaver and his ordained successor, Rev. Thomas Gorton. Was the connection known to them? And Peter Weaver, if he was our first elder, did he know Michael Brininstool, our first deacon, in eastern New York? When he left Ancram in 1810, he left a town just 16 miles from Rhinebeck, the birthplace of Michael Brininstool. So how did God connect the three key players in our founding? One wonders.