

Reynolds Family History

The Avon Baptist Church and Free Masonry

A Compilation by Robert N. Reynolds

Credit and praise for the items in this piece belong solely to the meticulous research, perseverance and generosity of Robert C. Mahaney M.D. Years ago when I first heard of Dr. Mahaney's research on the Reynolds Family line, and realized he was a descendant of Asa D.'s son Asa I began following leads whenever or wherever his name was mentioned. I was most intrigued by the story told of him by our mutual cousin Glenn G. Reynolds M.D. Glenn's admiration and respect for Mahaney was clear cut from the beginning, so when he told me that Mahaney had been to Avon searching for the graves of our family in fields and places no longer maintained as cemeteries, my interest really peaked. Recently, the rare opportunity of communicating with Dr. Mahaney lead me to ask him about his efforts to uncover the dust of our forebears in the rich soils of the "Genesee." His response was overwhelming. It led me on a trip of my own -- learning about the history of Livingston County; the artifacts of the Seneca Nation of Indians and the Iroquois that preceded our kin there; the war of 1812; the Wadsworth brothers and their famous offspring who died in the Civil war; the appeal of the Genesee Valley and the special attributes of living for a while at Avon; the hard times of the early 1800s that required not only sweat and tears but the red blood of our ancestors who sacrificed for our better times; and finally the history of the Avon Baptist Church which our family firmly held to for a generation or two --and then the anti-masonry movement that intruded and forced our forefather Asa D. to take a stand.

This little effort will reveal just a few of the priceless documents and references that Bob Mahaney sent me. What is presented here is just a glimpse of the many digital images that resulted from this inquiry into our family's past. Many more have been captured and placed on disk for any interested party to explore and investigate further. Mixed among the Mahaney treasures are some images captured from Google Earth--a modern miracle that allows us to go and see places we otherwise could only imagine or dream about.

The process at work here has been thus. Dr. Mahaney, supported by his good wife, has searched and researched every meaningful clue. His efforts have taken him out and about--into courthouses, graveyards, libraries, churches, private homes, family history centers, university tombs and halls of knowledge; they have carried him into the far reaches of the Internet too to retrieve valuable and rare documents. The latter is the case in point here. Copies of old rare documents and hard to find written records

are here converted into digital images and preserved and displayed for others to see and learn.



Looking northeast from a satellite view of the Livingston County countryside. Look closely and you can see the town of Avon and the location of Lot 195 where Asa D. and Betsy Artlip raised their family from about 1815 until shortly after Asa's death in 1835. Barely legible in the upper part of this photo is the location of the Baptist Church our folks attended during their stay in Avon. This photo and the one below captured from Google Earth, 26 September 2009.



A typical Livingston County panorama in the Avon area.

History of the Avon Baptist Church:

CHURCHES.—*The First Baptist Church of Avon* is located at East Avon. In the latter part of 1806, a few of the inhabitants of the then town of Hartford, united themselves in "covenant," forming the Second Baptist Church of Hartford, and called Elder William Firman to be their pastor. In the fall of 1807 they were admitted to the Ontario Association, having a membership of twenty-three. In 1808 the name of the church was changed to the Baptist Church of Avon, on account of the change in the name of the town, and their place of meeting from this time to 1830, was about one mile east of East Avon.

Just when Elder Firman ceased his labors, cannot be ascertained but he was followed by John R. Seaver as early as 1816. He was succeeded by Reuben Winchell in 1823; Rev. David Tenant in 1825; Philander Kelsey in 1827; S. Goodall in 1832; Elder J. G. Stearns, in 1834; Elder E. Stone, in 1838, who remained, however, only six months; Rev. J. W. McDonald, in 1838; Elder A. H. Stowell, in 1841; Elder E. Stone, in 1843; Elder S. M. Bainbridge, March 1, 1844; Elder Wm. Curtis, in 1848; S. F. Campbell, Nov. 9, 1852. From 1852 till May 1856, the church was supplied by students from the Rochester Theological Seminary.

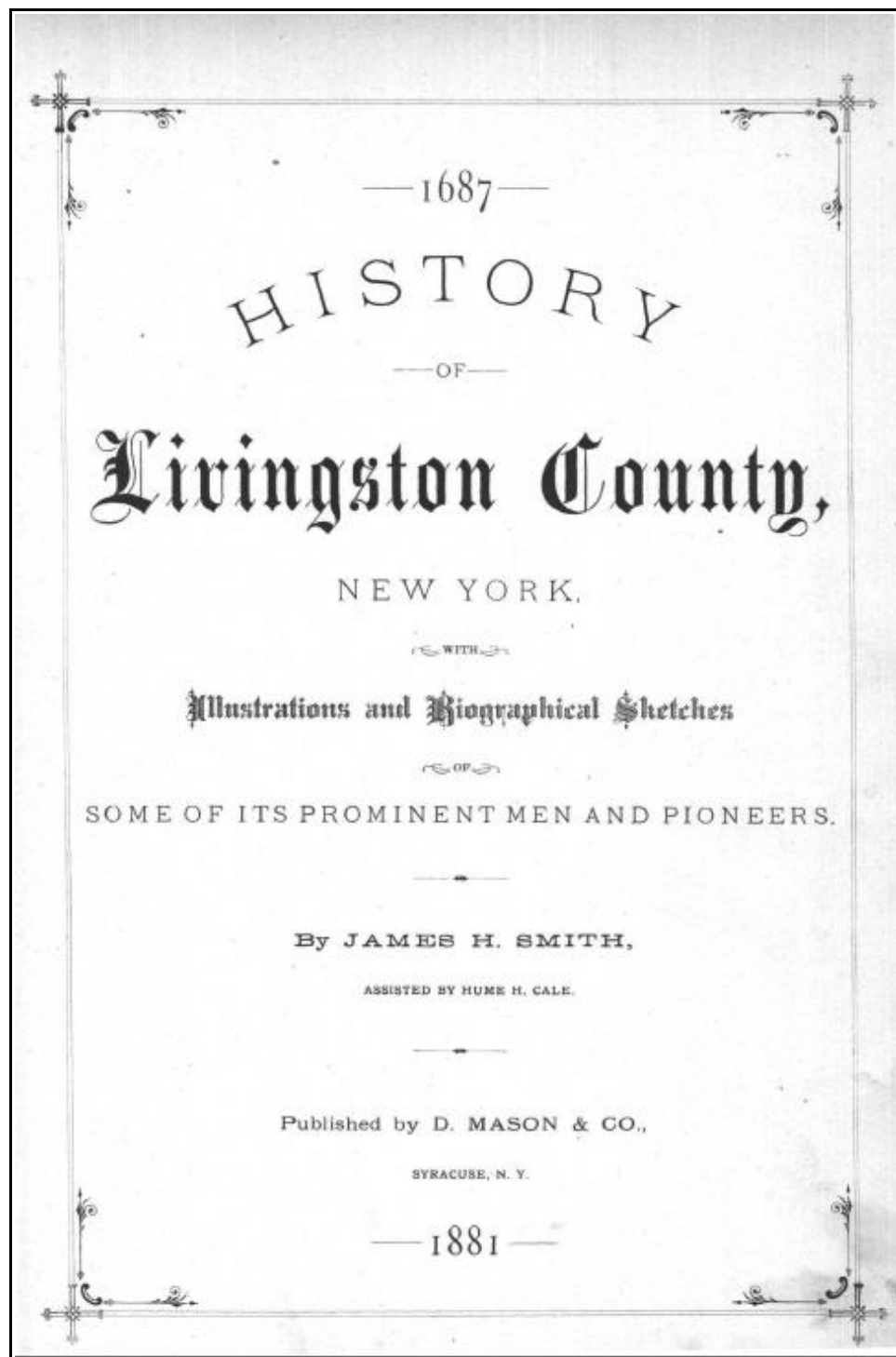
May 31, 1855, E. Nisbet commenced a pastorate that lasted three years. During 1859, Thomas Rodgers supplied the pulpit and was followed in 1860 by H. G. Nott, who left in August, 1864.

Oct. 9, 1864, S. J. Lusk, accepted a call and was ordained in March, 1865, but remained only one year. Rev. B. F. Mace began Feb. 4, 1866, but remained only eight months. The pulpit since then has been supplied with students from the Rochester Theological Seminary. One hundred and seventeen persons have been baptized within the last thirty years.

July 18, 1827, the name was again changed to the First Baptist Church of Avon. In 1828 arrangements were made to build a new church at East Avon. The church was not dedicated till 1830. In 1832 the Livingston County Baptist Association was formed and held their first meetings in this church.*

*The above is compiled from the Livingston County Herald of Oct. 7, 1880.

Source: History of Livingston County, New York by James H. Smith, Published by D. Mason & Co., Syracuse, New York, 1881, page 444



This work is a fascinating read on the early history of Livingston County, New York. For those of us whose ancestors lived there in the early days of settlement. I would say it is

"required reading" that will give insight and appreciation into what life was like for Jeremiah and Elizabeth and many of their children, grandchildren and close relatives who ventured into the frontier of western New York as our young country was expanding west. An online copy, with all of its fine illustrations, can be read at <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/FH19&CISOPTR=80433>

Or, a link can be found in the Library Catalog of the Family Search website. Just do a place search for "History of Livingston County, New York."

There is no "Avon Baptist Church" today. The task then of learning about it when it existed in the early 1800s is one of digging into old archives when and if they can be found. Fortunately for us today the Selden family had the foresight to preserve the early church records and keep them for posterity by donating them to the Rare Manuscript Collections, Carl A. Kroch Library at Cornell University. Dr. Mahaney had the persistence and "know how" to retrieve them.

**Guide to the Selden Family Papers,
1785-1947
Collection Number: 1655
Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections
Cornell University Library**

Contact Information:
Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections
2B Carl A. Kroch Library
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853
(607) 255-3530
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<http://rmc.library.cornell.edu>

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY

Title:
Selden family papers, 1785-1947.
Collection Number:
1655

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

Personal correspondence of Eliza Selden, Harriet Gale, and others; church records for the First Baptist Church of East Avon, N.Y. (1823-1894).....4 cubic ft.

SUBJECTS

First Baptist Church (East Avon, N.Y.)
Knox College.

Subjects:

Baptists--New York State--East Avon.

Religious institutions--New York (State)--East Avon.

Places:

East Avon (N.Y.)--Religious life and customs.

Rush (N.Y.) History.

INFORMATION FOR USERS

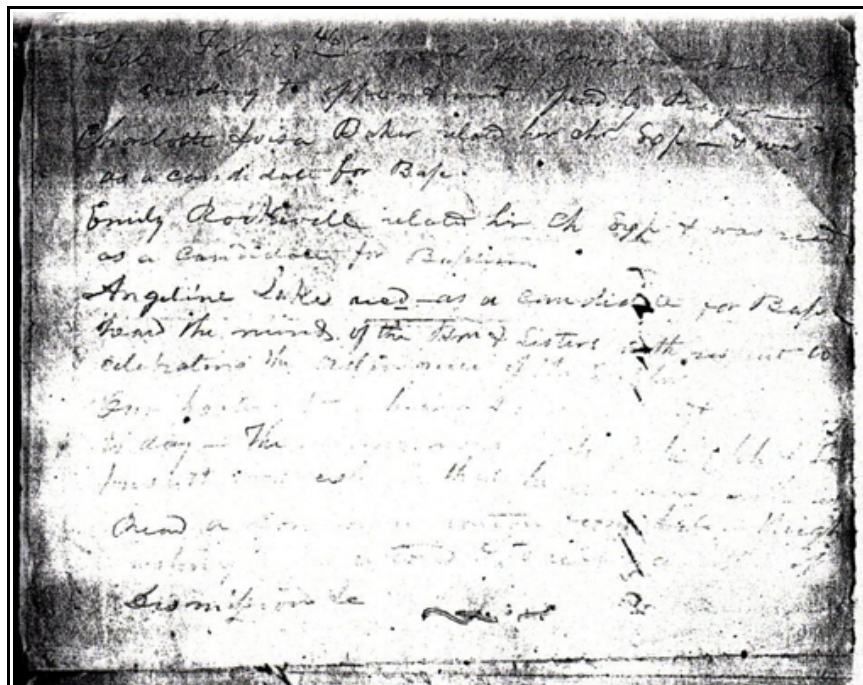
Cite As:

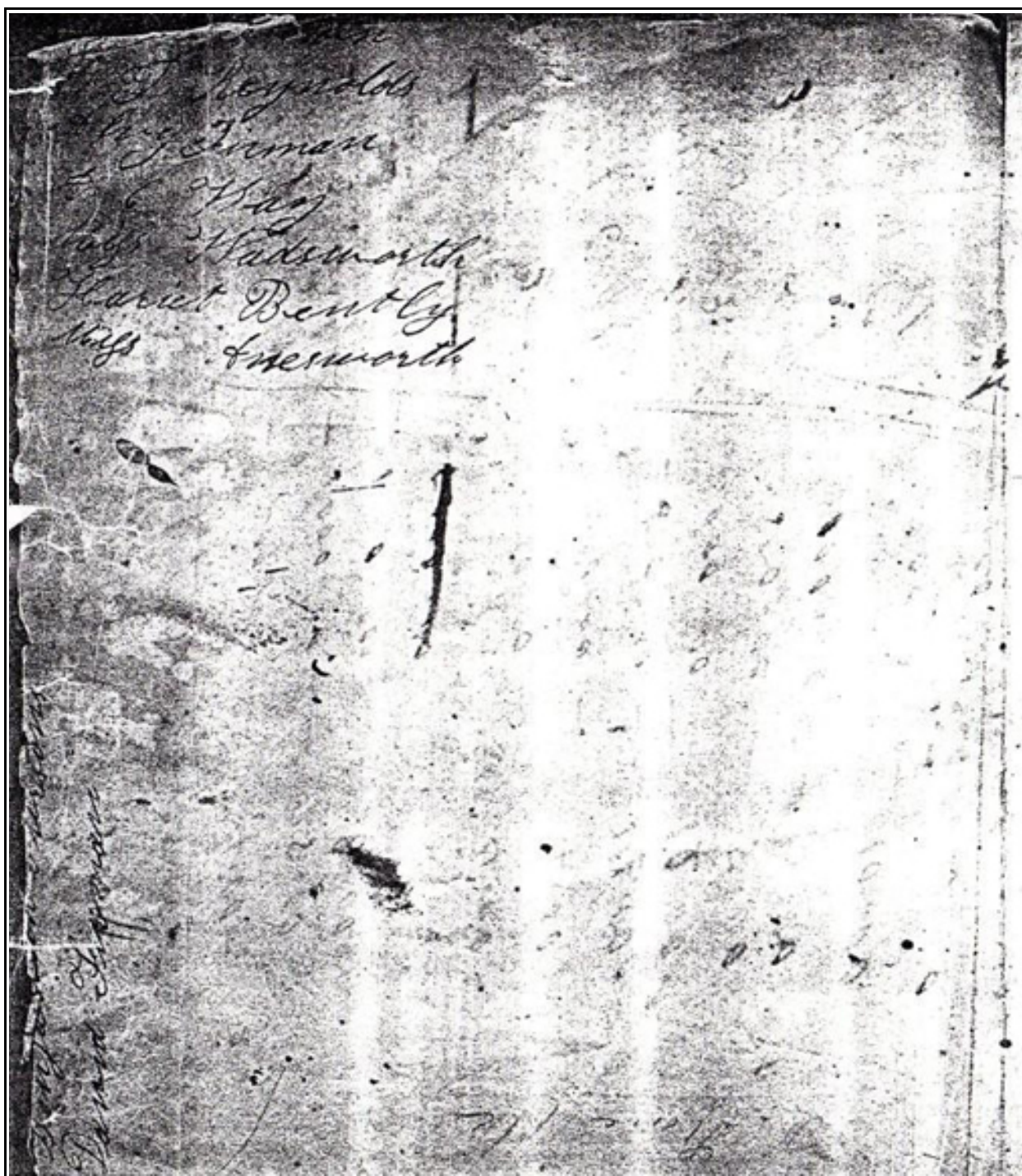
Selden family papers, #1655. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library. The greater part of the collection is concerned with activities of Baptist churches in Livingston County, New York, and includes pamphlets of the annual meetings of the Livingston Baptist Association (1844-1918); manuscript volumes relating to the First Baptist Church of East Avon, New York; also, accounts, notes of church meetings, lists of members, articles of faith, and financial papers; also, historical pamphlets on Rush, N.Y. and the Genesee Valley Canal written by Mary M. Selden and Henry R. Selden. Also, a pamphlet by Henry Selden pertaining to G. B. Selden's invention of the first practical internal combustion engine, and other material relating to the Selden patent.

These portions he copied and passed on to me:

RARE AND MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS, CARL A. KROCH LIBRARY, CORNELL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, ITHACA, NEW YORK 14853-5302--(607) 255-3530

*Selden Papers -
Book #2 Records Avon, NY, Baptist Church*





"D. Reynolds" can be made out at top of page; probably was A. D. Reynolds.

February 4, 1824 and March 20th 1824:

11th Voted that Eld. Winchell Daniel Chapin David
Finnman be a Committee to draft a Constitution
for the same purpose as above mentioned

At a Church Meeting at the Meetinghouse Feby. 4th
1824

1st Chose Mr Mangum Moderator

2nd Voted to answer the request of the Conference
in the west part of this town that have requested
a Council

3rd Voted to send Eld. Reuben Winchell Benjn. Jewell
Daniel Chapin Samuel Gibbs to sit in Council
with our bre from sister churches

At a church meeting at the Meetinghouse
held March 20th 1824. Opened the meeting by prayer

1. The Committee appointed to visit Sister Lorana
Purpolds reported her & crew for neglecting the
Church; but got no satisfaction
2. She praying for further assistance from
the Church; her case was postponed until
a future Chh. meeting

From the above image:

At a church meeting at the Meetinghouse held **March 20th 1824** Opened the meeting by prayer.

1. The committee appointed to visit Sister Lorana Reynolds reported her excuse for neglecting the church but got no satisfaction.
2. She praying for further --- ----- from the church her case was postponed until a future church meeting.

May 14, 1824 Meeting:

1. Heard the report of the committee appointed to look in the report against Br Enos when from a previous confession by Br Enos to the Church, & before an assembly the Church voted to hold nothing against Br Enos.
2. Voted to give Sister Lois Tinsman a Letter of dismission.
3. Voted to inquire into the following charges, first by Br. Et. Barnes against Sister Lorana Reynolds.
 1. Neglect of the Chh -
 2. Neglect of meetings held in the schoolhouse near Linn Reynolds.
 3. Doing mercenary business on the Sabbath
 4. Talking against a Br of the Chh
 5. Telling a falsehood -
4. Having heard the witness, the Church voted that the 1st & 4th Charges are true, & that the Chh hold the same against Sister Reynolds.
5. Voted to send a Letter of admonition to Sister Reynolds requesting immediate satisfaction or she must be excommunicated.

From the above May 14, 1824 meeting:

Item 3:

3. Voted to inquire into the following charges brot by Br. A. Barnes against Sister Lorana Reynolds.

1. Neglect of the church.
2. Neglect of meetings held in the schoolhouse ____ Levi Reynolds.
3. Doing unnecessary business on the Sabbath.
4. Talking against a Brother of the church.
5. Telling a falsehood.

4. Having heard the witness the church voted that the 1st and 4th charges are true & that the church hold the same against Sister Reynolds.

5. Voted to send a Letter of Admonition to Sister Reynolds requesting immediate satisfaction or she must be excluded.

Lords Day May 25, 1824 Meeting:

Item 2. Also the Letter of admonition then voted _____ Church to Sister Lorana Reynolds.

*5. Chosen Br Barker & Eltinge to serve as
Deacons one six months trial*
*7. Voted to have our counsell meetings
& communion seasons here after, once in
two months, also a church meeting
once in two months in
alternately. The church meeting every
one month, & a covenant meeting
the next. Each to be held the Saturday
before the 1st Lords day in each month.
Church meeting next month.*

*1. Lords day May 25th after meeting voted to send
the letter of exclusion to & to brother Pinger
which was then read before the church.*
*2. Also the letter of admonition then read to
Sister Lorana Reynolds.*

*3. Also voted to answer the letter of the Sevier
Church by appointing Bro. Barker & Bro. Eltinge
to sit in council for obtaining aid from them.*
*4. Also voted to answer the letter of the 1st Church
in Tennessee by appointing Bro. Barker*

July 31, 1824 At a regular church meeting held at the M. House. Meeting opened by prayer:

Item 2. Voted to withdraw the hand of fellowship from Sister Lorana Reynolds upon the charges proved against her by Bro. Barnes - May 14th last vis

1. Neglect of the church.
2. Talking against a brother of the church.

to Church fellowship, upon her being
receiving the ordinance of baptism -
(See in? baptism July 8th 1824.)

At a regular Church meeting, held at the
M. House July 31. 1824. Meeting opened by
1. Voted to receive Sisters, Isabelle Bush, &
Charlotte May, to ch. l. fellowship, upon
their letters.

2. Voted to withdraw the hand of fellowship
from Sister Lorana Reynolds, upon
the charges proved against her, by Br.
Barnes, May 14. th last viz -
1. Neglect of the ch.
2. Talking against a brother of the ch.

At a church meeting held Sept. 3^d 1824,

Voted letters of dismission to Sisters, Harriet Thomas,
Executive Spicer, & Lois Finnan -

2. Voted to receive Sister ^{Bernice} to fellowship
of the church, by bearing her experience -
3. Voted, ~~that~~ R. Finnell, Dea. Elijah Barker,
and Br. Grant Gordon represent the ch. at
no. Association to be held at Middlebury & Salem ch.

Membership List - February 15, 1827

850 Selden Papers

February 15 1827

The following list compose the Male Members
Of the Baptist Chh of Wren

Elmer - Barber dis Miss by letter 1828

Nathaniel - Munger dismissed

Benjamin - Parson

William - Humphry excluded Augt 1831

Isaac - Hubbard dis

Austin - Brown

Thomas - Bishop

Anthony - Dickinson dis

- Gould dis Sept 1829

Garret - Gordon dis

Job - Case

Thomas - Cartwright dis

Aaron - Cartwright excluded 1830

Thomas - Hartwell

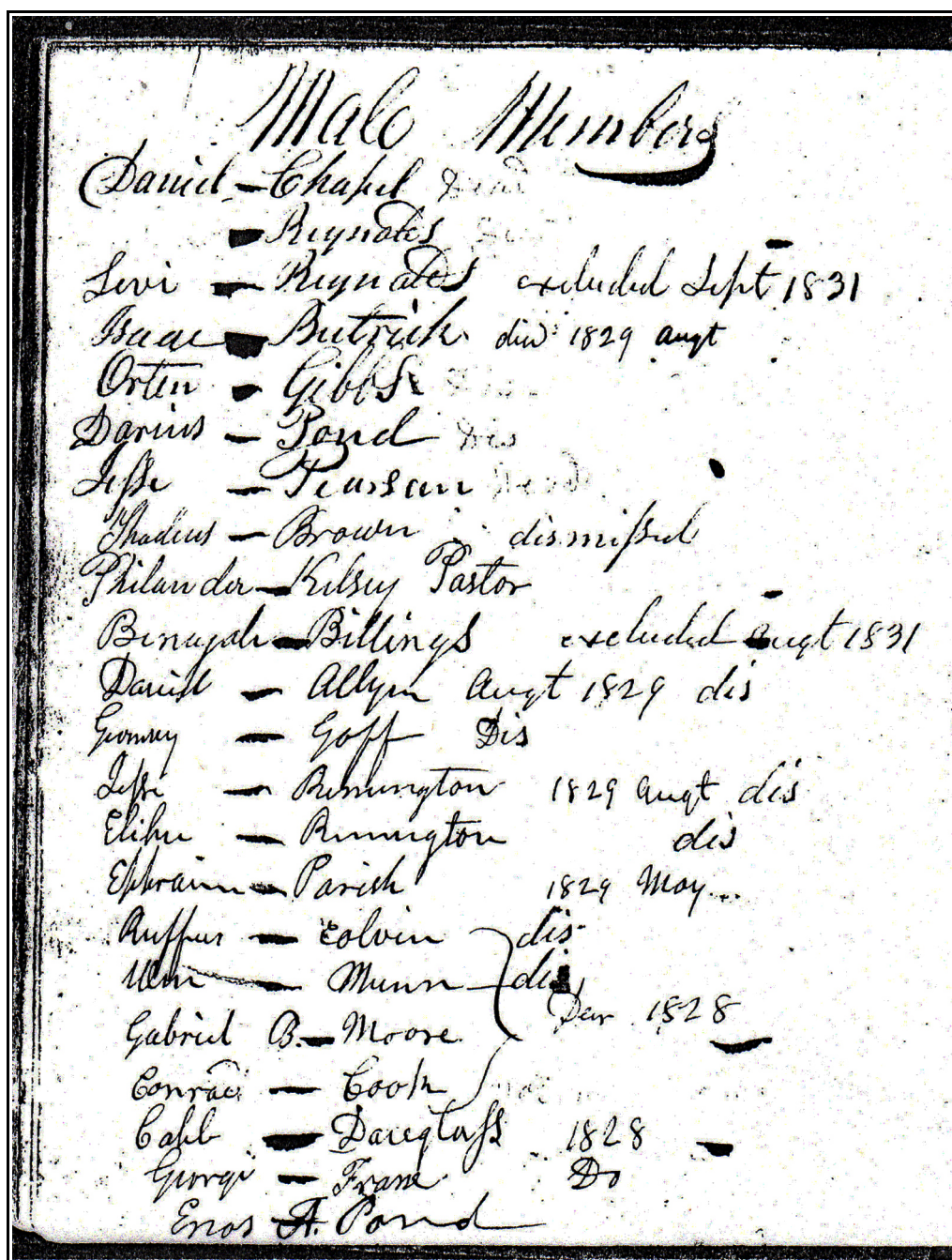
John - Hartwell, excluded Augt 1831

Nathan - Allyn

David - Firmari

Isaac - Seareh dis

Abel - D. Reginald Excluded Sept 1834



Pastor Philander Kelsey served from 1827 until 1832. He preached the service for Jeremiah when he died in September 1827. The Reynolds with no first name showing is probably Jeremiah as Asa D. is on the first list and these names appear to be heads of households and their wives. Note Levi, husband of Lorana is on the list in February 1827. See next List.

Female Members	Females
Maryann Rosner Anna	Perus Pand dis
Mrs J D Ensworth Ex	Alma Davis dis
Mrs Letsy	Bethiah Douglass
Mrs A D Reynolds	Sarah Raymond
Mary Chapel	Sarah Pease dis
Mrs Kennicott dis	Julia Wetley dis
Mrs Butrick dis	Emiri Pease dis
Edwin Gibbs dis	Mrs Mitchell
Mrs Widow Gibbs dis	Miss Mitchell dis
Deborah Roberts dis	Widow Swiss dis
Laura Davis dis	Clorisa Ward
Sybil Kelsey dis	Sister T Hartwell
Sarah Kelsey dis	dis Dickinson dis
Elizabeth Reynolds	Stillwell
Eliza Dickinson	Spencer
Ann Dickinson	Ginning
Mrs B Way	Volley Fernald
Mrs Way	Amibal
Mrs Sarah Buman	Crawel dis
Mabel Way	Mrs Samuel Costan
Hildah Pearson	Callu Smith dis
Margitana Pearson	Lulu Smith May
Leidia Pearson	Marianne Smith
Phila Kelsey	Anna Smith 1832
	Rosetta Smith

Note Elizabeth Reynolds would be wife of Jeremiah and the Mrs. Kennicott would be her daughter Elizabeth, wife of John Kennicott who died 6 March 1826. Mrs. A. D. Reynolds would be Betsy Artlip Reynolds.

June 28, 1831

Chh met 28 June 1831
a complaint was presented by Br
Fritts of Rush against Br. 3 Billings
for using profane language and
Intemperance

Voted that Br Case give notice to Br
Billings & Fritts to attend our Chh
meeting in 2 weeks from this day and
attend to the complaint

Br Allen reported that Br John Hartwell
rendered as an excuse or a part of his
excuse for not attending meeting that he
could not agree with the Church and
account of the resolutions they have
adopted on the subject of freemasonry
Therefore voted that our labour is done with
him and that he be notified to attend
next Chh meeting and Support his
grievances against the Chh at our next
Chh meeting

Voted that Elder Kelsey visit Br A D Reynolds
& Eliza Butler

Note reference that the church passed a resolution (probably against) on freemasonry.
Also, Elder Kelsey to visit Br. A. D. Reynolds and his daughter Eliza Reynolds Butler.

July 21, 1831

Chh-Meeting 21 July 1831 Monday
Voted that Br Garrison visit Br Billings
to know why he has not attended
meeting
Voted that Br Nathan Allyn be a committee
to see Br John Martwell to know why
he has neglected the Chh and to ^{say} if he
has neglected prayer in his family
Chh meeting 4 weeks
Met 21 March 1831 Monday
Br Chapel reported that he had seen
Br Levi Reynolds
Voted that the Chh are not satisfied
with the excuse made by L. Reynolds
and the ^{Chh} expects he will attend meeting
or render an excuse to the Chh
Voted that D Chapel & J. Case visit Br
A. D. Reynolds
Chh-Meeting 4 weeks

Notes of Significance in these minutes:

- * Brother Levi Reynolds is still at Avon in March 1831; and the church is having issues with him i.e., "he will attend meeting or render an excuse."
- * Church votes to send a couple of deacons to have a little confab with A. D. Reynolds, again!

September 1834

Church met 2^d of Sept 1834 according to notice Elder Stearns Moderator Br J. D. Clerk Bateau the case of Br Albert Wiley brought up and voted that we withdraw the hand of fellowship. The case of Br A. D. Reynolds brought up and voted that his case be ~~put off~~ put off untill next Saturday.

Voted that Br Daniel Chapel serve as Church Clerk

The Subject of Deacons discussed and laid over to the next Ch^h meeting. ~~The subject of Elder Prebley brought up and the Ch^h considered not to accept of his proposal. Heard a communication from Elder Prebley and he considered not to accept of our proposal.~~

Saturday Sept. 6. Met according to appointment. Br. Reynolds present. Heard him on the subject of masonry, said he could not renounce it. Therefor voted that we withdraw the hand of fellowship from him.

Significant Developments:

- * Brother A. D. Reynolds is now considered to be a "case." And it is put off "untill next Saturday."

- * Pastor Kelsey's proposal, whatever it is, is not accepted. We know he is no longer the Pastor.
- * Saturday, September 6, 1834: ***"Met according to appointment. Bro. Reynolds present. Heard him on the subject of masonry, said he could not renounce it. Therefore, Voted that we withdraw the hand of fellowship from him."***

To appreciate the decision that Asa D. Reynolds made in holding to his beliefs in freemasonry versus a continued fellowship in his Baptist Church membership can only be had by studying and learning about the socio-political realities that had a bearing on people's lives in the Genesee Valley in the early 1830s. It is somewhat complex but the subject is treated in detail in "A History of Livingston County" by Lockwood L. Doty, 1876. This work can be downloaded free on the Internet by looking it up in Google Books. Doty takes the reader through a brief history of the anti-masonry movement that began in 1826 in western New York and literally changed the face of local politics and peoples attitudes one to another by the time the decision was forced on Asa D. The politics of the anti-masonry movement in Livingston County also invaded the Baptist Church there as we saw in the foregoing example of Asa D.

To what extent Asa D.'s decision had on his family will probably never be known. For sure it had an impact on his children because it most certainly would have carried into the privacy of his home life where intense emotions are usually expressed. Asa D. died just seven months after he was dis-fellow-shipped from his Baptist congregation. His two oldest sons, Levi H. and Asa continued his Masonic tradition and were honored by the order at their funerals.

An additional list of Avon Baptist Church members was provided by Mahaney which shows the valuation of their land holdings. None of the Reynolds family was on the list which, perhaps can be interpreted to imply that none of the family owned land. A search of the deed records for the Reynolds Lot 195 might shed some light on that subject.

Robert N. Reynolds, September 26, 2009