

Church Web Page:

HATBORO BAPTIST CHURCH WAS FOUNDED SEPTEMBER 8th 1835

Why and how Hatboro Baptist was founded:

On June 10th 1835 a Woods Meeting was held under the auspices of the newly formed Central Union Association of Baptist Churches of Pennsylvania. Woods, or protracted meetings, became one of the methods of home evangelization, and upon resolution passed by the Association. The Churches were asked to spare their pastors for these meetings. In full sympathy with this spirit the churches of Pennepack and Holmesburg, mourning over the powerlessness for good of the old Southampton church, which upon the death of the venerable T.B. Montanye, had adopted Antinomian doctrines. They resolved to make an effort to breathe new life into that ancient body, or at least counteract the evil tendency of its teachings. The meeting was held in Hatboro and ran for ten days and was conducted by Revs. L. Fletcher of Great Valley; G.T. Miles, of West Chester; Morgan J. Reese, William S. Hall, of Frankford; and L.G. Beck, of Union Baptist Church. This Woods meeting resulted in the baptism of several converts in the Pennypack Mill Pond. While this meeting was in progress Mr. Joseph B. Yerkes, husband of Hannah, invited one of the presiding ministers, Bro. Fletcher, to come and preach at The Loller Academy. What disposition was to be made of the new converts brought to the Lord from this Woods meeting became a question, which found solution in a proposition by Mrs. Yerkes that a church be formed at Hatboro. A second Woods meeting was held July 31st 1835 to advance the forming of a church. Like the preceding meeting it was largely attended and others were converted and baptized.

On September 8th 1835 The Hatboro Baptist Church was constituted in the Loller Academy with twenty-two members. These founding members, six male and sixteen female, were; John Beans, Charles McNeal, Garrett Krewson, Benjamin Evans, John Ward, William Ward, Martha Beans, Frances McNeal, Phoebe Evans, Sarah Evans, Sarah Silvey, Rachel Mason, Mary Ann Edwards, Mary Whitehead, Ester Whitehead, Elizabeth Booskirk, Rachel Hoffman, Elizabeth Krewson, Alice Vansant, Ann Carrell, Elizabeth

Weiser, and Mary Irwin. Articles of Faith, Church Covenant, and Rules of Order were adopted. Services in recognition of the new church were held on the same day. The sermons were given by; Revs. L. Fletcher, W.S Hall and C.E. Wilson. The Rev. Wm P. Maul, from Blockley church Philadelphia, became the first pastor serving until 1838 during which time the church membership more than doubled. On May 31st 1836 The Hatboro Baptist Church was received into membership of the Central Union Association during its 4th annual session. Hatboro Baptist Church membership at this time was 34.

THE FOUNDATION OF OUR CHURCH IS ITS SUNDAY SCHOOL

The Hatboro Baptist Church's Sunday school predates the founding of the church by 12 years. This Sunday school has a unique place in history, as it was from this that the two oldest churches in Hatborough were formed. What follows is a historical sketch of this Sunday school composed by Rev. George Bowman of The Hatboro Baptist Church and read on it's 50th anniversary, November 5th 1874. The current historian has modernized it.

In 1823 the village of Hatborough, formally known as Crooked Billet, was a thriving community first settled in 1715. It was made up of farmers and tradesmen. The village boasted a library, academy of learning and public school, yet had neither Church nor Sunday school. The village's people, who were churched, went outside the community to religious services. However, Rev. Montanye of Southampton Baptist Church and Rev. Dr. Steele of Abington Presbyterian Church held religious services twice a month in the Loller Academy each preaching alternately.



Mrs. Hannah Yerkes

Mrs. Hannah Yerkes having recently moved to the community was not a member of any church, but she was religiously instructed and accustomed to observe the Sabbath. To her friends she commented, "I have located in a heathen land"; and this situation made her feel the desire for religious instruction in the village. In 1824, while talking with a friend, the question again came up, "Why can't we have a Sunday school?" The suggestion was then acted on and certain families were visited. With their co-operation a movement was made to establish a Sunday school.

Prominent among the citizens who at once endorsed the movement were village doctor J.H. Hill, John Whitehead, Nathaniel Furman of Loller Academy and local politician Nathaniel Boileau. The village and neighborhood were thoroughly canvassed, every family visited. A school of 100 members soon gathered. The principal men and women of the area were enlisted as teachers and the school was opened in the Loller

Academy with encouraging prospects. After a time the men became weary of religion and quit the work leaving it to the ladies to nobly carry on during the summer.

The desertion of the men was probably due to the influence of a sermon about that time, by a prominent minister in Philadelphia, in which he denounced the Sunday schools throughout the country as, “ a great organization, which is likely to corrupt society and endanger our national liberties.” The call to abstain from the use of alcohol also may have played a roll. Nonetheless, the Sunday school carried on and although closed during the winter, reopened again the second summer with encouraging results.

At the beginning of the third summer, Mr. Nathaniel Boileau took charge of the Sunday school and continued to act as superintendent from 1826 to 1835, when the Baptist Church was formed with Rev. William Maul as its pastor. It was then that Mr. Boileau, a member of the Abington Presbyterian Church, gave up control of the Sunday school to the newly formed Church.

The first teachers of the school whose names are on record are Mrs. Sprogel, Mrs. Hannah Yerkes, Mrs. Mary Thornton, Miss Mary Whitehead and Mrs. N.B. Johnson. Some of the key supporters of the early Sunday school were Pastors, Rev. William Maul, Rev. George Hand, Rev. George Bowman, Rev. I. Wynn, Rev. Owen James, Rev. T.P. Price, Rev. B. Eldridge, Rev. Hilton and Rev. F.C. Colby. Early Sunday school superintendents who served were, the Honorable Nathaniel Boileau, Mr. Robert Taylor, Mr. John Follensbee, Mr. Harrison Yerkes, Mr. Daniel Rorer, Mr. N.B. Johnson, Mr. Charles McNair and Mr. E.S. Walton. These are the most notable; but there are many more whose names are lost to time.

Results of this early labor of faith were that many who attended the Sunday school received training fitting them to be a blessing to the world. A few being Rev. William Roney, one of the first scholars who became a Baptist preacher; Dr. David Yerkes, son of the school’s founder, Hannah Yerkes, became renowned as a pastor in the American pulpit; Rev. A.J. Hay, was first a scholar then teacher of the Sunday School who later entered the ministry; Dr. Stephen Yerkes, who became a professor at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary at Danville Kentucky, Rev. Edward G. Taylor and his brother Rev. Malachi Taylor were sons of Robert Taylor one of the superintendents of the Sunday School and Rev. Newton C. Fetter. Many more of Hatboro Baptist Church’s Sunday School have gone on to become not only ministers but missionaries over the years.

The most striking thing about The Hatboro Baptist Church Sunday school is the teachers. Though far too many to name they have been and are dedicated Christians who love to bring God’s message to the children under their care and their fellow church members. Too much cannot be said of the prayerful and earnest manner in which they have undertaken their privilege.