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The Reverend Robert E. H. Peebles
Hilton Head Island, S. C.

T. O. Lawton, Esquire
Allendale, S. C.

Dear Bobby and Tommy:

I should like to have the carefully considered help of both of you in the development of the history of Lawtonville Baptist Church (originally organized as Pipe Creek). You may be assured I shall be grateful for your assistance, and that such help will be acknowledged.

Lawtonville Baptist Church will celebrate its 200th anniversary in March, 1975, and a committee, of which Rey W. Rhodes is chairman, has asked me to prepare the manuscript of a history of the church, covering the formation and history of Lawtonville. If we come up with an acceptable history, it will be published under hard-cover, and will run some 200 pages, and, I understand, will include a number of pictures.

You can help me, for you are not only interested in preserving local history but several members of your families have contributed a great deal to the success of the church. Indeed, one (perhaps more) gave his name to the church and community. I should like your help in this area as well as any others in which you are knowledgeable.

Now, as to some specific items:

I

There was "preaching" at Pipe Creek as early as 1763; the church was constituted in March, 1775, and admitted to the Charleston Association in 1778, under the name of "Savannah River, S. C., Church," which, by virtue of an act of incorporation (an act of the association), dated in 1787, was changed to "The Pipe Creek Church of Regular Baptists."

One, Joseph Lawton, with John Grimball and Joshua Lewis, the pastor, on February 2, 1778, presented the application for admission to the Charleston Association.

Would you give me a brief sketch of the life of Joseph Lawton? His parents? Where born, where he lived, died, children, etc.? Also, if you can, favor me with information on John Grimball? (I have sufficient data on Lewis, the pastor.)

Lawtons, who were pastors of Lawtonville-Pipe Creek were: Winborn A. Lawton: 1826-30, 1852-53, 1858-79; J. A. Lawton: 1838-39 (Is it possible that the "J." should be "W."?); James S. Lawton: 1856-

57. Can you supply a sketch, in brief, on each one of these ministers?

Also, can you tell me about Col. A. J. Lawton? Is he the Alexander J. Lawton, who, in 1835, was a member of the first board of trustees of Furman Theological Institute (which later became Furman University)?

In 1848, Col. A. J. Lawton was president of the Pipe Creek Bible Society. The treasurer was James S. Lawton (presumably the James S. Lawton who was the pastor in 1856-57). In that year the society distributed 1,309 copies of the Bible.

Another Lawton, Joseph James, of Hartsville, was an outstanding Baptist, and from 1920 to 1923 president of the South Carolina Baptist Convention. Did he have a Lawtonville origin, or, if not, connections?

Lawtonville in the old days was seemingly a fertile ground for the development of ministers and missionaries. Some, I believe, were Lawtons, others were Willinghams, Mikells. Can you tell me about any of them?

One Willingham of whom I have a record is Robert Josiah Willingham. He was born in 1854 in Beaufort District, educated at the University of Georgia, served as pastor of churches in Chattanooga and Memphis, and became Secretary of the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and remained there until his death in 1914. It was during his tenure that the Baptists "made marked advances in the work of seminaries and publishing houses around the world." Can you identify him with Lawtonville?

No! Mikells were important in the early days of Lawtonville. My guess is there was a Mikell among the founding members of the church. You may know something of the family as identified with Lawtonville. I do not. But I suspect the Mikells were earlier communicants at Euhaw, and that the Mikells of our area descended from John Mikell, who, in 1751, was one of eight laymen signing the original articles of association, in Charleston, of the Charleston Association (which closely followed the plan of the Philadelphia Association).

To some extent the history of Black Swamp Baptist Church is tied in with Pipe Creek. It was originally a branch of Pipe Creek, but in 1786 was constituted a separate church, with eight members, and two acres of land for the church site was donated by "a member of the Robert family." In informing me, do not hesitate to allude to matters and things affecting Black Swamp; it, too, has an interesting history that should not completely disappear. Incidentally, the first "preaching" in the Pipe Creek-Black Swamp neighborhood was in 1762, by one Francis Pelot, a Huguenot originally from Purysburg who in 1746 turned Baptist, at Black Swamp

II

According to the marble tablet inset into the old Baptis-
mal pool at Lawtonville stated that the Pipe Creek congregation was moved to
it is

that site in 1852. Against the date is an old note, dated in 1936, by Miss Florence I. Lawton that ^{the} old church structure at Lawtonville was built in 1843, and formally dedicated in 1850. Her note shows that present at the dedication were the Reverends Isaac Nichols, James Sweat, Joseph Furze (Furze), and Winborn A. Lawton, apparently comprising a presbytery for that purpose. Do you know any of the circumstances of the move from Pipe Creek -- dates, etc., particularly the reasons for it?

Do you know when -- and also why -- the name of the church was changed from Pipe Creek to Lawtonville? According to the minutes of the Savannah River Association, the name change was in 1884, but apparently the church was ^{earlier} known as Lawtonville, for, in an obituary, published in Texas in 1881 upon the death of Jonas Johnston, it was stated that he was ordained by "the Lawtonville Baptist Church." I suspect that soon after the removal from Pipe Creek, the church became so well identified by the name of the village that it was soon known as Lawtonville and that a change to that name was somewhat compelled. Do you know? If not, do you agree?

It also appears from the minutes of the Savannah River Association that there was another Baptist church in the neighborhood -- Bethlehem, organized in 1835, which in 1893 became extinct, whereupon the Bethlehem membership was absorbed into the Lawtonville congregation. Do you know anything of Bethlehem? Where was the church located?

Further, do you know of the details of the occupancy of Lawtonville, and the destruction thereof, by federal troops in 1865? I understand that the church structure was left standing, but that the pews were removed and burned; also that a portion of a brick wall surrounding the cemetery was knocked down to such an extent that the remainder of the wall was later removed. Do you know any of these circumstances?

According to an article by T. Oregon Lawton, in the News and Courier of July 16, 1950, the church building was used as a hospital by the union forces, and in reconstruction days as a forum for political meetings. Can you enlarge upon these incidents?

I have examined the reports of the 20th Corps, United States Army, commanded by Bvt. Maj. Gen. Alpheus Williams and Maj. Gen. Joseph A. Mower, whose first, second and third divisions passed through Lawtonville in the period between February 2nd and 8th. On the afternoon of the 2nd, the third brigade of the third division, after marching from Robertville, found Maj. Gen. Joseph Wheeler, C. S. A., and his cavalry force slowly withdrawing from Lawtonville (where Wheeler had established his headquarters) and their ensued a brisk engagement, called a "skirmish" in Williams' report to Gen. Sherman. Several Confederate soldiers were killed. According to Williams, "with a loss to us of 1 killed and 7 wounded."

Anent the foregoing, consider this from a note by Miss Florence I. Lawton, dated in 1936, in which she quoted Charles L. Peeples (Sr.): ". . . at the rear of the old Baptist [cemetery, I suppose] there several U. S. Soldiers buried, not inside the cemetery. I know of one Union soldier buried in the cemetery. Horse Pen branch holds the graves of Six Union soldiers - that the Confederate Army made a sudden attack on this spot, killing and burying them right there. The Union soldiers had

camped there, their horses in a pen as it was near a bold stream, and easy for the horses to get water, their headquarters were nearby in Lawtonville churchyard, about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from here [Lawtonville, I suppose]"

Uncle Charley's story may be correct, for Bvt. Maj. Gen. Williams' report to which I have referred, was dated February 3rd, at Lawtonville, the morning after his advance troops had occupied the village. They, the various units of Williams' army, were there until February 8th. The incident at Horse Pen may have occurred after the report, but the federal dead were buried at Horse Pen, how do we account for other bodies at Lawtonville? Can you cast any light on this situation? Where is Horse Pen Branch? if

III

According to the marble tablet in the baptismal pool,

LAWTONVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH

First organized at Pipe Creek Beaufort District by Joseph Blake and Lady Axtel dissenters who emigrated from Somersetshire England 1775 . . .

Do you know anything about the facts behind the tablet? When was it put into the pool wall? By whom? It is obviously incorrect, and the fact that it is causes me some trepidation. I think there may have been a Blake or Blakes among the founding members, but we shall never know with any degree of certainty, for the minutes of the church prior to 1865 were destroyed in the destruction of Lawtonville. We do know -- from a modern map -- that there is a church called "Blake Church" on the old Savannah-Augusta Road just north of the site of old Pipe Creek, some four miles below the Hampton-Allendale line, and, further, again according to Miss Florence I. Lawton, that before 1861 "John Lawton [whom she elsewhere in her notes called Uncle John] also bought Blake Plantation on Pipe Creek." Can you identify any of Blakes?

I used "obviously incorrect" with respect to the tablet. I had in mind Joseph Blake and Lady Axtel. First, Joseph Blake was Lady Axtel's son-in-law. He came to South Carolina in 1670, was governor of the province in 1690, and again just after the turn of the century. Lady Axtel, it is true, was a dissenter, a Baptist, a member of the Baptist Church in Charleston, where she died testate in 1725, devising a lot to the church for use as a place for the parsonage. If a Blake or Blakes were involved in the organization of Pipe Creek, he and she, or they, must have been their descendants or of an entirely different family. Do you have suggestions?

IV

Can you identify William H. Brisbane? He was pastor of Pipe Creek in 1833 and 1834, and was ordained at Pipe Creek in 1830, and earlier one of the delegates, in 1826, to the association.

Apparently Brisbane left Pipe Creek to become editor of the Southern Baptist in Charleston, for in 1834 he proposed in and to the State Convention such a religious publication. In the following year the State Convention "went on record as entertaining 'a high sense of the value of the Southern Baptist, as a medium of intelligence and intercommunication, and of the services of Br. W. H. Brisbane, as Editor."

Back before 1937 I recall a very celebrated columnist, Arthur Brisbane, whose column was carried in the Hearst newspapers throughout the country. He reportedly was the highest paid newspaper man up to that time in the nation, and before becoming a columnist, I understand, he was the editor the New York American, the New York paper of Hearst. I have also been told -- way back then -- that Arthur Brisbane had his origins in the old Robertville community. Was he a grandson of William H. Brisbane?

I suspect William H. Brisbane was either the son of Adam F. William Brisbane or a nephew. William Brisbane may have been an early settler in the Pipe Creek area. In 1763 he, William, donated "an additional acre of land when the "neat brick" church was built for the Ashley River Church (Baptist) after the original wooden church was burned in 1762. (Ashley River Church was a few up-river from Charleston; it became extinct in 1785.) miler

Please forgive me for writing at such length and to both of you in a single letter, but my questions are common to both of you. You may be sure that any information furnished by you, whether dealing with the church or community, would be welcomed, and, indeed, appreciated by me and the committee.

With all good wishes and kindest regards,

Sincerely,

Coy

CC - Mr. Rey W. Rhodes
Estill, S. C.

P.S. Bobby, I read with interest your article in Names in South Carolina. A very good job. Also have seen the microfilm of some of your work in Ga. Archives Dept. I particularly enjoyed the Stafford account of his boyhood and his descriptions of Black Swamp church and old Robertville. I had to sell out at St. Simons Island; we simply couldn't take the bugs, mosquitos and the summer humidity.

Coy