

NOTES ON BLACK SWAMP BAPTIST CHURCH AT
ROBERTVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA

Benjamin Spicer
By: B. S. Stafford (from memory) c. 1933

The galleries extended out as far as the partitions across the seats. The negroes, both slave and free, entered by two doors at the back and went up the steps to the galleries.

The families paid for their pews and always sat in the same ones. I have marked a few whose location I can remember. The men had boxes of sand on the floor inside their pews, in which to spit.

The choir did not always sit in the same place. Only a few in the choir, the ones I can remember are Mr. Baily, Mrs. Nannie Bostick Desaussure, and Mrs. Agnes Bostick Colcock.

Old Mr. Ben Bostick was partially deaf. He always sat in the ^{at} choir, marked B, in the pulpit, so he could hear the preacher.

I don't know how many deacons the church had, but I remember that Uncle Alex Lawton and Mr. Ben Buckner were two and I remember seeing them wait on the congregation during communion service, and taking up collections. Also for these services negro deacons came down from the galleries through the doors in the partition across the corners, for the bread and wine to serve the negro members, two for slave men, two for slave women, and two for free negroes.

There was a carpet down the aisle and on the floor of the pulpit. Many of the members upholstered their pews.

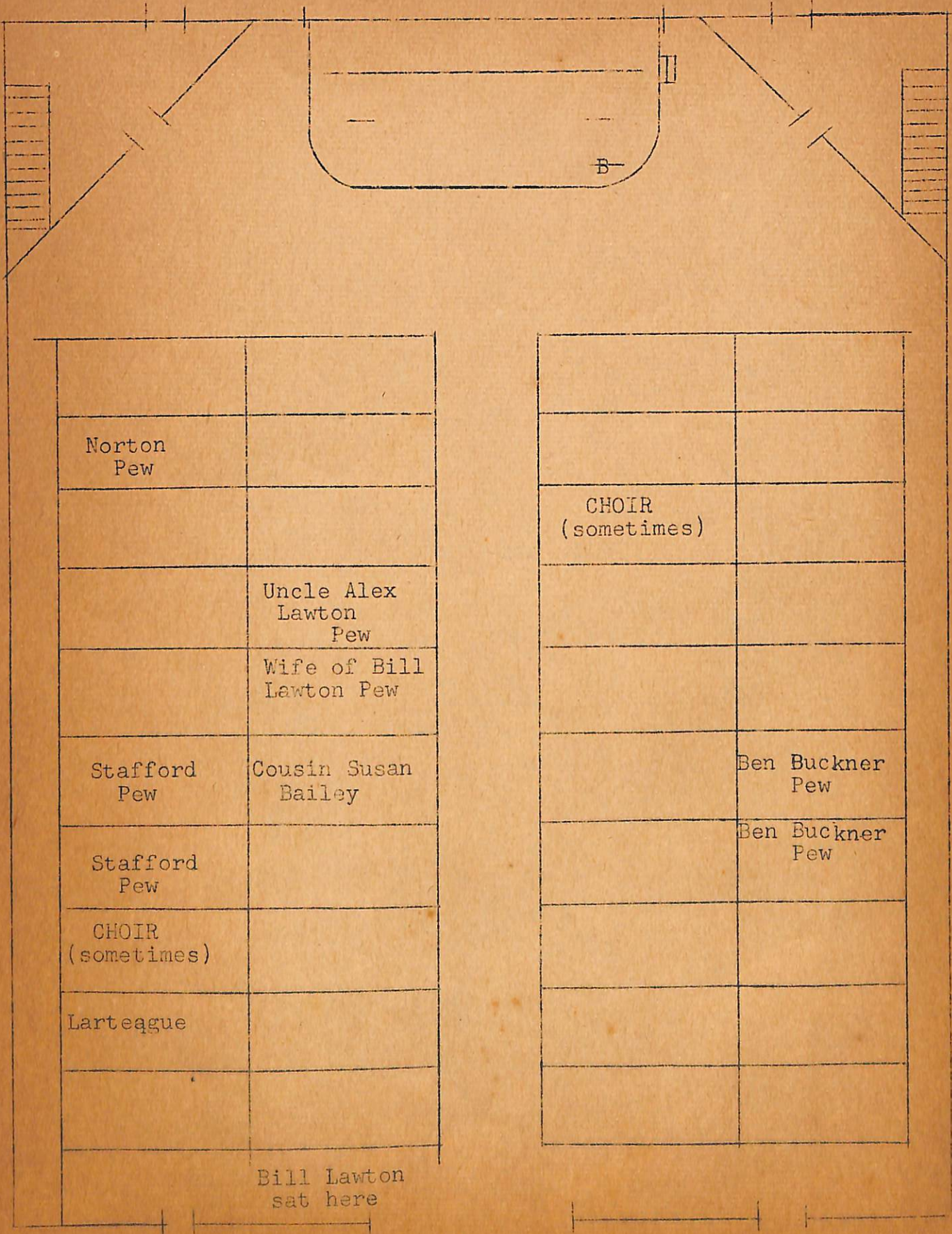
I remember attending our association at the church before the war, I think, as Father was present. Father was clerk of the church for several years. When he went into the army he turned the church books over to Uncle Alex Lawton.

This was a good church building, much better than any other church anywhere in the country.

Grandmother always sat in the front one of our pews.

Cousin Bill Lawton had the finest carriage and finest horses of anybody who came to church.

Men that I know, who were pastors were Uncle John Luther, Bro. Williams, and Bro. Morrall. I have heard Uncle Winborn Asa Lawton, Cousin Joseph Lawton, and Mr. Joe Bostick preach there too.



Norton
Pew

Uncle Alex
Lawton
Pew

Wife of Bill
Lawton Pew

Stafford
Pew

Cousin Susan
Bailey

Ben Buckner
Pew

Stafford
Pew

Ben Buckner
Pew

CHOIR
(sometimes)

Larteague

Bill Lawton
sat here

CHOIR
(sometimes)

B

F R O N T

Free Negroes

Men
Slave
Negroes

Women
Slave
Negroes

B A C K

Aug 31, 1891

THE DAYS OF LONG AGO.

Reminiscences of the Old Robertville Huguenot Baptist Church.

[From the Baptist Courier]

IN 1775 or 1776 two remarkable women removed to Black Swamp from Colleton District, South Carolina, with portions of their families and relatives:

1. Mrs. Sarah Jaudon Robert, the widow of Jacques Robert, who had died in 1774 and was buried at Stow County church, on the Combahee, with her sons, Peter and Elias, and daughters, Elizabeth Grimball and Judith Audebert.

2. Mrs. Elizabeth Robert Jaudon, the wife of Capt. Elias Jaudon, with her children and husband.

These two sisters, intelligent and godly women, lived to honor the church, "fear the Lord, and hence were praised by all," and their works do follow them.

Rev. Alexander Scott from Georgia visited the community in 1781, and succeeded in organizing a church at Black Swamp. Marrying the widow Grimball, he became pastor of the church and served it from 1785 until 1806 or 1807, when he emigrated to Mississippi and soon afterwards died.

In March, 1785, the two other children of Grandma Robert, as she was called, joined these—

1. Deacon John Robert, with his wife, Elizabeth Dixon Robert, a highly cultivated English lady, granddaughter of Landgrave Thomas Smith with five sons and two daughters.

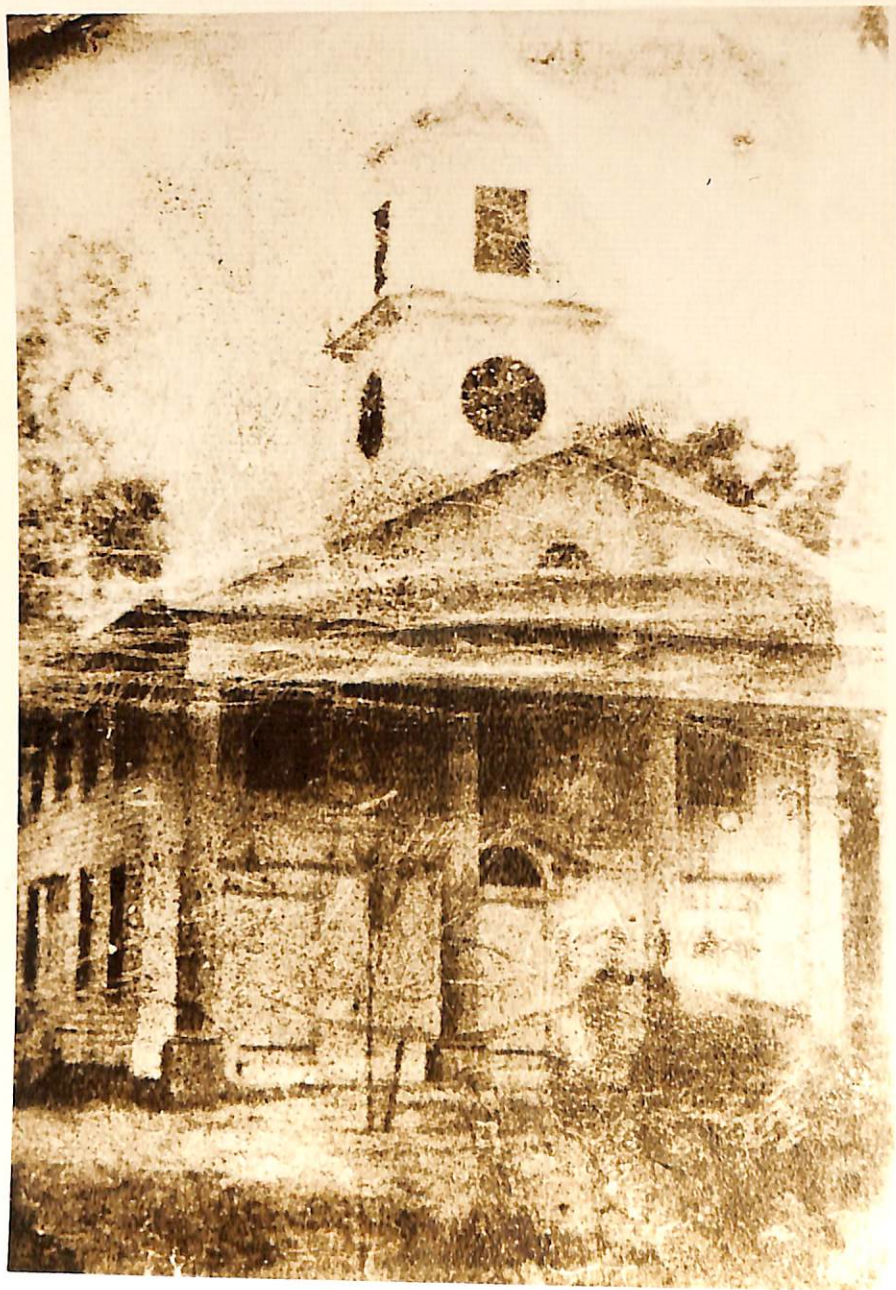
2. And his sister, Mrs. Sarah Robert Lawton, and her husband, Joseph Lawton, an English gentleman, also a deacon, with five sons and two daughters. These removed from Colleton District to Black Swamp, and settled on plantations near the village of Robertville. These being Baptists, strengthened much the church, and added largely to the interest of the schools and congregations in the community. The community felt the loss of the pastor, Rev. Alexander Scott, Peter Robert, Judith Audebert, Joseph J. Lawton, Thomas Porthuil, B. L. D. Lawton, and others, who emigrated in 1806 to the Mississippi Territory. This loss was partly made up by the removal of Dr. George Mosse and his family and some of the Nortons to the community. Dr. Mosse purchased the lands from the movers, Rev. Scott, Peter Robert and Grimball, and settled on them, he and his wife, Phebe Norton, and also aunt Graham, another sister of Mr. Wm. Norton. But Dr. Mosse and wife died in about one year and a half.

In 1820 the church had gotten down to very few indeed; it was few in numbers and without a pastor. There was no theological school to which to turn for a preacher, and wisely and piously they betook themselves to God in prayer for an under shepherd to break to them the bread of life. This was especially impressed on the mind of Deacon J. Jehu Robert, who in great agony of heart wrestled with God one day until he felt sure that God would answer and send them a minister of his word. That very day, while walking in his piazza late in the afternoon, he saw a stranger riding up with his saddle-bags, and said: "That is the man! I saw him in my prayers. Get down, my brother! I am glad to see you. I don't know who you are, but I believe you are the preacher for whom I have been praying, and that God has sent you. Tell me, are you not a preacher?" And, sure enough, it was Rev. J. H. T. Kilpatrick, father of Dr. J. H. and W. L. Kilpatrick, now of Burke county, Ga. He was induced to remain and labor awhile. God blessed the church and community with a gracious revival of religion. Brother Kilpatrick was continued over one year. Col. A. J. Lawton, father of Gen. A. R. Lawton, and many other valuable accessions were made to the church membership, and the effects of that meeting continued till the breaking out of the late unpleasant war, in 1861.

In 1825 the house rallied for a new house of worship, and at a cost of between \$5,000 and \$10,000 succeeded in erecting the neat and well furnished house, with a gallery on three sides for colored people, a steeple and a clock painted on it, and a brick porch in front with four large brick columns at least three feet in diameter.

Grandfather John Robert and uncle Richard Bostick, aunt Sarah Robert Lawton, Mr. Morgandaker, the Manners, Jaudons, Nortons, Chovius, their children and children's children, and many others united to honor God in this house, our "Mount Zion, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole community, the city of the great King."

W. H. ROBERT.
Centreville, Miss., August 31.



Black Swamp Baptist Church
built in 1781 at or near
Robertville S.C.

The 2 acres of land were given
John Robert - first church burnt by
British 2nd this one was burnt
by Sherman in 1861-1865-

St Joseph Lorton
was deacon

Photo By

Lawton High School

Photo Dept.

Now this church the 2nd one was
built in 1825 - burnt by Sherman ^{value \$5,000}
_{to \$16,000}

The 3rd Baptist Church building
was bought from Epis. congregation
in Gillisonville S.C. + brought to Black
Swamp in a Baptist Church + is
still standing.