



CONGREGATIONAL HISTORY

Gallatin Church of Christ

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Gallatin Church Options in the 1820s, '30s, and '40s (continued)

If people in Gallatin were reading Stone's Christian Church periodical before there was a Christian Church in Gallatin, then my question is, What church options were available to these readers? In issue 6, I shared Presbyterian and Baptist options.

-Methodist

≤1790s: Methodist societies were meeting in Sumner County (e.g., in homes).¹

~1800: Strother's meeting house in Cottontown²

~1800: Crane's meeting house/ Rehoboth down Cage's bend³

<1805: Methodist society in Bethpage⁴

1829: First Methodist Church of Gallatin was organized.⁵ It first met in the Union Church building until it completed its own building in ~1844.⁶

-Catholic

1837: A "frame building" housed a Roman Catholic Church that previously had met in a house.⁷

-The Union Church

1804-1860s: According to multiple sources,⁸ the city of Gallatin had a log building on the north side of Bledsoe Street that served as a church building for different denominations in town. This building is known as the Union Church (*not* to be confused with "Old Union" or "Union" Hill Churches of Christ). As I understand it, people of Gallatin could gather for church services in that building in the 1800s, '10s, and '20s. I do not yet know any details of those earliest gatherings—leadership, music, preaching, baptisms, Communion. The common use and common ownership of the facility might have promoted some sense of unity among Christians, though I am not sure of this—and I get the impression that our knowledge of these things is not only scant, but perhaps practically nonexistent.

¹ Durham, *Great Leap Westward*, p. 156.

² *Ibid.*, p. 164.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Durham, *Old Sumner*, p. 16.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 330.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 332.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 338.

⁸ Easton Morris, *Tennessee Gazetteer* (1830), pp. 58-59, in Durham, *Old Sumner*, p. 160; *ibid.*, p. 124. Mayme Hart Johnson, *A Treasury of Tennessee Churches* (Brentwood, TN: JM Productions, 1986), p. 29. Morris, *Gazetteer*, also referenced in *History of Tennessee ... Counties of Sumner ...* (Nashville: Goodspeed, 1887), p. 814. The Union Church appears as lot number 33, west of Water Avenue, on the 1839 map of Gallatin.

1828: It was after “sacramental meetings” held at the Union Church that First Presbyterian Church formed in 1828. But the Presbyterians continued to meet at Union Church until they had their own building in 1836-1837.⁹

1829: It was after (the same 1828?) “sacramental meetings” held at Union Church that First Methodist Church formed in 1829. But the Methodists continued to meet at Union Church until they had their own building in ~1844.¹⁰

By 1830, the Union Church was a “large brick” building, and the only other church building than that of the Cumberland Presbyterians on the corner of Smith Street and South Green Street/Boyers Street.¹¹ After each denomination gradually acquired its own building, the Union Church “was given to the Black members.”¹² It was torn down during the Civil War.¹³

-Camp Meetings

Though not the same kind of establishment as regular church gatherings and church buildings, camp meetings are indicative of the religious atmosphere of many people in this period.

1800: In Sumner County, camp meetings were held in 1800 at Red River, Drake’s Creek, and—much nearer to Gallatin—at Desha’s Creek.¹⁴ This is worth noting because, in Kentucky, Barton Stone’s choice to leave the Presbyterian Church and begin the Christian Church movement was rooted in part in his experience of a camp meeting at his Cane Ridge Church in 1801. Camp meetings had a way of bringing people together. As noted in issue 6, a Baptist preacher in/near Gallatin was chastised by his church for communing with Methodists and Presbyterians at a Shiloh meeting in 1801. Camp meetings in Gallatin may have pressed upon people the need for Christian union—a message that would become central to the Christian Church movement.

1828: Meetings in this year played a part in the forming of First Presbyterian and First Methodist Churches. What about those who didn’t join either of these churches?

-Sunday School

1830s: Again, while not the same as church gatherings and church buildings, the occurrence of a Sunday School in Gallatin in the 1830s might indicate perceived needs that Christians in Gallatin cooperated in meeting. From Durham, *Old Sumner*, pp. 320-321:

“The ‘Gallatin Sunday School,’ a non-denominational effort sponsored by the churches to make instruction in reading and writing available to children and young people who could not afford the costs of private schools, was organized in 1830. No details of the school’s operation are known, although the eighth anniversary was observed July 4, 1838, at the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Gallatin. Thomas Anderson, secretary of the board of trustees of Transmontania Academy, was superintendent of the Gallatin Sunday School at that time.”¹⁵

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So, what church options were available to Gallatin readers of Stone’s *Christian Messenger*? Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and Catholic, with some facilities and efforts in common.

⁹ Durham, *Old Sumner*, pp. 327-328.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 330-332.

¹¹ As can be seen on the 1839 map of Gallatin. Gallatin Cumberland Presbyterian Church is the church listed on lot number 13 on the east side of Water Avenue.

¹² Johnson, *Treasury*, p. 29.

¹³ Goodspeed *History*, p. 814.

¹⁴ Durham, *Great Leap*, pp. 166-67.

¹⁵ Based in part on the Gallatin *Union* newspaper, June 29, 1838.