Information Sheet

**R Big Rock Primitive Baptist Church (Versailles, Mo.).**
Four volumes.

**MICROFILM**

This collection is available at The State Historical Society of Missouri. If you would like more information, please contact us at shsresearch@umsystem.edu.

These are records of the Big Rock Primitive Baptist Church and its predecessor, Bethlehem Baptist Church, near Versailles in Morgan County, Missouri. The records include minutes of church business meetings and membership rosters, 1827-1942, and a history of Big Rock Church, 1968.

The Bethlehem Baptist Church was organized on 9 August 1827 at the home of Jacob Chism in Cooper County, Missouri. The small congregation, which included the Thruston, Scott, and Harmon families, adopted the articles of faith of the Regular or “Anti-mission” Baptists by 1830. The church continued to meet in Cooper County, at locations which included the Boonville Academy, through 1834. In August 1835, the congregation determined to move to Versailles in Morgan County. Meetings were held at the homes of members and at local school houses until 1847, when a building was purchased and moved to a site near Versailles known as “Big Rock.” Bethlehem Church seems to have been inactive from June 1851 to April 1858. There are no records of church meetings during that period.

The Big Rock Regular Baptist Church was organized in April 1858 by twelve members of the old Bethlehem Church. The new church was affiliated with the Lamine Baptist Association. The articles of faith of the Bethlehem Church were retained, as was the pastor, Howard Jackson, and the clerk, Francis L. Ross. Meetings continued at the Big Rock site until 1886. The congregation met temporarily at the McKinley schoolhouse until a new building could be completed at a site north of the former location. The present church building was dedicated in 1888.

The records of the church consist of three record books, 1827-1942, and an historical sketch of the church compiled in 1968. The record books contain the articles of faith, rules of decorum, and minutes of church business meetings beginning with the organization of the Bethlehem Baptist Church in 1827. Volume One contains the minutes of meetings of the Bethlehem Church through June 1851. They are followed by the minutes of the organizational meeting, articles of faith, and rules of decorum of the Big Rock Regular Baptist Church. The volume also contains membership records for the Big Rock Church dated March 1856, which is nearly two years before the congregation was formally organized by that name. Volume One ends with the minutes of meetings in 1874.

Volume Two contains records from 1858 through 1910. The minutes of meetings from April 1858 through July 1874 are duplicated, having been recopied from the earliest book. The minutes in Volume Two are complete through 1910 with the exception of the period of the Civil War. Volume Three contains records of meetings beginning in 1910 and continuing through July 1942. The minutes have gaps in the records for the 1920s and 1930s.

The church was designated a “Regular Predestinarian” congregation by the 1880s. By 1900, the church adopted the name Big Rock “Primitive” Baptist Church.

The records of the Big Rock Church are a useful source for an early Regular Baptist congregation. The church was one of the first societal organizations in Morgan County, and, in its earliest period, had strong connections with Cooper County. There was a distinct integration of the church
and community life which is indicated by investigations of church members for improper conduct, and by deliberations on disputes involving neighboring churches. Routine church business included election of church officers, the admittance and dismissal of members, and discussions on the location of meetings and the construction of a church building. Membership records, although they are not entirely complete, will be useful for genealogical and historical research, particularly for the ante-bellum period. A history of the church, compiled by members in 1968, has been filmed following the record books.

**Shelf List**

These are records of the Big Rock Primitive Baptist Church and its predecessor, Bethlehem Baptist Church, near Versailles in Morgan County, Missouri. The records include minutes of church business meetings and membership rosters, 1827-1942, and a history of Big Rock Church, 1968.

Volume 1: Bethlehem Baptist Church/Big Rock Regular Baptist Church, record book, 1827-1874 (132 pages).

Volume 2: Big Rock Regular Baptist Church, record book, 1858-1910 (240 pages). This volume includes records from April 1858 through July 1874 which were transcribed from Volume 1.

Volume 3: Big Rock Primitive Baptist Church, record book, 1910-1942 (approx. 85 pages).


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