

# Oldest church came before Albion existed

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The earliest church to be organized in what is now the Town of Albion was outside the Village of Albion. Established in 1818, it was known as the First Christian Church of Barre before the Town of Albion was established in 1875.

There was once a Protestant denomination (sect) simply known as Christian, which has since merged with other denominations.

There were three Christian churches organized in Orleans County — one in Murray as early as 1815, one in West Shelby in 1834 and the one that is our subject in this article.

All three societies built meeting houses, two of which still stand today. A brick one at West Shelby was later used as a store and the Murray group moved and built a meeting house in Manning, which

is now a storage building.

The only thing remaining of the one in the western part of the Town of Albion is its name on old maps. Our illustration from the 1852 map of Orleans County shows the Christian Church next to a house noted as S. Bennett. This church was located on the north side of the West County House Road between Wood road to the west and Long Bridge Road to the east.

Jotham Morse, the founder and pastor of the church was an early settler who devoted 50 years of his life to preaching regularly and serving the pastoral needs of the members.

The church building was erected in 1830. Prior to that, the people met in their homes for worship.

The Christian church had a very simple worship style with emphasis on the Bible and little

need for any pageantry.

The Rev. Morse, like many self-taught preachers of that time, could not exist on any meager salary from the church, so he also farmed to support his family. He later served in a dual role as the pastor of the West Shelby Church.

A Mrs. Fred Thompson who was 95 in 1967 remembered attending socials at the Christian Church during the 1880s. There was no dining room in the small meeting house. However, a Miss Bennett in the house next door allowed the church ladies to set up tables in her house for social affairs of the church.

The programs would be given in the church and the supper served in the Bennett house. Mrs. Thompson said the church closed in 1890.

The meeting house was later torn down and the site is now part of a field.

