

Ephraim Blaisdell — A Freewill Baptist Pioneer

Ephraim Blaisdell, 1717-1802, was one of the original 60 Proprietors for the Town of Lebanon, Maine, when it was formed as a township in 1735 by the General Court of Massachusetts. The proprietors erected the first public buildings in 1762: a 40' x 30' two-story Meeting House and a 36' x 24' one-story Minister's House.

The first church in Lebanon, an Orthodox Congregational Church, was constituted in Ephraim's home June 24, 1765. He was one of six charter members, having transferred his membership from the Congregational Church in York, ME. He was elected as one of the first two Deacons for the congregation August 8, 1765. His wife, **Thankful (Webber) Blaisdell**, was admitted to the church in 1767.

Ephraim's Sin, Confession, Restoration

The church records of April 17, 1767 charge Ephraim of stealing and killing a steer. He was dismissed from the office of Deacon and suspended from communion. On Sept. 13, 1767 he made public confession of his sin, was restored to communion, but not to the office of Deacon.

By 1770 he stopped worshipping at the church and by 1772 began to hold worship in homes around town, which became the basis for the Free Will Baptist Society in Lebanon.

His wife continued to worship at the Orthodox Congregational Church. One day after refusing to attend her husband's church, Ephraim "seizing a new pair of shoes belonging to his wife, which had been procured by her only a few days previous, took his knife and cut one of them asunder crosswise through the vamps so she could not wear them, in order to deprive her from attending meeting that day."¹

Free Will Baptist Tenets

Ephraim believed these tenets: The only Scriptural mode of baptism was immersion. The ministry should not be educated and should not receive any pecuniary compensation for preaching. There is to be no established order in conducting worship on the Sabbath; both preacher and hearer should act as they be moved by the Holy Spirit.

Ephraim's son, **John Blaisdell**, was the first Free Will Baptist minister in Lebanon. **David** and **Edward Blaisdell**, sons of **Ephraim Blaisdell, Jr.**, Ephraim's brother, also became Free Will Baptist ministers.

Ephraim Blaisdell was a great great grandson to patriarch Ralph Blaisdell — (5.11)

1. *A History of the Town of Lebanon, Maine* by **Samuel Wingate Jones**, p. 63.

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