

40. Churches in Bloomington

Now we are going to look at the early churches in Bloomington and read some very detailed information about how they started. And if we get too bored with all the detail, we can simply stop reading. To me the detail is interesting because it shows how complicated it often was to get a new church started where there had not been one before. The tenacity of the people who pursued their dream of a church through so much turmoil, financial insecurity, discord, ill health, death, and above all the difficulty of procuring and keeping converts, is impressive. Knowing as we do today the hardships of pioneer life, it seems amazing that anyone had the stamina and energy to pursue religious matters with such determination.

The detailed reports here, about the following churches in Bloomington, are taken from the 1881 *History of Grant County, Wisconsin – Bloomington*.

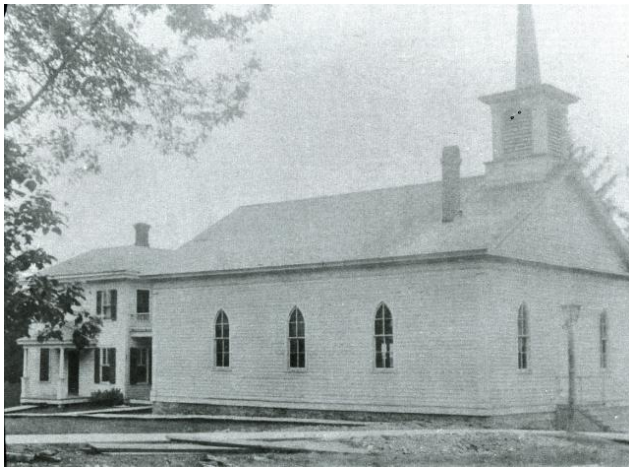
The First Congregational Church began in the abandoned Tafton Collegiate Seminary building in 1878. This facility was used until it was replaced by a new facility dedicated in 1915. This church was first organized on the 10th of April, 1847, at Patch Grove, in the house of Hugh Garside, consisting of fourteen members. The organizers were the Revs. O. Littlefield and J. D. Stevens. Mr. Littlefield became the first Pastor, preaching half the time in Beetown. He remained until February 1849. During the months next following, the church was without a Pastor, but in November the church extended an invitation to Rev. C. W. Monroe, of Boston, a young man in the ministry; December 25, he was ordained. A parsonage was in process of construction, but the building went so slow that Mr. Monroe took it into his own hands and held it as his own property. Rev. Mr. Monroe left in 1850, and for about a year the church was without a Pastor. During this interval, the Rev. S. W. Eaton, of Lancaster, looked after the spiritual needs of the little flock. In October 1851, Rev. Ira Tracy became Pastor at a salary of \$400. Mr. Tracy first preached at Patch Grove and the "Red Schoolhouse" alternately, but afterward changed so as to include other points. In 1855, the question of erecting a church building was taken up and a site selected a mile and a half south of the present village of Bloomington. The congregation was aided by private subscriptions and supplies from the Congregational Building Fund, the cost of the building being \$1,400. April 1856, Rev. Mr. Tracy took his departure, going to Spring Valley, Minn., where he remained until his health failed. August of the same year Rev. A. M. Dixon commenced his pastorate, the church membership at this time being about fifty. During the nine years of Mr. Dixon's stay, this membership was doubled. Following Rev. Mr. Dixon came Revs. George Smith, William A. Lyman, Julian Dixon and A. E. Tracy. Nine members of the church entered the army; seven returned; two, Charles Bingham and Ira Tracy, Jr., remained behind awaiting the great reveille. Rev. Mr. Dixon's efforts were heartily seconded by faithful workers, and during his pastorate, Sabbath schools were established at Beetown, Patch Grove and Glen Haven.

During the winter of 1865-66, the church extended a call to Rev. C. T. Melvin, which was accepted. About this time, the congregation was strengthened by the addition of several members previously connected with the Scotch Presbyterian Church of Canada. In June 1866, Rev. A. A. Young became the Pastor of the church remaining five years. He was aided during the past part of his ministry by the Rev. W. H. Marble.

At its first organization, the church had been called the First Presbyterian, but this name had soon after been changed to Blake's Prairie Congregational Church. During the pastorate of Mr. Young,

the name was again changed to the First Congregational Church of Tafton. Rev. Mr. Young closed his labors May 20, 1871, and the church was without a Pastor for a little over a year. In June 1872, the Rev. David Wirt received a unanimous call, which was accepted, and the reverend gentleman remained one year as Pastor. During this year, it was determined that the well-being of the church demanded that it should have one organized center at Bloomington and another on the prairie. The old academy was purchased and remodeled and improved at a cost of \$1,160, and at the same time another church edifice was erected on the prairie; the Bloomington Church was dedicated August 24, 1873; at that time there was a deficit of \$600, but of this amount \$512 was pledged at this time. The second church was dedicated October 12, 1873. During this same year, Rev. Charles Willey came to the pastorate and remained as Pastor for two years, during which time, twenty were received into the church. The first Sabbath in November 1875, Rev. Smith Norton occupied the pulpit in both churches, and the week following the Rev. Ira Tracy, former Pastor, passed on to the shore beyond.

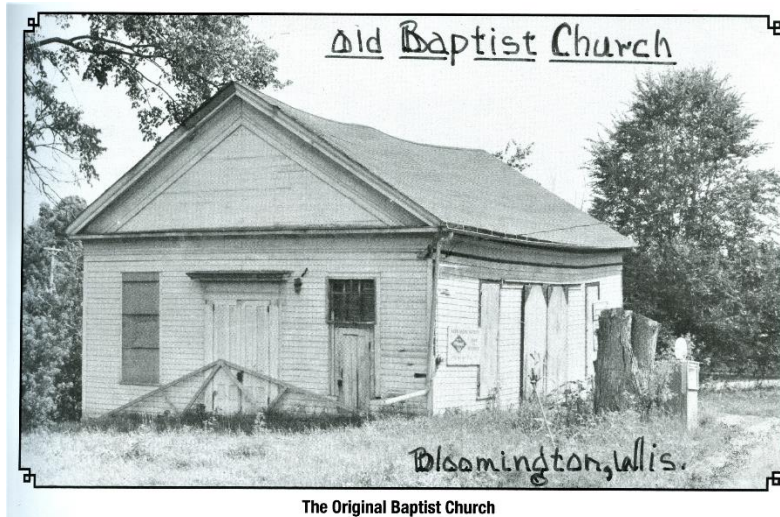
Mr. Norton remained six months, during which time ten members joined the church. In June 1876, Rev. R. L. Cheney came and was ordained in the October following, and has since remained in the pastorate of this church. The present officary of the church is as follows: Pastor, Rev. R. L. Cheney; Deacons, J. A. Kilbourn, L. C. Newcomb, J. W. Stone, William R. Newcomb, S. McIvor, B. Beardsley, M. Scott; Clerk, C. R. Newcomb. The First Congregational Church merged with the Bloomington Methodist Congregation and became The United Methodist Church in 1965.



The original Methodist church and Parsonage was built in 1871 and a new building constructed on that site at the turn of the century. In the late 1800s pastors would travel from village to village as circuit riders to minister to the congregations.

The first Methodist class was organized in the fall of 1857, and consisted of H. K. Wells, Mrs. Wells, Jeremiah Gee, Mrs. Gee, Mr. and Mrs. L. S. Osborne, Miss Annette Wilson, Miss Minnie Gordon, Mrs. N. Wilder, Luke Parsons and William Crosley. H. K. Wells was class leader. Service was held every two weeks, the new organization being attached to Patch Grove. The ministers having the little flock under their care were the Rev. W. F. DeLapp and Rev. Knibbs, who were associated

together on the circuit. Mr. De Lapp was followed by Rev. C. Cook in the spring of 1859, who had associated with him Rev. Alfred Brunson, followed in the fall of the same year by Rev. C. P. Hackney. In the fall of 1860, Rev. R. R. Wood succeeded Rev. Mr. Cook, and was, in 1862, followed by Rev. W. F. De Lapp, who returned for a second time. He remained two years, and was succeeded, in 1864, by Rev. E. S. Bunce. In 1866, Z. S. Hurd came to the circuit, remaining one year, when he was succeeded by Rev. W. H. Kellogg. Rev. C. Bushby took charge of the circuit in 1868. Up to this time, the congregation had been without a church. The first meetings had been held in the old schoolhouse, and, after the erection of the Baptist Church, service had been held there for a few times, and afterward Brown's Hall had been leased for the use of the church. In 1868, however, the present church building was erected, and the congregation, after numerous vicissitudes, at last was vouchsafed a permanent abiding-place. Rev. Mr. Bushby remained three years, and was followed, in 1871, by the Rev. J. D. Brothers, who also served a term of three years. In 1874, Rev. E. M. McGinely came to the charge, followed, in 1875, by Rev. D. L. Hubbard. In 1876, the church, expressing a desire for the services of Rev. R. Hoskins, then at Bloomington, with the permission of Rev. Mr. Hubbard and the Presiding Elder of the district, Mr. Hoskins took charge of the church, being the first resident Pastor. The church was, in 1877, separated from Patch Grove and organized as a distinct body, Rev. James Ward being appointed to the new charge. Rev. Mr. Hoskins afterward sailed for India as a missionary. Rev. Mr. Ward was followed in the fall of 1878 by Rev. A. Charles, who remained as Pastor until 1880, when he was succeeded by Rev. J. C. Lawson. Previous to his coming, Mr. Lawson had announced himself as willing to serve as missionary to the far-off east, and soon after his arrival at Bloomington notice was received by him that his offer had been accepted, which necessitated his severing his connection with his charge, leaving the church for the present without a Pastor. The present officers of the church are: Trustees, L. S. Osborne and J. D. Clayton; a vacancy exists caused by the death of Mr. Milo Higgins, who formed the third member of the board; Secretary, L. S. Osborne.



The Original Baptist Church was built in 1863 on the northeast corner of Mill and Second Streets and replaced by a new structure in 1905. The original church, prior to its destruction, served a variety of purposes including as a gymnasium for the Bloomington school system around 1910 and then for a storage unit before being torn down.



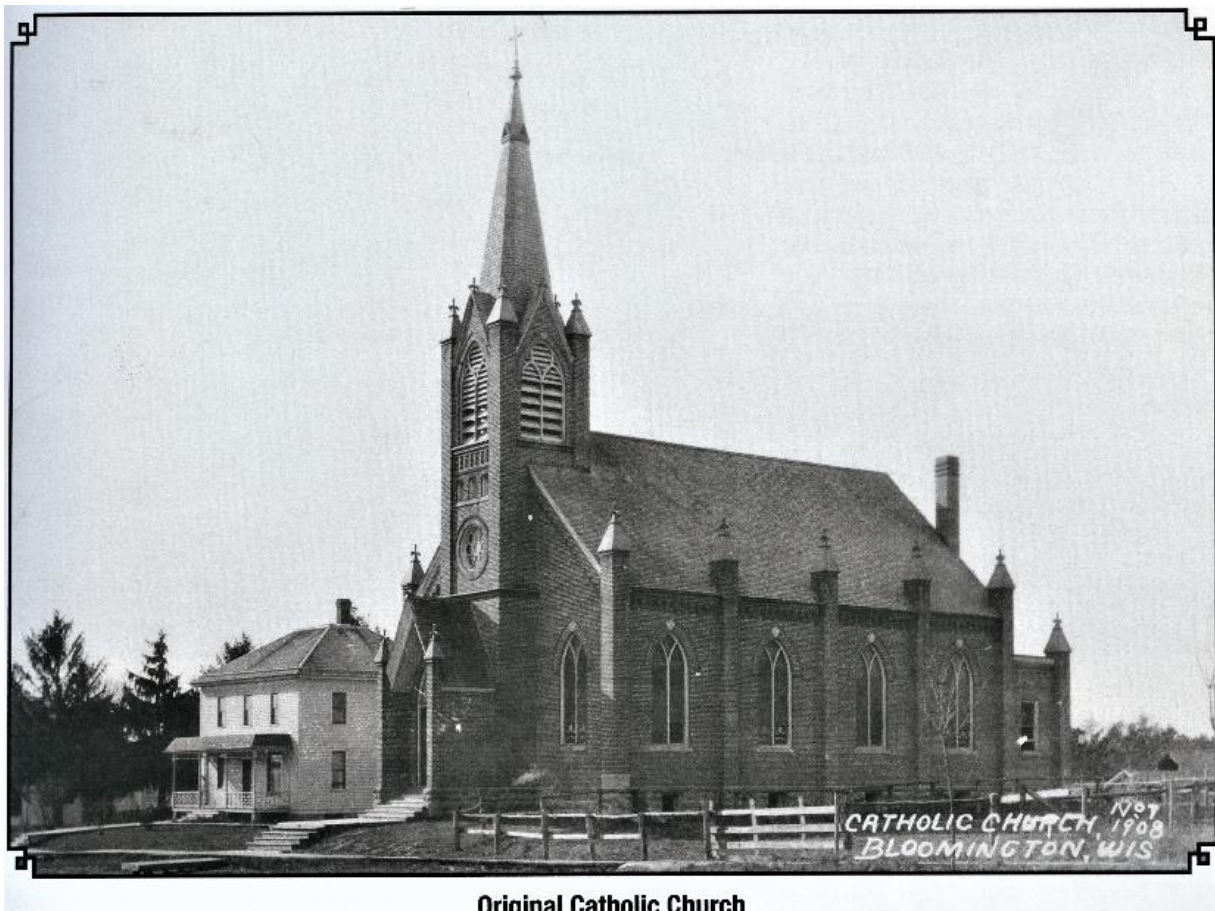
This impressive structure was the new Baptist Church built in 1905 for the village's Baptist Congregation at a cost of \$5000. Following the parish disbanding in the early 1920s, it was sold in 1926 for \$1500 and later remodeled into a double residence by the Sprague family and occupied by their daughter for many years. The history of the Bloomington Baptist Church is as follows. The Beetown and Bloomington Baptist Churches are one and the same, the early history of the church and

its beginning will be found in another place connected with the Beetown history. This organization was effected June 21, 1845, and it continued as a branch church until January 2, 1847, when a council was convened at Beetown, of which Elder J. P. Parsons was Moderator, and Elder William Stillwell was Clerk. The church organized as a separate church, with Elder Chapin as Pastor. Elder Chapin continued to divide his time between Beetown and Lancaster until November 30, 1850, when he accepted a call to devote his whole labor to the newer organization. He remained until the close of the following year, when he tendered his resignation, which was accepted with much regret. During his pastorate, meetings had been held alternately between Beetown and the "Red Schoolhouse." In 1852, Rev. D. Matlock preached alternately at Lancaster and at Beetown, and at the close of his labors Elder Miles preached for the church six months. He was followed by Rev. William Wallace. In May 1855, Rev. E. M. Lewis was called to preach one-half the time. Previous to this, a revival added seventeen to the church. An attempt was made during this year to erect a church but the project came to naught. In the spring of 1857, a series of meetings was held at Tafton, then a rising village, and the church removed to that place. In 1858, Elder Lewis severed his connection with the church. The congregation remained without a Pastor until April 1859, when F. G. Thearle, a licentiate of the Darlington Church, assumed pastoral care in accordance with a call that had been extended to him. He devoted a portion of his time to the church at Wyalusing, but in October was ordained as Pastor. The name of the church was changed in this year from Beetown Baptist Church to Tafton Baptist Church, and work was commenced on a new church building, and completed sometime after in 1863. Elder Thearle remained until 1864, when he was succeeded by Elder B. Law, who remained until April 1867. The church was again without a Pastor until 1869, when Elder W. T. Hill took charge of the congregation, devoting a portion of his time to Wyalusing. Elder Hill resigned in August 1870, his resignation was not acted upon until March, 1871, and in May he closed his labors. April 1872, Rev. G. F. Strong was called to the pastorate, and, accepting, began his labors in May; they were cut short by his untimely death in September of the same year. In November, J. C. Webb preached for a few Sabbaths, and was asked to continue six months, and, in December, was asked to continue one year, he having been ordained in October by a council called for the purpose. Elder Webb closed his work in June, 1874, and the same month an invitation

was extended to Elder G. D. Stevens, who accepted the invitation, and has continued as Pastor up to the present time.

The present officers of the church are as follows: Pastor, G. D. Stevens; Deacons, James L. Woodruff, Homer Beardsley, Peter N. Thornton; Clerk, Homer Beardsley. The Deacons also act as Trustees of the Church.

The original Catholic Church was built in 1899, and the first mass held there in 1899. This 1908 photo shows the church and rectory. This is the church Johnnie and I went to, and because it was built after the publication of the 1881 History of Bloomington, its history is not in that book.



Original Catholic Church





The farm we bought northeast of Bloomington was in Patch Grove Township, so its legal description was that township, but our post office address was always Bloomington, just as yours was in town. I really like this map that shows exactly where all the farms were. The enlargement below shows how close all of us were to each other then, the five couples on my favorite July 4th photo. We were all within one mile of each other. Starting at the bottom right in Section 12 the second farm from the bottom was our farm, John Crubel, 240 acres. Right above him is the Thos. Lyness farm of 160 acres. This is the farm your Daddy used to own. He stopped farming and moved into town the year before you were born. The farm above that in Section 1 was B. Hermsen, 160 acres, our friends Ed and Lena. Then two

above that, in Section 36, is Joe Sebers, 200 acres. Then in the middle of the map, just left of the Thos. Lyness farm, was Martin Koopman, 160 acres in Section 11. Then just to the left of the Martin Koopman farm were the John Crubel farms of Johnnie's father, 160 acres in Section 11, 80 acres and 40 acres in Sections 10 and 3. Just north of Mr. Crubel's land was the farm of Geo. Noethe from Dyersville, Iowa, who bought a farm at the same time as Andrew Raker (Recker) from Dyersville, in July of 1912. North of the Noethe farm we see that the land agent G. Hesselmann owns more land.

moved on to their own farm, just north of Johnnie and me in March of 1913. Their second child Ablain was born there on December 22, 1914.

Feb 20, 1914 John Crubel Sr. and Josephine, his wife, sold To Barney Koelker, \$28,000

SE 1/4 of NW ¼, NE 1/4 and NW 1/4 and SW 1/4 of SW 1/4 of Section 34, Township 90, Range 3 W

March 2, 1914 G.H. Hesselmann to John Crubel, Sr., \$30,800

NW 1/4 of Section 11 (160 acres), E 1/2 of NW 1/4 of Section 10 (80 acres), SE 1/4 of SE 1/4 of Section 3 (40 acres), total of 280 acres

Feb 15, 1914 John Crubel to John F. Crubel, \$17,400

SW 1/4 and W 1/2 of SW 1/4 of Sect. 12 , Township 5 North, Range 5 West of 4th PM (240 acres)

Nov. 20, 1916 G.H. Hesselmann to John Crubel, Sr. \$1,400 (This may have been timber land.)

SW 1/4 of NE 1/4 of Section 28, Township t, Range 5 West of 4th PM (40 acres)

Sept. 1919 Harry & Louise Tornowski to John Crubel \$800

2.5 acres in the Village of Bloomington, in SE 1/4 of Sec. 23, 5N, Rr, W

Feb. 11, 1920 Rose Smith Lance to John Crubel \$5,300

East side of Congress St 452, then northerly from the NE corner of 4th St & Congress then north 100 feet east 150 feet then south...all in the Village of Bloomington

Note: The last two properties Johnnie's father bought were in the village of Bloomington. He retired from his farm in September of 1919 and moved to town. In 1920 he bought the property known as 452 Congress Street across from the Catholic Church, and he and Josephine lived there until their deaths, 38 years for Josephine and 40 years for John. She lived to be 91 years old, he to 95 years old.

It is quite astonishing, isn't it my Little Dear One, how quickly we all got relocated to Wisconsin? In a little over three years' time four of the five couples in my favorite July 4th photo had pulled up roots in another state and settled down in Bloomington, Wisconsin. The fifth couple, Martin and Catherine Hoefer Koopman had moved there a few years previously. Catherine Hoefer was a relative of Josephine Hoefer Crubel, Johnnie's mother. The five couples were Johnnie and I, Johnnie's parents John and Josephine Crubel, Joe and Lizzie Sabers, Ed and Lena Hermsen, and Martin and Catherine Koopman. We have seen on the Plat Map where each of the farms of these five couples was located in Patch Grove Township, northeast of Bloomington, all within a mile or so of each other. What good, good times we had together! These were amazing years for us, my Little Dear One!

Once Johnnie's father had decided to relocate to Bloomington, the actual move went quite smoothly. There were a lot of us to help, both in Iowa and in Wisconsin. In addition, John and Josephine had a car by then and had made a number of trips to Bloomington. They bought a Ford Tourer in 1912 for the very good price of \$550. Johnnie had already introduced his father to the cheese factory operations near Bloomington and the large business in New Glarus, and he had five high-producing Holstein cows ready for Mr. Crubel's herd. Johnnie and Mr. Crubel had agreed that in exchange for good cows Mr. Crubel

would sell the farm to Johnnie for exactly what he had paid for it three years previously, minus the rent Johnnie had paid for three years. Both men felt this was a beneficial arrangement. Consequently, Mr. Crubel decided to sell most of the milk cows he had in Petersburg that were not Holsteins. He also sold some other animals and farm goods.

In March of 1914 the Mississippi had one of its big freezes, and farm animals could be walked across the ice. There was a dray line with trucks operating in New Vienna in 1913, transporting goods to and from the train station. Mr. Crubel contracted with them to transport his animals by truck to Gutenberg, and Johnnie contracted with a trucking company in Bloomington to be ready on the Wisconsin side to load the animals onto a truck and bring them to Bloomington. 17-year-old Henry would go with the animals and would take care of them on the new farm while Mr. Crubel brought the rest of the goods and the family. Lena and Henry Goedken had married several years earlier and had a car, so they helped with the transport.

And now, my Little Dear One, I think it is time to close my Story. What an adventure it has been, and



great fun too! Now that you know how to do a Story, would you like to make your own? This big beautiful old house is where you were born May 4, 1949. The photo here was taken in 2018, and the house is over 100 years old now. It has the most wonderful big attic and gloomy dark cellar, where any number of adventures might be imagined. Your grandfather, my Johnnie, lived in this house from the time he left the farm in 1937 until he died in 1947 and joined me here on this hill. In his obituary in the newspaper I found this statement: "To appreciate Mr. Crubel's ability and success with the art of farming, it would have been necessary to visit his farm. The modern conveniences of the home and farm equipment were ever present." That made me smile, my Little Dear One, because from the very beginning

Johnnie and I adopted new ways of farming and bought new farm equipment that could help us be successful. I was happy to see that Johnnie continued to do that even after I was gone. I know you love tractors, so I wrote this short history of tractors for you in case you want to do your first Story about tractors. You will see a wonderful photo of your grandpa at the end of the history.

Short History of Tractors

The first recorded use of the word tractor as an engine for pulling wagons or ploughs occurred in 1896. It was short for "traction engine", a term in use starting in 1859 and meaning an engine that could propel itself.

The first powered farm implements in the early 1800s were portable engines, basically steam engines on wheels that could be used to drive machinery by means of a flexible belt. Various inventors applied steam power to agriculture by inventing machines for ploughing, digging, threshing, etc. One big drawback of these machines was that they were not self-propelled and had to be transported from place to place.

The first successful traction engine was developed in 1859 by British engineer Thomas Aveling, who modified a portable engine into a self-propelled one by fitting a long driving chain between the crankshaft and the rear axle.

In the 1860s there was a period of great experimentation on the traction engine, and by 1870 its form had evolved into the one that would change little over the next sixty years. This was widely adopted for agricultural use.

The first tractors were steam-powered plowing engines.

German inventor Nicholas Otto invented the internal combustion engine in 1876. When his patent expired in 1890, manufacturers throughout the world began to develop, build, and sell machinery powered by the Otto engines.

In 1892 John Froelich invented the first gas-powered tractor in the U.S. He was born in Iowa in 1849 and operated a mobile threshing service and grain elevator in Clayton County. He charged farmers a fee to thresh their crops at harvest time, using his crew and steam-powered threshing machine. In 1890 Froelich and a blacksmith welded a one-cylinder gasoline engine onto the thresher steam engine's running gear, and this rudimentary tractor could be driven safely at about 3 miles per hour. It proved successful, threshing over 1000 bushels of grain a day without any safety issues. Froelich started up the Waterloo Gasoline Engine Company and invested all of his assets into building his type of tractor. It was clumsy and heavy and did not catch on. By 1895 he went broke and was out of business.

The first commercially successful light-weight gas-powered general-purpose tractor was built by Dan Albion in Great Britain in 1901.

The first successful American tractor was built by Charles W. Hart and Charles H. Parr, who developed a two-cylinder gasoline engine and set up their business in Charles City, Iowa. In 1903 the firm built 15 tractors. Their 14,000 pound #3 is the oldest surviving internal combustion engine tractor in the U.S. and is on display at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C.

Henry Ford produced his first gasoline-powered tractor model in 1907, based on successful models in Great Britain. He called it the "automobile plow".

By 1910 gasoline powered tractors had caught on in the U.S. because they became smaller and more affordable. In 1914 the Waterloo Gasoline Engine Company was resurrected and produced the first Waterloo Boy Tractor, also called the Model R single-speed tractor. They had 118 sales within the year.

Ford produced the Fordson in 1917, which became wildly popular, and he soon had 77% of the U.S. market. Most of the tractors produced in 1917 went to Great Britain for the war effort.

By 1918 there were enough tractors produced that they were selling in the U.S.

By mid-1918 more than 6000 Fordson tractors, all U.S. built, were in use in Britain, Canada, and the U.S. By 1925 Ford had built 500,000 tractors.

Tractors in 1920 were selling for \$785 and by 1922 were selling for \$495. As competition heated up in 1922, Ford advertised his Fordson for \$395.

Harvester rose to the challenge, developed its trusty TITAN 10-20, and in a great act of bravado decided to sell it for \$230 to take away Ford's market share. To sweeten the deal they even threw in a plow. This strategy worked, and Harvester went on to eventually become the most successful farm implement company in the world as International Harvester.

In the photo below your grandfather, my very own Johnnie, proudly demonstrates his brand-new TITAN 10-20 tractor and plow. He is holding one of his children, Janet, with another child, Mary Magdalen standing on the plow hitch. He bought his tractor around 1930, one of the first men to buy a tractor in Bloomington, Wisconsin.



And Now



***ONWARD TO THE
NEXT STORY!***