In the early 19th century, Methodism on Long Island outside of Brooklyn was in one circuit, and the circuit rider, traveling on horseback, could hold meetings only at long intervals. At first, meetings were held in homes, but as interest grew, more room was needed, and district schoolhouses were used.

Some locals, disillusioned with the preaching of predestination at the established Presbyterian Church here, found that Methodism promised a different approach to salvation—offering God’s grace to all. On a candlelit evening in 1815, at the old Hayground schoolhouse, Capt. Jeremiah Halsey Cook converted first, and five other new members joined him to form the nucleus of the Methodist church in Bridgehampton: Silas Woodruff, both junior and senior, Roxanna Halsey and her father, Capt. William Halsey, and Hiram Sandford, all of whom suffered some ostracism for doing so.

By 1820, the congregation had outgrown the schoolhouse and built their own house of worship on the west side of Ocean Road, north of Church Lane. By 1831, the church had a pastor, the former circuit rider Rev. John Trippet, and under his leadership the flock grew to 40 members. It needed a larger home. On the east side of the present St. Ann’s Episcopal Church, a new building was designed by the architect and builder William Leffingwell and finished by Capt. Pardon Tabor of Sag Harbor, who also built the Beebee Windmill. The cornerstone was laid on the first day of April 1833, as reported in the Sag Harbor Corrector, at right, to an audience of 400 people.

This same building was moved west down Main Street in 1870 to its present spot, where it was greatly expanded with a new bell tower, greeting visitors as they enter Bridgehampton.

The last service of the Bridgehampton Methodist Church was held in June of 2014, although the church remains a testament to the strength of the early Cooks, Halseys, Ludlows, Sandfords, and Woodruffs who sought a different religious experience over 200 years ago.

After the dedication of the new church building in 1833, William Corwith, also an early congregant, bought the earlier 1821 church. William moved it across the hamlet to his property on Main Street, where it was attached as the north wing of his home, which is now the Bridgehampton Museum.

The Corrector, April 6, 1833, Sag Harbor, New York.