

*A History of God's Standing Order Church
in Enfield*

1680-1973

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A HISTORY OF GODS
STANDING ORDER CHURCH
IN ENFIELD

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INTRODUCTION

The history of the Enfield Congregational Church cannot be written by merely transcribing the highlights of church meetings, because there are too many facets-intriguing facets-that extend throughout the town and, yes, even into the historical documents of the country.

This is not a history of our church as such. As I sit and meditate the events of such a glorious and significant past, many events pass before me-the religiousness of our forefathers, the hardships of the colonials in following and delivering God's words and wisdom; for without a firm belief in a Supreme Being, God's church would not be here now-nor would many of us. A vast parade of colorful events and personalities revolves in fanciful procession in my mind of the Separatists, of the North Church, of Jonathan Edwards, of the Revolution, of Elam Potter, of David Yale, of the steeple bell, and even small items like a collection box long out of circulation. All have a tie with us, or more correctly, us with them. Would we be here if these events or people had not come? Would our church be here? I don't know; but whatever it would be, it would be different. How strong are we now? Where are we going? What have we done? Will we stand the test of time?

Before we can answer these questions, we must go back and look at what has gone before us. We must look at those things, and at those people and events, that have put us where we are today; people too numerous to mention here-yet people that we can thank sincerely for our position today.

This is what I shall write about, the background of our church, those events which occurred putting us where we are, where the people came from (if known) and what made them act as they did-and a guess at the future.

Many histories have been written before about our church. All of them are sketchy; in many cases details are lacking. As any search into old town and church records is laborious, yet intriguing, I would like this to be as true and factual as possible; and therefore, it must be detailed.

We are now 293 years old. If we should survive another 293 years, I wouldn't want the historian, if there is one, to delve into the labyrinthian past, as I did, to get the facts. Much that will be written is not recorded, but gleaned from conversations with present church members, or from my contact with the life of the church as I lived it.

Let this stand as written, until future ages shall find out the right. Let us look ahead with earnestness and be on the level with God. Let us be moral and upright before God and of good repute before the world. Let us appreciate what we have and thank God that he has been with us on this journey, for we are likened to the poem:

"I shall pass through this world but once
Any good, therefore, that I can do
Or any kindness that I can show
To any person, let me do it now
Let me not defer or neglect it
For I shall not pass this way again."

We are now in 1973. Let us go back and start at the beginning of this town when it was a single foottrail along the Connecticut River.

THE FLEDGLING TOWN

As I drive through the exploding town of Enfield and contemplate with awe the hundreds of new homes being built each year, the splendor of forests that are disappearing so rapidly as they yield to a contractor's bulldozer and the gleaners match; I wonder what the five original managers of Enfield would think? How many homeowners stop and ponder their location - not for the view they get from their seven foot picture windows - but that their home is built on some ancient trail called the North Highway, or Post Office Road, or whatever; or maybe they are standing on some Shaker's prized seed garden.

We have a beautiful town despite all the inundations and crowded streets. Just a drive down Enfield Street, with its beautiful old Colonial homes, or survey the new suburban developments, or the new commercial buildings, will show the planning involved. All that we have comes from God and to Him we are indebted.

Let us go back and reflect upon the spiritual foundation upon which our church now stands and trace the growth and development of our town and church - for in the colonial days the town and the church were almost synonymous.

The area now known as Enfield and Somers was a part of Springfield, Massachusetts and was given to Springfield in 1648 by the General Court of Massachusetts. It was generally accepted that the meadows lying near the banks of a river were the most fertile and heavily forested. Such was probably the case in Enfield; but because there were Indians, possibly the forests were destroyed for protection plus the need for open fields to grow their subsistence. Little is actually known of the early town; but from the scanty records that do exist, there appears to have been a saw mill and a small

brook in what is now known as Thompsonville. Originally it was known as Freshwater. The brook still carries that name and runs under Enfield Street and into the large pond in the center of town and then dumps into the Connecticut River. The brook probably had a natural falls that Major John Pynchon reinforced and erected his sawmill prior to 1674. No mention is made of it after 1675. It was probably burned by Indians.



This saw mill stood at the falls at Freshwater Pond and was thought to have been destroyed by Indians in 1675.

There was growing concern about the development of this region, for in 1679, five persons were assigned by Springfield to manage the proposed plantation at the falls and at "Freshwater". These five were John Pynchon, Samuel Marshfield, Thomas Stebbins, Senior, Jonathan Burt, and Benjamin Parsons. The importance of most of these five people and their decendants will be self-evident as we progress.

These proprietors were then given the right to issue, to anyone residing in Springfield, home-lots

of 30, 40, 50, and 60 acres of field land and a "proportional" share of meadow. The recipients were required to settle in Enfield within three years and not to sell their land within seven years. If these rules were disobeyed, the land reverted back to the proprietors and was again issued to the next newcomer under the same contract.

Col. Pynchon was undoubtedly a very influential and powerful man; for he was issued a double homesite of 24 acres and 180 of "out" (acreage not directly on the main street, but could be used for pasture or open farming) land. Fifty acres assigned to him adjoined his sawmill, "130" acres north of his mill, it to be 50 rods wide on Main Street and extending from the river eastwardly to the plains," probably to open area through which Interstate 91 now traverses.

Shortly after this, we find that the liberal land grant news must have reached the small colony of Salem, Massachusetts; because four settlers - John Pease, Sr., John Pease, Jr., Elisha Kibbe, and Robert Pease were issued grants. John, Jr., and Robert were brothers and the two of them traveled to Enfield in 1679 and dug out a hut about 650 feet east of the entrance of the Enfield Street Cemetary. History indicates that no other white person was in this area that winter to share with them the rigors of a Connecticut winter. Their trials must have been tremendous. Few, or only small, trails must have been their only way of moving about. Imagine the difficulty we would have getting around during the winter of 1960-1961 if we had no snow tires, no chains, and no snow plows to clear the streets.

These two explorers must have enjoyed the winter or seen the huge potential in Enfield; - its fertile fields, its rich forests, and the open water to the sea, a way of life with almost unlimited opportunity. What a wonderful future! In the spring of 1680, these two brothers returned to Salem with

wonderful accounts of the untouched paradise south of Springfield. They must have been exuberant, for they returned with their families in 1680; and in the three years that followed, 30 more families came to the plantation at Freshwater - mostly from Salem. By virtue of this, the town was really a Salem extension.

We were not adverse to urban development even in those days, for we see that homesite determinations were not solidified - each to be 165 to 231 feet on the Main Street (Enfield Street) and to extend on to the plains. Even today, 293 years later, as you drive along Enfield Street, you may still see the large lots on which rested the beautiful colonial homes that were constructed on their assigned lot. Later on in this story, we will see how one such family (Pease) greatly influenced the life and position of our church.

In 1681, other grants were made, and I record them here for you to keep in mind when, later, the church was formed. The grants were made to "Simeon Booth, John Burroughs, Simeon Rumeral, Daniel Collins, John Kibbee, Samuel Terry, Jr., Thomas Bancroft, Jonathan Pease, Isaac Gleason, Lot Killam, Rowland Thomas, Thomas Hayward, William Booth, Isaac Meacham, John Bement, Sr., & Thomas Gier, John Tarman, John Bement, Jr., Obadiah Abbe, Henry Abell, Joseph West, Samuel Merit, and Thomas Perkins".

Now the town was growing and the need was now apparent for legal protection. A petition was sent to Springfield requesting incorporation in the name of Enfield in 1684. The General Court of Boston approved this move and we were a separate settlement of the Massachusetts Colony. The original dimensions were running 6 mi. south of Longmeadow Brook and 10 mi. east of the river (now Somers).

Also in 1684, religious meetings were held by the principal men of the town on Sundays and a small meeting house was erected. The meeting house was always in the center of a town and this presupposed the cemetery was there also. It must be assumed that it stood in or near the present Enfield Street Cemetery, the original center of the town. The oldest headstone is that of "Isaac Morgan, Son of Isaac Morgan aged 5 1690" still visible in the cemetery.

In the land grants issued from 1684 to 1691, we see one made to a Rev. Mr. Welch, from Charlestown, near Boston. However, it is not known whether he did preach in this town; but it is known that he died before he could move his family here. He was 23 years old at the time of his death in 1689. I must guess that he did at least look at the town and decided that he wanted to settle here-and-further, that some of the local men must have heard him preach. I wonder why he died at such a young and fruitful age!

Thus, we have the background of the town and the events and people of our "squatters' rights" community. We were a legally incorporated town, but the settlement was on land "owned" by the Podunk Indians. However, the settlers must have felt obligated to the rightful owners, their friends; for in 1689, the entire town (Enfield and Somers) property was purchased for 25 pounds sterling.

For many years the records of our church are sparse; and in some cases, nonexistent. Therefore, the correlation and consistency of some parts of this history may be difficult to follow.

The church was a part of the original grants in 1680 because we see "and whereas it is the earnest desire of the Committee and by the help of God shall be their great care to promote the progress of the Gospel by indevering to settle the ordinances of God and Freshwater Plantation as soon as conveniently may be possible".

It is therefore agreed concluded and ordered that all persons who accept of their grants there and shall (according as they are engaged) so declare to the committee before the first of May next (1681) they shall with all other that may have after Grants become bound and hereby are engaged to promote the settling of an able minister there and shall unite together in rendering him suitable and due maintenance and shall by May come 3 years so in a way of allowing each man's proportion towards the maintenance of sum able minister of the word of God we intending as the grantees settling there by that time so also then if it can be obtained to have some able and orthodox Minister on the place, or as soon after as may be -

Wherefore it is hereby agreed and ordered that all charges shall be expended for procuring and settling a minister there and providing for him with any other matter and thing conducing to the public good of the town, shall all be raised in a due proportion upon all the grantees whether present grantees or any other grantees whatsoever according to their grants or allotments, it being hereby agreed and ordered that from the time of paying rates there for 7 years after all rates shall be proportioned and paid by all men, according to the quantity of land granted to them when as after seven years, the quality and condition of the land of each inhabitant may be considered with other, their estate and according to law of the country levy as shall be found there most expedient, if it be not judged meet to continue it longer, wholly on land as before said, which shall be continued until agreement otherwise be clearly settled and fully agreed upon, provided not withstanding if any grantees be not actually settled there having allowance for longer time than other such grants or granters shall be rated and pay to the minister and to all other public charges according to the quantity of land or lands as before til he or they shall come with their other estate and be settled there within the plantation so as to be liable to be rated for it is as others there are and be.

It is further ordered that...50 acres which with the meadow to it and house lot shall be full 60 acres more than shall be set apart and reserved for the 1st minister that shall be settled in the place.

Also, it is agreed and ordered that...60 or 70 acres be set apart...for the ministry and use of the church...and to continue to be improved forever and not granted away from the ministry or such as shall be settled preacher of God's word in this place, said land to be no ways alienated or sold there from and all such grants sales alienations and passing away there of if any be which may or shall be contrary to this order and declared grant of this allotment and the true intent thereof which is the continuance of this to the ministry of Preacher of God's word from time to time for ever to the people of this place, and toward maintenance of such a one for ever to become void and nul and are so in themselves, the grant of this land being so as to be only improved for the ministry and Gospel preachers of the word of God in this place, and in the vacancy of such at any time the revenue or income of it to be improved toward the procuring and settling thereof in the said place or town."

By having just read the above, you probably wonder what there was behind those early religious people that made such iron-clad rulings and gave explicit instructions to the formation of a church. I also was curious and wanted to establish the background of the church up until 1680.

OUR PATH TO GOD

Congregationalism as we know it in 1973 is not the Congregationalism of 1680. In fact the name, the formation and yes, even many of the beliefs were not the same as those in 1680. As opposed to the colonial days for example, our support of the church today is strictly voluntary, also our attendance. But this is not the foundation of the church.

The Christian church, as being different from the Jewish church, was gradual and slow in becoming a society as such. Ancient documents show it to be in a few scattered areas about 50 years after the death of Christ. These churches were unique in that they gleaned every small bit of information they could from the letters of Paul and the other apostles. These writings were gradually collected and became known as the New Testament. The great and broad teachings of the apostles were gradually digested and condensed and re-condensed until it became known as the Apostles Creed, the creed which we as Christians pay too little attention. The early Christians, as we, solemnly relive the Last Supper through Communion, and were cleansed through baptism as we are. There are probably as many methods to baptism as there are faiths - anywhere from complete immersion to a touch on the head. Congregationalism today satisfies itself with a small baptismal font and a short service. Perhaps in today's world of symbolism and status, more impressive, symbolic and meaningful to that which was practiced in Jesus' life. Perhaps even an entire service devoted to baptism. We should all remember the obligations we have as Christians to the newly baptised. God is our guide. Jesus Christ was the Son of God. We should recognize no other. It was because of this belief that in the years following Christ's death Christians were persecuted by the Romans

for worshipping above the Roman Empire. Even in Rome, crude paintings of Christ were found as evidence that Christian meeting places existed within the confines of the Roman Capital. For several hundred years, as Militant Nations rose and fell, the Christian church in many forms continued to grow and expand.

As most societies tend to develop through a rhythmic pattern so did the Christian Church. It progressed in rapid steps through the efforts of King Constantine I, a christian sympathizer, though not a christian himself, until just prior to his death when he was baptised. As is also the converse true in which christians were set back for several hundred years through the crusades. But there were areas in Middle Europe where the church got its strong footings because they established schools, hospitals, and cathedrals. But these huge buildings were not without their penalties for in many instances the communities were impoverished.

During this growth the main church center was in Rome, probably because it was a cultural architectural and in all probability an educational center. Would it not seem logical to look to these leaders for religious help and thus through the years allow it to become the religious head? In any event, Rome did become the religious center and it grew to a tremendously powerful center, owning almost 1/3 of Europe. This Roman center, as anyone would guess, became a dictatorial power and whenever this occurs there are many discontents produced; people who want power themselves and thought perhaps one way to achieve this was to approach the worship of God another way.

The Anglican church was the first formed and its structure and politics are similar in nature to the parent church in Rome, Roman Catholicism. This new church has prospered in England and has come to the United States as the Episcopal Church.

Then there came a man whose name was destined to become renowned for centuries. He was Martin Luther. A religious sect bears his name - Lutheran. Martin Luther and his disciples occupy a very important corner in the religious history of the world but this is not to be included in this text.

Congregationalism can look to about 1509 and the birth of a Frenchman named John Calvin as the very root of their religion. This man, John Calvin, became so dedicated to the work of Luther that, at twenty-six, he wrote a book called "The Institutes of Christian Religion". Many of John Calvin's ideas are not accepted today such as his pre-destination theory; a theory that dictates that we are scheduled for our fate before we are born, that we are powerless to prevent or avert or forestall our destiny, that we are moved down the path of life as a puppet. Those that are to be saved will be saved in spite of themselves; men are born in sin and are damned. Those that believe in Jesus Christ are to be the only ones to be saved.

Yes those were surely unsettled times. Calvin went to Geneva and established a religious city in which the city and the church were one. Civil, religious and personal desires were strictly governed. Geneva became a magnetic city, attracting people from all over Europe. Such people as John Knox who founded the Scotch Church were present.

Calvin's ideas and success spread rapidly and there soon resulted some religious unrest in England. The Church of England or Anglican Church as it was called then, had shortly before the Calvin theory, broken from the Roman Church. This Anglican Church was the only church in England and the ruling Monarch at the time was its head. In the late 16th and early 17th centuries several Steward kings obtained power and although they would not allow other churches to form they did allow these new groups to form and establish their churches in the recently discovered "New World". These groups

wished to "purify" the religious thinkings of the people and desired to simplify the complicated Roman Catholic structure. They wished that they could worship God and his only begotten son freely and strictly, they were Calvin followers in principle and in many of his practices. These early colonials took religion seriously and sternly enforced their own rules.

The remainder of the settling here in New England is known to everyone. These new groups known as "Pilgrims" (actually they were "Puritans") left England to seek religious freedom in Holland and not having found it sailed for the New World in 1620. Other "Puritans" sailed soon thereafter and thus we have the first roots of Congregationalism in America. History records show that they landed at Plymouth, Mass. many miles from their intended point of Jamestown, Virginia. Perhaps Congregationalism as we know it today would not be here at all had it not been for a navigational error. Perhaps I would be writing about a Baptist or Methodist or Presbeterian Church.

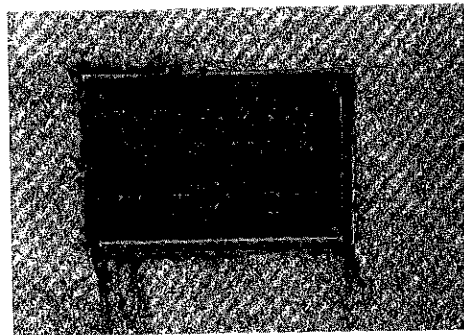
The story of our church is unique in that it affects the history of both Massachusetts and Connecticut. As we develop our narrative you will see where we fit.

GOD'S FIRST CHURCH IN ENFIELD

In Enfield the building of the first church was authorized on January 15, 1683, at the town committee's meeting in Springfield. The first meeting house was to serve as both a home for any minister, if there be one, and also as a house of worship. Our early architects must have thought of a church first because the plans called for a building only 20 feet long by 20 feet wide by 10-1/2 feet "between joints". The "architects and builders" were Daniel Collins, John Pease, Isaac Morgan, and Isaac Gleason.

If you remember, many of these names appeared earlier as recipients of the first land grants. No stipulations were made as to the type of construction nor to its cost. However, a clause was added which read - "procuring all material and workmen in the best and most reasonable way they can, the charge whereof to be borne by the inhabitants and proprietors in way of rate according to the quantity of each one's grant - the number of chimneys to be considered after the frame". Times certainly have changed!

We see that the cost of the first church building was not born by a few but the whole town was taxed by the type and size of the house and not by the number of chimneys that each homeowner possessed. Apparently church support was shared equally by all, and the homeowner had no alternative.



This indicates that the 1st meeting house was at the entrance to what is now the Enfield Street Cemetery.

Religious meetings were established on July 15, 1683 and were agreed upon between town committee and the inhabitants of Enfield. The meetings were to be in the forenoon and afternoon, and the day was to be devoted to prayer, singing, and reading some "good orthodox book".

As yet, there was no minister so John Pease Sr., Isaac Meacham, and Thomas Bancroft Sr., were appointed to select the leader for each meeting and the subject matter of the service.

No church entries can be located between 1683 and June 22, 1686. However, on that date we find that a minister's house was being hastily completed and finished on the exterior with clapboards. This home stood on the lot now occupied by the home of the late Miss Martha Parsons of 1387 Enfield Street. John Pease, Jr., who was constable in 1683, was authorized to collect the back taxes for the homes construction from the house owners of the town. If any did not pay, they would forfeit everything they had in Enfield, including any buildings, livestock, or produce.

Sometime prior to June 27, 1689, a committee representing the town church met with a Rev. Nathaniel Welch to serve the church and town in its religious guidance. For on that date the Rev. Mr. Welch was granted 12 or 13 acres for a house lot and many score more of "out lands". The town fathers must have been delighted to find a minister because the following entry is noted in the committee book"... who through the favor of God is come to be their Minister at Enfield, if he settle, and hoping that God will so smile on the place that they may join him".

The above granted land was to be given to him and his heirs forever with no tax payments, whatsoever. There was also a grant of 40 acres to Mrs. Hannah Welch which she could have tax free if she would settle in Enfield in the Spring of 1690. This grant

could have been to Rev. Welch's wife in Charlestown, Massachusetts; but no record, now known, states such. Neither claim was ever acknowledged because in 1690 Mr. Welch's piece was given away.

In a town meeting (all residents had to attend or be fined) in 1693 mention is made of the continuing work on a Minister's house plus the clearing, plowing, and fencing of 6 acres of land for a minister. Also in the same meeting, it was officially agreed upon that the first settled minister would receive this house and 13 acres, 80 acres of field land, the 6 acres mentioned above to be used for plowing, pasturing, and an orchard. All this to be his if the town could find a minister within 5 or 7 years. If a minister agreed to settle here and be a minister for his life, the town would pay him 55 pounds a year and deliver all his firewood.

Up until 1699, we must conclude that there was a church and church meetings, but there was no minister, no active support, or any recognized church body. We were a church in the very loosest of terms. The church could not have held a prominent position in the town without a head. But in 1699, the religious stature of the town took on a new life. In a town meeting, the following entry appears:..."at this meeting declare thir willingnes by a clere Vot to except of mr collins to bee thir mister to preach the word of god among us here at endfeild and so in convniant time to cary on the hollwork of the minetry among us here at this place...". At the same meeting, the town decided to ordain him in the church and to pay him 70 pounds to build a barn. All persons 16 years and older "agreed" to work for Mr. Collins 1 day a year for 4 years or pay the equivalent amount - all townspeople agreed; except 4 or 5. On March 10, 1701, the church was getting active and in need of funds and the first "every member canvass committee" was formed-Obadiah Abbee and Zechariah Booth were chosen tithing men. Tithing men were the more influential men of the town and it was their duty to assess each homeowner's

ability to support the church. Those men served until the following year when Isiah Pease and Efriam Terry were their replacements.

By early 1703, the church had done well by Mr. Collins; and he was so rewarded by a 10 pound increase per year for the next 2 years if he continued to do a good job. Also two new tithing men were chosen, Goodman Rumerel and Nathaniel Bliss. No entries can be found in 1704, except that Nathaniel Morten and Isaac Pease served as tithing men. Music began to take form in the church in 1704 because they assigned the tithing men of last year to "set the psalm tunes" while Enson Person and Ebenezer Warrener were to serve as tithing men. Could it be that Mr. Rumerel and Mr. Bliss had good voices?

Mr. Collins' financial affairs were in a poor state and he was gradually getting himself in debt; and the town, realizing that this could impair his worthiness to serve the town, granted him an additional 50 pounds to clear himself of all debt and again serve the church with an unoppressed mind.

This ends the first phase of the old first church of Enfield - a church which had no name, no denominations, no affiliation - except to God. It was a town church - its only church - a meeting house and minister that depended on strictly local support, not only for its operating capital (which must have been very small) but for its very life. Although this is a continuous story, the new or second church should be treated separately because the surviving records are more complete.

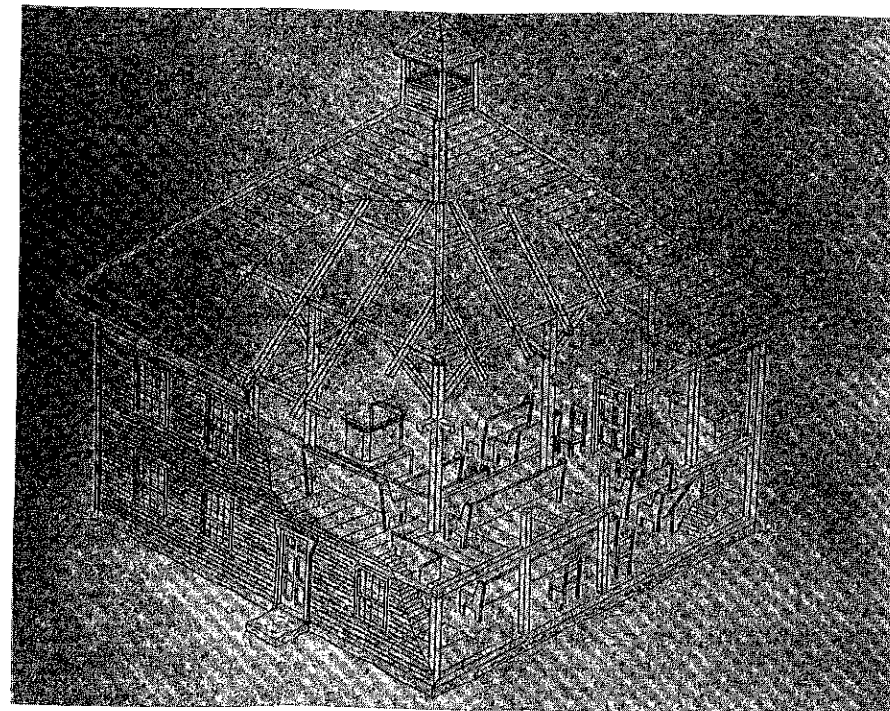
GOD'S SECOND CHURCH BUILDING IN ENFIELD

In the early 1700's, it was realized that the 1st meeting house wasn't large enough to hold an expanding community. The town had now given grants of land considerably north of Freshwater brook and extending south past Kings Corner, from the Connecticut River to the "east wilderness" now known as Hazardville. The families that had been granted land east of town were actively destroying their forests of all white pine to use in making turpentine. Several entries are found in town meetings in the late 1690's where men offered enough trees to provide 2 and 3 thousand boxes of turpentine. With such a profuse number of trees destroyed, is it small wonder that many of our homes today are bare before the sun?

November 28, 1705 marked the beginning of the first concerted effort of the town to build for the future. As a special town meeting called for the purpose of looking into building a new church, we find that the proposed dimensions are to be 40 feet long by 35 feet wide with "two roofs" - one on the meeting house and one on the "Terett or belfry". It was to be placed in the middle of the street at the front of the lot then assigned to John Kibbee (directly across from Post Office Road).

Two persons volunteered to do the construction work for 240 pounds and that they were free to hire men to cut, trim, or in any way whatsoever assist in building the new church and meeting house as speedily as they could.

About a month later, on December 24, 1705, the two men returned to the meeting with plans to build it 38 feet square and apparently they requested more money because there were 5 men chosen to work out an agreement whereby they would not exceed 300 pounds.



This drawing is an artists concept of the way our second meeting house probably looked on July 8, 1741 when Jonathan Edwards delivered his famous sermon. Of particular note is the placement of the "guards" chairs flanking each door, the placement of the stairs leading to either side of the balcony and the high pulpit. Such information was extracted from old church records and from accepted meeting house construction. The cupulo or turret was made to support a bell which was never purchased. The building was built in the middle of the main street (Enfield Street) opposite Post Office Road.

A search of old records and published books on meeting house construction, indicates that the most common type of structure, during this period, was square with 4 roofs meeting at a common point which supported a belfry. By 1705, the two original carpenters had disappeared. On June 24, 1706, a Mr. Right, the carpenter, was to appoint a day when the entire town was to assist in raising the building; and after that, he would call on those he wanted to continue in its construction. The food and drink were to be furnished by the town.

Church and town meetings were still being held in the old small original church while the new meeting house was being constructed. In 1706, the tithing men chosen to serve until 1707 were Goodman Colton and William Booth. The following October, 1707, the new building still had not been completed because an entry is made in the town records "...to seat ye new meeting house before they meet in it". "To seat the meeting house" means to assign the various members to their proper seat. This was done by rank and importance (wealth). It must have been very close to completion because, at the same meeting, a vote was made to dispose of the old meeting house to the town's advantage. No accurate description exists as to the physical layout; however, as the old records are surveyed, many internal changes were made and these have been collected into a drawing to indicate the final layout as far as is now known, plus internal support that must have been there to support the roofs.

The importance of this meeting house cannot be over-emphasized because it covers an era that showed tremendous expansion of the town and was the focal point for much religious and governmental discussion.



The second Meeting House stone placed at the site of the 2nd house of worship.

As you will remember, the town was really started by people from Salem, Massachusetts. As the town started to grow, word reached other communities of the abundance of turpentine bearing trees, wild life, fish, and large quantities of free land and many people came from Northampton, Holyoke, and Springfield. You will also recall the incorporation of Enfield came from Boston. We were a part of the Massachusetts colonies; but the trip to Boston and back made the control of our fledgling town, difficult and unwieldy. New laws or legislation were, at best, only a hit or miss proposition; however, only 20 miles away, a day's journey South, lay the general court of the Connecticut colonies in Hartford. The next town South (Windsor) was a member of this colony. Land grants had been given those early settlers which overlapped ours in many cases and these had to be settled in both Boston and Hartford. It was easier to settle the affairs in Hartford because of its proximity to the town, so it was voted on May 5, 1707 to "yield themselves to the Hartford government". However, it would be years before this actually became a reality.

The new church building was occupied probably in late 1707 and was in active use on March 8, 1708 when Seargent Randall and John Prior were chosen the thithing men. The land granted to Mr. Collins in 1702 soon began to show some financial return when a considerable section of his forest was destroyed to make turpentine. In 1710, the town agreed that Mr. Collins should receive 75 pounds per year payable in money or negotiable goods such as corn or turpentine. His salary would never be less, they agreed; but it might be more. Although the town and church grew, there seem to have been some difficulty with Mr. Collins, for on August 24, 1713, the situation came to a head when there was a committee of eight persons named to settle any differences of opinion that prevented Mr. Collins from fulfilling his charge to the town. They were impowered to obtain outside help in the discussion and Mr. Collins agreed to bear 1/4 the cost "if there be any". Obviously, he certainly was interested in maintaining his position and doubtless was interested in obtaining a quick and successful compromise. These complications were still not resolved by April 5, 1714 because the same committee was to continue in their assigned task. The committee was discharged October 4, 1714 without ever meeting a satisfactory solution, yet Mr. Collins continued as the spiritual head.

That October meeting was very important for two more reasons. In all the previous discussions of the building of the new meeting house and its dimensions, no notations were made of a bell, only that the building was to contain a belfry. However, at a meeting on April 5, 1714, it was noted that the purchase of the bell from the Norwich meeting house (Massachusetts or Connecticut) and that the town assume the charges.

The bell mentioned in the town meeting could not have been purchased because in October 1714 another entry is made authorizing two men to go to Wethersfield and "view the bell that is to be sold for a

meeting house" and buy it if they thought it met the needs of the town, remembering that its purpose was manifold, to call the people to church, to sound when someone died, for celebrations, and in emergency for emergent town meetings. No entry can be found to indicate whether it was purchased or not.

The second item was the purchasing of a decent burying cloth to be used by the town. This was a cloth that covered the coffin but was not interred with it and was apparently owned by the church.

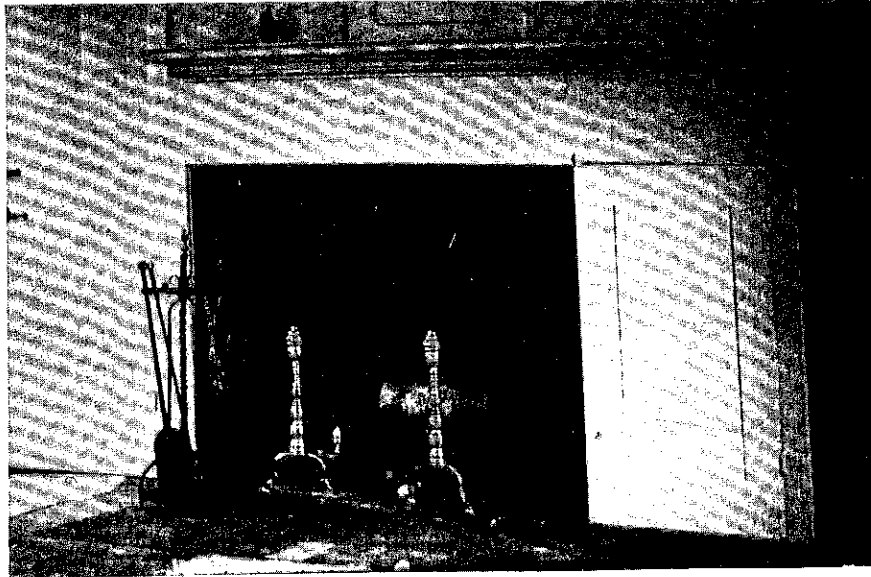
At an annual town meeting of March 11, 1717, Mr. Collins decided that his position as religious leader of the town was either in need of bolstering, or replacement, and he entered the following proposal - not very well received.

Addressing a letter "To My Christian Neighbors", Mr. Collins said that there had been private meetings among several church members about his ability as a minister. He was much distressed about it and didn't want it to affect the church or its position as the only religious training available in the town. If the talks were to continue, it could deeply hurt both.

He thus proposed the following alternatives: (1) If the town wants him to continue as its spiritual leader, they are to pay him 20 pounds more per year plus his fire wood; (2) that if he is not to continue, that he be paid 300 pounds severance pay payable within a "year or 15 months"; but only after a new minister is obtained and, further, that all the land he now possesses be free to him and his heirs "without molestations".

Thus, our first settled minister had trouble with the church. Unfortunately, this concern was not described; but troubled relations between minister and church occurred many times since, sometimes to the betterment of the church, others to its detriment.

A committee was formed to settle this dispute with Mr. Collins and six months later, in September 1717, the town agreed to increase his salary 20 pounds. The following September, 1718, Mr. Collins was awarded all the land that had been granted him tax free to him and his heirs forever. The townspeople must have felt that he was an asset to the community; for at this same meeting, they gave him an additional 30 pounds, making a total now of 100 pounds.



One of 3 fireplaces that was used to re-heat bricks used in footwarmers, located in the home directly across from the 2nd meeting house at Enfield Street.

Consistently appearing in the old records are statements that certain people objected to their assigned seats; and at various times, the rules were changed from seating by age, to seating by importance, wealth or political position. It was standard, however, that men would not sit with their wives or children. It is interesting to note that in March 9, 1719, a Edward Kibbee made such an issue about his seat that he was permitted to sit anywhere "the pulpett only excepted". At this time, there were slaves in the town; and when

they went to church, they were permitted to sit in the gallery. No positions of the children were described; however, they were both in the gallery and downstairs because, frequently, adults were assigned to quiet the disorders in both locations.

However, the friction continued between Mr. Collins and the town. In March, 1722, a committee was formed to "treat with Mr. Collins about laying down ye work of ye ministry among us...". At the same meeting, another note is made..."to give Mr. Collins one-hundred pounds ("in case he will not take up with less")..."and quit the town of all former obligations that have been between him and ye town...". This committee evidently couldn't agree or didn't complete the negotiations because 18 months later another committee was formed to cooperate with Mr. Collins and get the matter settled. During all these negotiations, Mr. Collins continued to serve the church and receive his pay, but only 80 pounds, a decrease of 20 pounds as was noted in 1717. The following February, 1724, agreement is finally reached that Mr. Collins be allowed the use of his land and home for one year; however, it is not clear what became of all the land originally granted to him.

He apparently left the church at once, but did not leave the town. On May 14, 1724, he was chosen moderator of the town meeting, a position he held for several years; and it is unlikely that an installed minister would serve at a somewhat political position. He also served as clerk of the town for several years, (1729-1735).

Somers, which was known as the East Precinct, separated from Enfield about 1733, after several years of negotiations, so that the Somers Congregational Church is an off-shoot of the Enfield church and was originally permitted to exist through the good will of the parent church in Enfield.

No statement can now be found regarding the coming of the second minister to administer to the religious needs of Enfield. In fact, no entries are

made about any minister until January 12, 1731 when an agreement was reached regarding some ministry land and Mr. Peter Raynolds. Another entry was made in 1735, increasing the salary of the Rev. Mr. Peter Raynolds by 50 pounds. We don't know what his basic salary was.

However, we believe that Mr. Raynolds must have started his preaching here about 1724, an early handwritten history says November 1725, but no fact supports this, or immediately after Mr. Collins was released, because there were no entries about seeking another minister or arranging for a house or a salary. The town must have provided for this or perhaps a church committee did the work. You will remember that Mr. Collins would not lay down his work until a replacement was obtained.

An odd entry in 1736 accounts for all the town expenditures and among these is one for paying five shillings per load to those that supplied wood to the minister. In all 52 loads were delivered to his door "cut and stacked".

As we get closer and closer to the religious turn-around year of 1741 in Enfield, and the Great Awakening, we find continued interest in seating protocol. Could this signify some religious unrest which was displayed outwardly by a desire for a better seat before God? Compare the custom established by March 21, 1739, when people (men only) would be seated by age, usefulness, qualifications, and office, and to the earlier precedent when only town officials were given front seats. The question that occurred to this author was why was a front seat important? Two answers are immediately apparent. First, because the members of government were probably considered the most important people in town, were respected for their position, and therefore were accorded special consideration. Secondly, the town had no Sunday School, so when children came to church in those days, they were separated from their parents and sat in the rear of the church

and the gallery. It was not uncommon to "choose" men of the town at town meetings to "look into the disturbances among the children on the Sabbath".

The name Jonathan Edwards is synonymous with revival. This one man was responsible for the religious upheaval that swept New England in the mid 1700's. He was a brilliant man having graduated as valedictorian of his college class (Yale) at 17. He was pastor of the Northampton Church but did extensive preaching in other New England churches, causing extreme concern among the parishoners. His reputation was spreading as a Calvinist (pre-destination) and was challenging the Methodist ideology. If you re-read the troubles we were having in Enfield from 1715 to 1741, you perhaps can see why he was invited to preach to us, only 8 miles from his birthplace in East Windsor, on July 8, 1741. Picture the day as a typical hot July day, with a crowded church, the women dressed in heavy, long skirted dresses, the men in heavy dark homespun suits, most of whom were uneducated and who leaned heavily on "the written word" and it's interpretation. The sermon "Sinners In the Hands Of an Angry God" was one of the most famous sermons he preached and caused the congregation to cry out, hold onto the church timbers for support, and cause much moaning. The sermon is printed here in its' entirety. When reading it, project yourself back and imagine yourself sitting on a plain board pew looking in awe at a man, already famous, knowing full well he is going to try to strike the fear of God in you and make you be aware that only He allows you to exist.

SINNERS IN THE HANDS OF AN ANGRY GOD

There is nothing that keeps wicked men at any one moment out of hell, but the mere pleasure of God.

By the mere pleasure of God, I mean his sovereign pleasure his arbitrary will restrained by no obligation, hindered by no manner of difficulty, any more than if nothing else but God's mere will had, in the least degree, or in any respect whatsoever, any hand in the preservation of wicked men one moment.

The truth of this observation may appear by the following considerations:

1. There is no want of power in God to cast wicked men into hell at any moment. Men's hands cannot be strong, when God rises up. The strongest have no power to resist him, nor can any deliver out of his hands.

He is not only able to cast wicked men into hell, but he can most easily do it. Sometimes an earthly prince meets with a great deal of difficulty in subduing a rebel, who has found means to fortify himself, and has made himself strong by the numbers of his followers. But it is not so with God. There is no fortress that is any defense from the power of God. Though hand join in hand, and vast multitudes of God's enemies combine and associate themselves, they are easily broken in pieces. They are as great heaps of light chaff before the whirlwind; or large quantities of dry stubble before devouring flames. We find it easy to tread on and crush a worm that we see crawling on the earth; so it is easy for us to cut or singe a slender thread that any thing hangs by; thus easy is it for God, when he pleases, to cast his enemies down to hell. What are we, that we should think to stand before Him, at whose rebuke the earth trembles, and before whom the rocks are thrown down?

2. They deserve to be cast into hell; so that divine justice never stands in the way; it makes no objection against God's using his power at any moment to destroy them. Yea, on the contrary, justice calls aloud for an infinite punishment of their sins. Divine justice says of the tree that brings forth such grapes of Sodom, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" Luke XIII. 7. The sword of divine justice is every moment brandished over their heads; and it is nothing but the hand of arbitrary mercy, and God's mere will, that holds it back.

3. They are already under a sentence of condemnation to hell. They do not only justly deserve to be cast down thither, but the sentence of the law of God, that eternal and immutable rule of righteousness that God has fixed between him and mankind, is gone out against them and stands against them; so that they are bound over already to hell. John iii. 18. "He that believeth not is condemned already." So that every unconverted man properly belongs to hell; that is his place; from thence he is. John viii. 23. "Ye are from beneath:" and thither he is bound; it is the place that justice, and God's word, and the sentence of his unchangeable law, assign to him.

4. They are now the objects of that very same anger and wrath of God, that is expressed in the torments of hell: and the reason why they do not go down to hell at each moment, is not because God, in whose power they are, is not at present very angry with them; as he is with many miserable creatures now tormented in hell, who there feel and bear the fierceness of his wrath. Yea, God is a great deal more angry with great numbers that are now on earth, yea doubtless with some who may read this book, who, it may be, are at ease, than he is with many of those that are now in the flames of hell.

So that it is not because God is unmindful of their wickedness, and does not resent it, that he

does not let loose his hand, and cut them off. God is not altogether such a one as themselves, though they may imagine him to be so. The wrath of God burns against them, their damnation does not slumber; the pit is prepared, the fire is made ready, the furnace is now hot, ready to receive them, the flames do now rage and glow. The glittering sword is whetted, and held over them, and the pit hath opened its mouth under them.

5. The devil stands ready to fall upon them and seize them as his own, at what moment God shall permit him. They belong to him; he has their souls in his possession, and under his dominion. The Scripture represents them as his goods, Luke xi. 21. The devils watch them, they are ever by them, at their right hand; they stand waiting for them, like greedy hungry lions, that see their prey, and expect to have it, but are for the present kept back. If God should withdraw his hand, by which they are restrained, they would in one moment fly upon their poor souls. The old serpent is gaping for them; hell opens its mouth wide to receive them; and if God should permit it, they would be hastily swallowed up and lost.

6. There are in the souls of wicked men those hellish principles reigning, that would presently kindle and flame out into hell fire, if it were not for God's restraints. There is laid in the very nature of carnal men, a foundation for the torments of hell. There are those corrupt principles, in reigning power in them, and in full possession of them, that are seeds of hell fire. These principles are active and powerful, exceedingly violent in their nature; and if it were not for the restraining hand of God upon them they would soon break out; they would flame out after the same manner as the same corruption, the same enmity, does in the hearts of damned souls, and would beget the same torments as they do in them. The souls of the wicked are in Scripture compared to the troubled sea. Isaiah lvii. 20. For the

present, God restrains their wickedness by his mighty power, as he does the raging waves of the trouble sea, saying "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further," but if God should withdraw that restraining power, it would soon carry all before it. Sin is the ruin and misery of the soul; it is destructive in its nature; and if God should leave it without restraint, there would need nothing else to make the soul perfectly miserable. The corruption of the heart of man is immoderate and boundless in its fury; and while wicked men live here, it is like fire pent up by God's restraints; whereas if it were let loose, it would set on fire the course of nature; and as the heart is now a sink of sin, so, if sin was not restrained, it would immediately turn the soul into a fiery oven, or a furnace of fire and brimstone.

7. It is no security to wicked men for one moment, that there are no visible means of death at hand. It is no security to a natural man, that he is now in health, and that he does not see which way he should now immediately go out of the world by any accident, and that there is no visible danger, in any respect, in his circumstances. The manifold and continual experience of the world, in all ages, shows this is no evidence that a man is not on the very brink of eternity, and that the next step will not be into another world. The unseen, unthought of ways and means of persons going suddenly out of the world are innumerable and inconceivable. Unconverted men walk over the pit of hell on a rotten covering, and there are innumerable places in this covering so weak that they will not bear their weight, and these places are not seen. The arrows of death fly unseen at noon-day; the sharpest sight cannot discern them. God has so many different unsearchable ways of taking wicked men out of the world, and sending them to hell, that there is nothing to make it appear, that God had need to be at the expense of a miracle, or to go out of the ordinary course of his providence, to destroy any wicked man, at any moment. All the means that there are of sinners going out of

the world, are in God's hands, and so universally and absolutely subject to his power and determination, that it does not depend at all the less on the mere will of God, whether sinners shall at any moment go to hell, than if means were never made use of, or at all concerned in the case.

8. Natural men's prudence and care to preserve their own lives, or the care of others to preserve them, do not secure them a moment. To this, divine providence and universal experience do bear testimony. There is this clear evidence that men's own wisdom is no security to them from death; that, if it were otherwise, we should see some difference between the wise and politic men of the world and others, with regard to their liableness to early and unexpected death; but how is it in fact: "How dieth the wise man? even as the fool." Eccles. ii. 16.

9. All wicked men's pains and contrivances which they use to escape hell, while they continue to reject Christ, and so remain wicked men, do not secure them from hell one moment. Almost every natural man ~~that hears of hell, flatters himself that he shall escape it; he depends upon himself for his own security; he flatters himself in what he intends to do;~~ every one lays out matters in his own mind, how he shall avoid damnation, and flatters himself that he contrives well for himself, and that his schemes will not fail. They hear indeed that there are but few saved, and that the greater part of men that have died heretofore, are gone to hell; but each one imagines that he forms plans to effect his escape better than others have done. He does not intend to go to that place of torment; he says within himself, that he intends to take effectual care, and to order matters so for himself as not to fail.

But the foolish children of men miserably delude themselves in their own schemes, and in confidence in their own strength and wisdom; they trust to nothing but a shadow. The greater part of those who

heretofore have lived under the same means of grace and are now dead, are undoubtedly gone to hell; and it was not because they were not as wise as those who are now alive; it was not because they did not lay out matters as well for themselves to secure their own escape. If we could come to speak with them, and inquire of them, one by one, whether they expected, when alive, and when they used to hear about hell, ever to be the subjects of that misery, we, doubtless, should hear one and another reply, "No, I never intended to come here: I had arranged matters otherwise in my mind; I thought I should contrive well for myself; I thought my scheme good. I intended to take effectual care; but it came upon me unexpectedly; I did not look for it at that time, and in that manner; it came as a thief. Death outwitted me: God's wrath was too quick for me. O my cursed foolishness! I was flattering myself, and pleasing myself with vane dreams of what I would do hereafter; and when I was saying peace and safety, then sudden destruction came upon me."

10. God had laid himself under no obligation, by a promise to keep any natural man out of hell one moment. God certainly had made no promises either of eternal life, or of any deliverance or preservation from eternal death, but what are contained in the covenant of grace, the promises that are given in Christ, in whom all the promises are yea and amen. But surely they have no interest in the promises of the covenant of grace, who are not the children of the covenant, who do not believe in any of the promises, and have no interest in the Mediator of the covenant.

So that, whatever some have imagined and pretended about promises made to natural men's earnest seeking and knocking, it is plain and manifest, that whatever pains a natural man takes in religion, whatever prayers he makes, till he believes in Christ, God is under no manner of obligation to keep him a moment from eternal destruction.

So that thus it is that natural men are held in the hand of God over the pit of hell; they have deserved the fiery pit and are already sentenced to it; and God is dreadfully provoked: his anger is as great towards them as to those that are actually suffering the execution of the fierceness of his wrath in hell; and they have done nothing in the least to appease or abate that anger, neither is God in the least bound by any promise to hold them up one moment. The devil is waiting for them, hell is gaping for them, the flames gather and flash about them, and would fain lay hold on them, and swallow them up; the fire pent up in their own hearts is struggling to break out; and they have no interest in any Mediator; there are no means within reach that can be any security to them. In short they have no refuge, nothing to take hold of; all that preserves them every moment is the mere arbitrary will, and uncovenanted, unobliged forbearance of an incensed God.

Application

The use of this awful subject may be for awakening unconverted persons to a conviction of their danger. This that you have heard is the case of every one out of Christ. That world of misery, that lake of burning brimstone, is extended abroad under you. There is the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God; there is hell's wide gaping mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, nor anything to take hold of; there is nothing between you and hell but the air; it is only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up.

You probably are not sensible of this; you find you are kept out of hell, but do not see the hand of God in it, but look at other things, as the good state of your bodily constitution, your care of your own life, and the means you use for your own preservation. But indeed these things are nothing; if God should withdraw his hand, they would avail no more

to keep you from falling, than the thin air to hold up a person who is suspended in it.

Your wickedness makes you, as it were, heavy as lead, and to tend downwards with great weight and pressure towards hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink, and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf; and your healthy constitution, and your own care and prudence, and best contrivance, and all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you, and keep you out of hell, than a spider's web would have to stop a falling rock. Were it not for the sovereign pleasures of God, the earth would not hear you one moment, for you are a burden to it; the creation groans with you; the creature is made subject to the bondage of your corruption, not willingly; the sun does not willingly shine upon you, to give you light to serve sin and Satan; the earth does not willingly yield her increase, to satisfy your lusts; nor is it willingly a stage for your wickedness to be acted upon; the air does not willingly serve you for breath to maintain the flame of life in your vitals, while you spend your life in the service of God's enemies. God's creatures are good, and were made for men to serve God with: and do not willingly subserve any other purpose, and groan when they are abused to purposes so directly contrary to their nature and end. And the world would spew you out, were it not for the sovereign hand of Him who hath subjected it in hope. There are the black clouds of God's wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm, and big with thunder; and were it not for the restraining hand of God they would immediately burst forth upon you. The sovereign pleasure of God, for the present, stays his rough wind, otherwise, it would come with fury; and your destruction would come like a whirlwind, and you would be like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor.

The wrath of God is like great waters that are restrained for the present; but they increase more

and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the longer the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course when once it is let loose. It is true, that judgement against your evil works has not been executed hitherto; the floods of God's vengeance have been withheld; but your guilt in the mean time is constantly increasing, and you are every day treasuring up more wrath; the waters are constantly rising, and waxing more and more mighty; and there is nothing but the mere pleasure of God that holds the waters back, that are unwilling to be stopped, and press hard to go forward. If God should only withdraw his hand from the flood-gate, it would immediately fly open, and the fiery floods of the fierceness and wrath of God, would rush forth with inconceivable fury, and would come upon you with omnipotent power; and if your strength were ten thousand times greater than it is, yea, ten thousand times greater than the strength of the stoutest, sturdiest devil in hell, it would be nothing to withstand or endure it.

The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string; and justice directs the arrow to your heart, and strains the bow; and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood.

Thus all you that never passed under a great change of heart, by the mighty power of the Spirit of God upon your souls; all you that were never born again, and made new creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a state of new, and before altogether unexperienced light and life, are in the hands of an angry God. However, you may have reformed your life in many things, and may have had religion in your families and closets, and in the house of God, it is nothing but his mere pleasure that keeps you from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction.

However, unconvinced you may now be of the truth of what you hear, by and by you will be fully convinced of it. Those that are gone from being in the like circumstances with you, see that it was so with them; for destruction came suddenly upon most of them; when they expected nothing of it, and while they were saying, Peace and safety. Now they see, that those things on which they depended for peace and safety, were nothing but thin air and empty shadows.

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much in the same way as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked; his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in his eyes than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince: and yet, it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you were suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep; and there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given, while you have been reading this address, but his mercy; yea, no other reason can be given why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.

O sinner, consider the fearful danger you are in! It is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it and ready every moment to singe it, and

burn it asunder; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment.

And consider here more particularly,

1. Whose wrath it is. It is the wrath of the infinite God. If it were only the wrath of man, though it were of the most potent prince, it would be comparatively little to be regarded. The wrath of kings is very much dreaded, especially of absolute monarchs, who have the possessions and lives of their subjects wholly in their power, to be disposed of at their mere will. Prov. xx. 2. "The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion; whoso provoketh him to anger, sinneth against his own soul." The subject who very much enrages an arbitrary prince, is liable to suffer the most extreme torments that human art can invent, or human power can inflict. But the greatest earthly potentates, in their greatest majesty and strength, and when clothed in their greatest terrors, are but feeble, despicable worms of the dust, in comparison with the great and almighty Creator and King of heaven and earth. It is but little that they can do, when most enraged, and when they have exerted the utmost of their fury. All the kings of the earth, before God, are as grasshoppers; they are nothing, and less than nothing; both their love and their hatred are to be despised. The wrath of the great King of kings, is as much more terrible than theirs, as his majesty is greater. "And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear; Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him". Luke xii. 4, 5.

2. It is the fierceness of his wrath that you are exposed to. We often read of the fury of God; as in Isaiah lix. 18. "According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries." So Isaiah lxvi. 15. "For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire." And so also in many other places. Thus we read of "the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." Rev. xix. 15. The words are exceedingly terrible. If it had only been said, "the wrath of God," the words would have implied that which is unspeakably dreadful; but it is said, "the fierceness and wrath of God:" the fury of God! the fierceness of Jehovah! O how dreadful must that be! Who can utter or conceive what such expressions carry them? But it is also, the "fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." As though there would be a very great manifestation of his almighty power in what the fierceness of his wrath should inflict; as though Omnipotence should be, as it were, enraged, and exerted, as men are wont to exert their strength in the fierceness of their wrath. O! then, what will be the consequence? what will become of the poor worm that shall suffer it? whose hands can be strong; and whose heart can endure? To what a dreadful, inexpressible, inconceivable depth of misery must the poor creature be sunk, who shall be the subject of this?

Consider this, you that yet remain in an unregenerate state. That God will execute the fierceness of his anger, implies, that he will inflict wrath without any pity. When God beholds the ineffable extremity of your case, and sees your torment to be so vastly disproportioned to your strength, and sees how your poor soul is crushed, and sinks down, as it were, into an infinite gloom he will have no compassion upon you, he will not forbear the execution of this wrath, or in the least lighten his hand; there shall be no moderation or mercy, nor will God then at all stay his rough wind: he will have no

regard to your welfare, nor be at all careful lest you should suffer too much in any other sense, that only that you shall not suffer beyond what strict justice requires: nothing shall be withheld, because it is so hard for you to bear. "Therefore will I also deal in fury; mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity; and though they cry in mine ears with a loud voice, yet I will not hear them." Ezek. viii. 18. Now, God stands ready to pity you; this is a day of mercy; you may cry now with some encouragement of obtaining mercy. But when once the day of mercy is passed, your most lamentable and dolorous cries and shrieks will be in vain; you will be wholly lost and thrown away of God, as to any regard to your welfare. God will have no other use to put you to, but to suffer misery; you shall be continued in being to no other end! for you will be a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction; and there will be no other use of this vessel, but only to be filled full of wrath. God will be so far from pitying you when you cry to him, that it is said he will only "laugh and mock" because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you; then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof; therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall stay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." Prov. i. 24-32.

How awful are those words of the great God, "I will tread them in mine anger, and will trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled

upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment." Isaiah lxiii. 3. It is, perhaps, impossible to conceive of words that carry in them greater manifestations of these three things, namely, contempt, hatred, and fierceness of indignation: If you cry to God to pity you, he will be so far from pitying you in your doleful case, or showing you the least regard or favor, that instead of that, he will only tread you under foot; and though he will know that you cannot bear the weight of Omnipotence treading upon you, yet he will not regard that, but he will crush you under his feet without mercy; he will crush out your blood, and make it fly, and it shall be sprinkled on his garments, so as to stain all his raiment. He will not only hate you, but he will have you in the utmost contempt; no place shall be thought fit for you, but under his feet, to be trodden down as the mire of the streets.

The misery you are exposed to is that which God will inflict, to the end that he might show what that wrath of Jehovah is. God hath had it on his heart to show to angels and men, both how excellent his love is, and also how terrible his wrath is. Sometimes earthly kings have a mind to show how terrible their wrath is, by the extreme punishments they would execute on those that provoke them. Nebuchadnezzar, that mighty and haughty monarch of the Chaldean empire, was willing to show his wrath, when enraged with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; and accordingly gave order that the burning fiery furnace should be heated seven times hotter than it was before; doubtless, it was raised to the utmost degree of fierceness that human art could raise it. But the great God is also willing to show his wrath, and magnify his awful majesty and mighty power in the extreme sufferings of his enemies. "What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?" Rom. ix. 22. And seeing this is his design, and what he has determined, even to show how terrible the unmixed.

unrestrained wrath, the fury and fierceness of Jehovah is, he will do it to effect. There will be something accomplished and brought to pass that will be dreadful with a witness. When the great and angry God hath risen up and executed his awful vengeance on the poor sinner, and the wretch is actually suffering the infinite weight and power of his indignation, then will God call upon the whole universe to behold the awful majesty and mighty power that is to be seen in it. "And the people shall be as the burnings of lime, as thorns cut up shall they be burnt in the fire. Hear ye that are afar off, what I have done; and ye that are near, acknowledge my might. The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burning?" Isaiah xxxiii. 12-14.

Thus it will be with you that are in an unconverted state, if you continue in it; the infinite might, and majesty, and terribleness, of the omnipotent God, shall be magnified upon you in the ineffable strength of your torments. You shall be tormented in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and when you shall be in this state of suffering, the glorious inhabitants of heaven shall go forth and look on the awful spectacle, that they may see what the wrath and fierceness of the Almighty is; and when they have seen it, they will fall down and adore that great power and majesty. "And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." Isaiah lxvi. 23, 24.

4. It is everlasting wrath. It would be dreadful to suffer this fierceness and wrath of Almighty God one moment; but you must suffer it to all eternity.

There will be no end to this exquisite horrible misery. When you look forward, you shall see a long forever, a boundless duration, before you, which will swallow up your thoughts, and amaze your souls; and you will absolutely despair of ever having any deliverance, any end, any mitigation, any rest at all; you will know certainly that you must wear out long ages, millions of millions of ages, in wrestling and conflicting with this almighty merciless vengeance; and then when you have so done, when so many ages have actually been spent by you in this manner, you will know that all is but a point to what remains. So that your punishment will indeed be infinite. O, who can express what the state of a soul in such circumstances is! All that we can possibly say about it, gives but a very feeble, faint representation of it; it is inexpressible and inconceivable: for, "Who knoweth the power of God's anger?"

How dreadful is the state of those who are daily and hourly in danger of this great wrath and infinite misery! But this is the dismal case of every soul that has not been born again, however moral and strict, sober and religious, they may otherwise be. O! that you would consider it, whether you be young or old! There is reason to fear that there are many who will read this book, or who have heard the gospel, who will actually be the subjects of this very misery to all eternity. We know not who they are, or what thoughts they now have. It may be they are now at ease, and hear all these things without much disturbance, and are now flattering themselves that they are not the persons, promising themselves that they shall escape. If we knew that there was one person, and but one, of those that we know, that was to be the subject of this misery, what an awful thing would it be to think of! If we knew who it was, what an awful sight would it be to see such a person! How might every Christian lift up a lamentable and bitter cry over him! But, alas! instead of one, how many is it likely will remember these solemn reflections in hell! And

some may be in hell in a very short time, before this year is out. And it would be no wonder if some readers, who are now in health, and quiet and secure, may be there before tomorrow morning. Those of you who finally continue in a natural condition, who may keep out of hell longest, will be there in a little time! your damnation does not slumber; it will come swiftly, and, in all probability, very suddenly, upon many of you. You have reason to wonder that you are not already in hell. It is doubtless the case of some whom you have seen and known, that never deserved hell more than you, and that heretofore appeared as likely to have been now alive as you. Their case is past all hope; they are crying in extreme misery and perfect despair; but here you are in the land of the living, blessed with Bibles and sabbaths, and ministers, and have an opportunity to obtain salvation. What would not those poor damned, hopeless souls give for one day's opportunity such as you now enjoy!

And now you have an extraordinary opportunity, a day wherein Christ has thrown the door of mercy wide open, and stands calling, and crying with a loud voice to poor sinners; a day wherein many are flocking to him, and pressing into the kingdom of God; many are daily coming from the east, west, north, and south; many that were very lately in the same miserable condition that you are in, are now in a happy state with their hearts filled with love to Him who has loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. How awful is it to be left behind at such a day! to see so many others feasting, while you are pining and perishing! To see so many rejoicing and singing for joy of heart, while you have cause to mourn for sorrow of heart, and to howl for vexation of spirit! How can you rest one moment in such a condition? Are not your souls as precious as the souls of those who are flocking from day to day to Christ?

Are there not many who have lived long in the world, who are not to this day born again, and so are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and have done nothing ever since they have lived, but treasure up wrath against the day of wrath? O sirs! your case, in an especial manner, is extremely dangerous. Your guilt and hardness of heart are extremely great. Do not you see how generally persons of your years are passed over and left, in the dispensations of God's mercy? You had need to consider your selves, and wake thoroughly out of sleep: you cannot bear the fierceness and wrath of the infinite God.

And you, young men, and young women, will you neglect this precious season which you now enjoy, when so many others of your age are renouncing all youthful vanities, and flocking to Christ? You especially have now an opportunity; but if you neglect it, it will soon be with you as it is with those persons who spent all the precious days of youth in sin, and are now come to such a dreadful pass in blindness and hardness.

And you, children, who are unconverted, do not you know that you are going down to hell, to bear the dreadful wrath of that God, who is now angry with you every day and every night? Will you be content to be the children of the devil, when so many of the children of the land are converted, and are become the holy and happy children of the King of kings?

And let every one that is yet out of Christ, and hanging over the pit of hell, whether they be old men and women, or middle aged, or young people, or little children, now hearken to the loud calls of God's word and providence. This acceptable year of the Lord, a day of great mercy to some, will doubtless be a day of as remarkable vengeance to others. Men's hearts harden, and their guilt increases apace at such a day as this, if they neglect their souls. Never was there a period

when so many means were employed for the salvation of souls, and if you entirely neglect them, you will eternally curse the day of your birth. Now, undoubtedly it is, as it was in the days of John the Baptist, the axe is laid at the root of the trees, and every tree which brings not forth good fruit, may be hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Therefore, let every one that is out of Christ now awake and flee from the wrath to come. The wrath of Almighty God is now undoubtedly hanging over every unregenerate sinner. Let every one flee out of Sodom: "Haste, and escape for your lives, look not behind you, escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed".

The following days were concerned with group discussions and fear about where we were going. This type of talk was the basis for a return to stricter beliefs but was not culminated for almost 30 years.

As had been the custom since the church was in full session in 1699, but seldom mentioned in town meetings, a town drummer was hired to "beat the drum at half an hour before ten of ye clock and at half an hour after ten in ye forenoon and at half an hour after one of ye clock in ye afternoon, from ye middle of October till ye middle of April, and from ye middle of April to ye middle of October at nine of ye clock and at ten in ye forenoon, and at two of ye clock in ye afternoon, and to beat till ye minister comes into ye street". This only applied to Sundays. During Lecture days, Thursday, town meetings and funerals, he was to just beat the drums. This was a charming custom that lasted into the 1780's.

Although little mention is made, Enfield, Suffield, Somers, and Woodstock joined with Connecticut in May 1749. The depression was still in effect because Mr. Raynolds received 500 pounds, including his base. This inflated condition lasted until 1757 when a re-adjustment was made - new money issued and a return to normal was established.

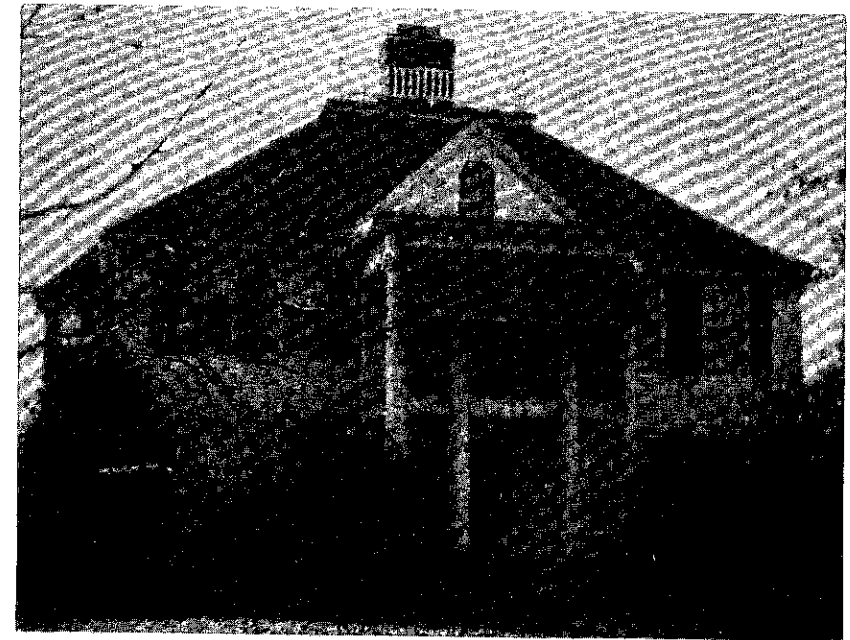
Beginning about 1702 and continuing through this time there was apparently an adjustment of momentary levels throughout the colonies and one author wrote in 1752 that based upon the English standard of exchange 100 pounds of sterling in 1702 must be purchased for 113 pounds in currency, and in 1749 the same 100 pounds of sterling could not be purchased for less than 1100 pounds of currency. Although this was the exchange rate in Boston it was indicative of the conditions throughout all New England. For example, Mr. Raynold's salary for 1741 was 100 pounds more than his base (probably 70 pounds). Add this to the desire of Enfield to join Connecticut, plus the religious unrest of the time, it is evident that our church was indeed ripe for Jonathan Edwards' sermon.

At a town meeting September 21, 1756, the first entry was made regarding the Separatists' interest

in the town. This new religious group basically believed that the Congregational form was too liberal for them and they petitioned the town for a separate piece of land and relief of taxes so that they could form a separate Society. This story will be related further on in this history as it is an interesting one, but not until they gain their own independence and form a distinct faith of their own.

Tranquil times must have descended on Enfield for there was no important church event from this time, 1756 until 1765, when the Rev. Mr. Raynold's health began to fail and a committee was formed to meet with him in his need. Mr. Raynolds evidently did not want to yield his pastorage to another man, for December 1, 1766, efforts were made to assist him with his church activities. He spent more and more time at home and many church meetings were conducted without him. Although he conducted some Sunday and Thursday services it was not without pain. But his spirit maintained him for 2 more years. He died on May 11, 1768. A search was begun on November 7, 1768 for a new minister and Mr. Elam Potter of Waterbury (Conn.) was chosen, if he would agree to yield all the Ministry lands, which would normally be given to him, to the town. He agreed to this and was installed in the church March 1, 1769. A strange note in this case is that he was not examined in the church. The ceremonies took place in the home of Capt. Ephraim Pease with 19 witnesses (called messengers) with a Rev. Stephens Williams of Longmeadow, Mass. as moderator. With all papers in order and the examination successful he was installed with the following persons assisting:

Rev. Mr. Potter - Prayer before sermon
Rev. Mr. Lockwood - Sermon
Rev. Mr. Whitman - Prayer before the charge
Rev. Mr. Williams - Charge
Rev. Mr. Buck - Last Prayer
Rev. Mr. Perry - Right hand of Fellowship



Parsonage at 1390 Enfield St. built by Capt. Ephraim Pease for his 14 year old daughter, Sybil when she married the Rev. Elam Potter in about 1769.

The town at this time was very uneasy. The Separatists movement wanted to be fully recognized; the present church building needed repair or replacement and some political friction was being experienced with England. The town agreed to release the Separatists if the General Assembly in Hartford would agree to it. This begins the saga of a sect which was to last nearly 75 years and will be discussed lightly here.

The Second Ecclesiastical Society of Enfield

The Strict Congregational Church

The Separatists

The Separatist movement in Enfield was not unlike the Separatist movement throughout all New England. It was a direct off-shoot of the "Great

Awakening" produced people that desired to go to the stricter, more physical type of church organization or one in which its members took active part and voted in all church matters and practiced their belief more strictly.

The desire to form a new church was apparent for many years prior to 1770 and is witnessed by the fact that many letters were sent to the state Legislature requesting relief of taxes to support a church in which they didn't believe. They wanted recognition and protective legislation. As early as March 26, 1744 eight persons requested release from the church to be recorded as members of a Second Ecclesiastical Society in Enfield. Records do not indicate this release was granted. However, the biggest division came August 20, 1762 in which about 50 people withdrew to form a new church. At their head as Minister was Nathaniel Collins who served from 1762 to December 5, 1787. Ironic, isn't it, that he should divide the very church that his father (long deceased) organized. The church grew, supported entirely by gifts because their tax money still went to the "standing church", ie. the first church. On May 4, 1769, the Separatists church again filed a request to state signed by 78 persons requesting release from support of the town church. This time it was granted. Rev. Peter Reynolds died in 1768 undoubtedly broken by the constant aggression and growing division of his members, the lack of adequate funds to furnish his own church, and physical hardships of the times.

The release of this new society from local tax assessments did not cure all the ills of a new church because for several years committees constantly attempted to collect "the respective sums due us." It is odd to note that the General Assembly allowed only those that signed the petition to become members of this new church; also the signers' descendants and any strangers in the town who so requested the town clerk. No others would be allowed membership without the General Assembly's knowledge. The Legislators obviously were believers in Congregationalism!

There was a church built and it stood on the lot on the North corner of Oliver Road and Enfield Street. It was not a large church and had no fine appointments on the interior. In fact, it was never plastered. It is not known whether it had a steeple or a bell. Records do not show when the church was built, but probably in 1770. An attest to its poor construction may be seen in the records for 1786 when money was appropriated for major repairs.

Upon the death of their first minister in 1787, a committee was formed immediately to locate another. Even Rev. Elam Potter, who had been released from the first church, was asked. He refused. Their search continued and a Mr. Jeremiah Higbe was found, but apparently he was not entirely satisfactory for in 1790 he was accepted on probation to "improve his gifts...for their further acquaintance of his gifts as a minister of the Gospel." In December he was accepted and was paid the "necessaries of life". Records are very sketchy and nondescript of the coming and goings of a minister of this church, but in 1794, a search for another minister was begun and at this point we see that the Baptists are mentioned. A Baptist layman would be acceptable to the church if he would acquaint himself with strict Congregational procedure. This is interesting because the Baptist Church was also operating under duress, because they too were restricted by state laws. So it now became a case of survival! The church could not obtain a Congregational minister and accepted a Baptist instead - and a layman at that. A committee was chosen to consult with the "Baptist Brethren" on November 29, 1805 in the efforts of unity. Thus ended 19 years of searching for a new minister for a newly organized church. This long search hurt the growth of the membership and many returned to the home church.

Elder George Atwell, another layman, served until 1814 when he died, and the church again turned to the Baptist church for a preacher. Again no one was forthcoming and it wasn't resolved until 1816,

when Mr. Buckley Waters, another Baptist layman, was allowed to come to Enfield. Another Elder, Jeremiah Bridges, was obtained early in 1820. But this was the beginning of the end for this church. Apparently religious meetings were still held as were annual meetings, but no taxes were levied; no important business was transacted such as repair of the meeting house. On March 25, 1839, the church membership agreed to sell the meeting house and all property; yet this action was forestalled for 4 years while stubborn members attempted to keep the church going. A petition (contested) was filed with the state in 1843 in which the claim was, that the meeting house and parsonage were in disrepair and request made to sell the property and return the money to the town treasury. No concrete evidence was found regarding the disposition of the buildings, but I must assume that the Baptists acquired them.

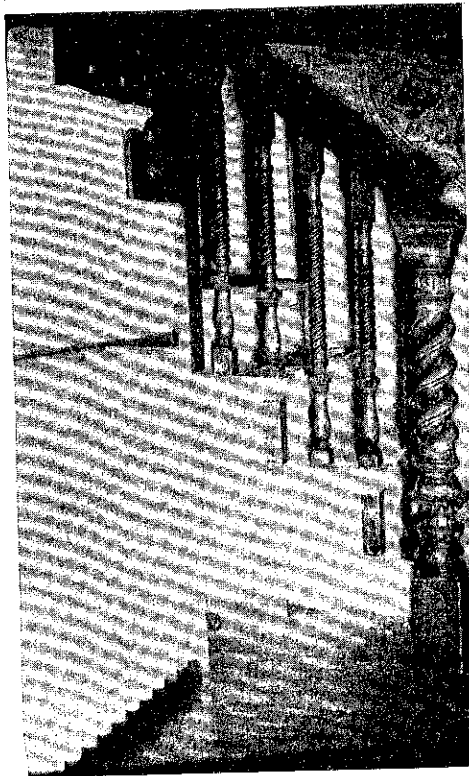
Thus ends the history of the Second Ecclesiastical Society of Enfield. A church which had only one qualified minister and he the son of the First Congregational minister. A Church which was duly recognized only 73 years, and about 40 of these years were essentially Baptist dominated. A church never fully built, yet had substantial membership. A Church unable to live up to its own requirements. A Church never fostered. This same pattern was to repeat itself within 75 years.

Let us now return to the pastorate of the Rev. Elam O. Potter and our own Church in 1770. Remember, at this stage, the town was in the middle of the installation of Mr. Potter. He had vision and recognized the possibility of unity within the Church. He proposed the erection of a new church building because the old one was in poor repair and 70 years old. He recommended this 6 months after his installation. His move was defeated. This marked the beginning of trouble for Mr. Potter. The church was quiet for 2 years, but on September 24, 1771, after initial refusal of the church to allow

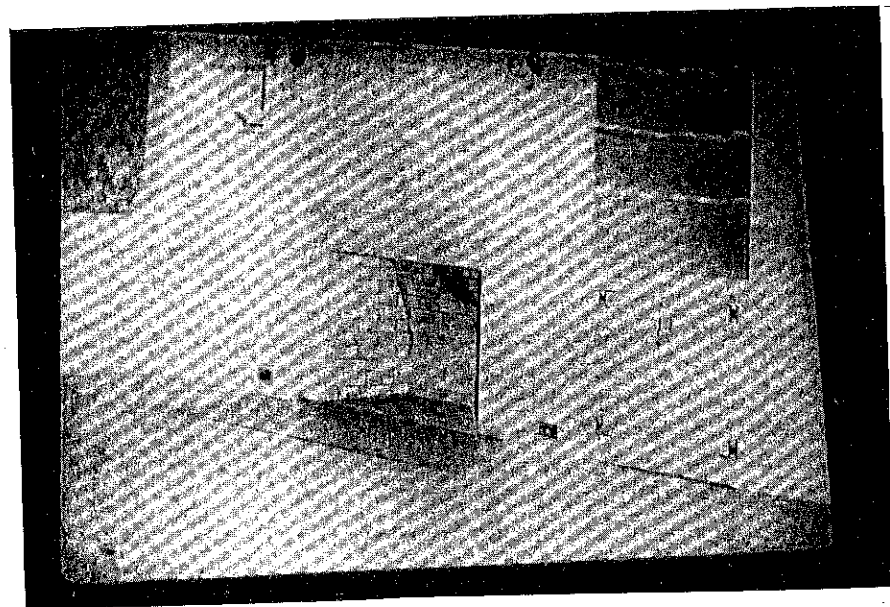
Mr. Potter to travel through the South and preach against slavery, and deliver Gods word to the negroes, consent was given, but only because Mr. Potter had enlisted the aid of three parishoners to help him in his cuase.

It is not known exactly when this trip was started, but he kept a diary of events and thoughts of his trip which probably took place in 1772. His trip was very frustrating and was done in great poverty for numerous entries in his diary say that he had to sell his minister's jewelry and had to beg for food. Many times he would ask for lodging in a tavern or private home. In other cases he would be thrown out of the place where he was preaching because he was advocating freedom from bondage. However, he did get much satisfaction from talking to negroes, who were innocent to the presence of God or what He meant. Most of them never heard about Jesus Christ. Although we all know of the slavery that was in the South, few of us realize that we had it in Enfield too. If slaves went to church, they would sit in the back rows of the gallery. Mr. Potter was a deeply religious man and many phamplets are in our possession that he published from 1770 to 1777 attest to this fact.

An interesting facet to his life was his wife. He married a Sybil Pease, the 14 year old daughter of the richest man then living in Enfield. Her father built her a home that still stands on Enfield Street. Although some of the interior and exterior of the house has been changed, the main features have not changed and the accompanying photos show the extent of the luxury in which they lived. This served as a parsonage and was only about 200 feet South of where the second meeting house stood. Built into this house was a secret room, behind one of the fireplaces, in which he hid slaves as part of the underground railroad system. Ironic, isn't it, that his own father-in-law who lived in the house immediately north of his had several slaves?



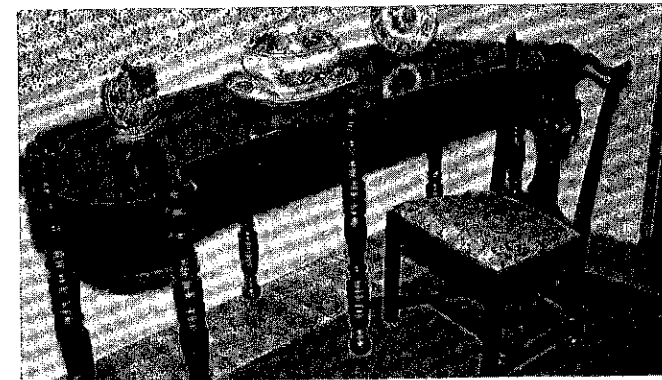
The hand carved staircase in Elam Potter's home.



Behind the cupboard to the right of the fireplace is a secret room in which Mr. Potter hid slaves.

Mr. Potter's stay here was not entirely satisfactory, but some good was accomplished. Careful observation will bring one to the conclusion that this is often true that organizations have existed on divided opinions. A situation is rarely entirely lost, just as good circumstances are not always perfect.

War was pending with England. Inflation was very high. But, in 1772 a major task was undertaken to build a new meeting house and it was hoped that the Separatists would abandon their congregation and rejoin the parent church and assist in the sponsorship of a new building. They refused. The new building was authorized on March 11, 1772 and was to be in every respect the exact duplicate of the church in East Windsor (now known as Scantic). A Mr. Isaac Kibby agreed to do this and to complete it by January 1, 1775 for 1100 pounds sterling to be paid in corn, wheat, rye, beef and tobacco.



This kidney table and unmatching Chippendale chair were once part of a set used in the third church building from 1775 to 1850. The table is now in the possession of Thomas Keeney of Somersville. The chair, one of four, is now in the Martha Parsons estate.

The agreement made was that the steeple and weathercock be on the west side of the building. Minor modifications were made as the building progressed

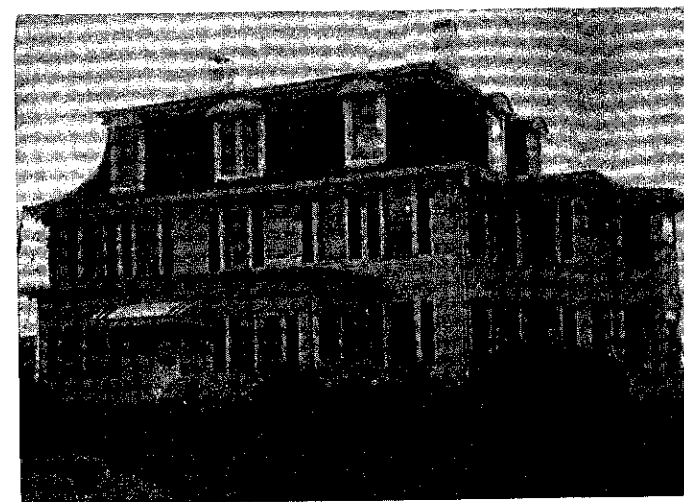
but these only applied to the placement of doors and flooring. One interesting fact is that once the foundation of stone was laid and framing complete, the entire perimeter was packed with dirt, probably as a protection against cold weather. Also a double floor was laid, but this cost was accepted by a benefactor in East Windsor. The building was completed on time and occupied before January 15, 1775.

At this time there was so much friction in the church about Mr. Potter that his salary was withheld in 1775. No comments are made about the difficulties (but there was much talk about dividing the church again, which was defeated by 56 to 27). Mr. Potter was dismissed early in 1776. Thus we end an era of confusion, splits, deception and distress. Yet we did build a new church - a building which stands today, in bad disrepair, across the street from its original location - the front lawn of the present building. Mr. Potter died in 1794 on Long Island, but his family was in Enfield. His will provided for them and his wife re-married.

This old and wonderful building gazes at a statue of a man which is intimately connected with its history. On Thursday, April 20, 1775, during the regular church prayer meeting, word reached Enfield that the British had attacked at Lexington. The truth of this episode is shrouded in mystery. Current stories say that in a tavern (which did exist) across the street from the church there was a man, a drunkard, who became excited when he heard the news, picked up a drum and proceeded to walk around and around the church beating the drum until he broke up the meeting and spread the word. Others say he was the town drummer and his job was to spread the word when it reached Enfield. Other stories also persist, but it suffices to say that the word spread rapidly and this man, Thomas Abby, gathered up 80 volunteers and the next morning marched off to Boston, spending the first night in Springfield. Only 33 ever reached the war, the

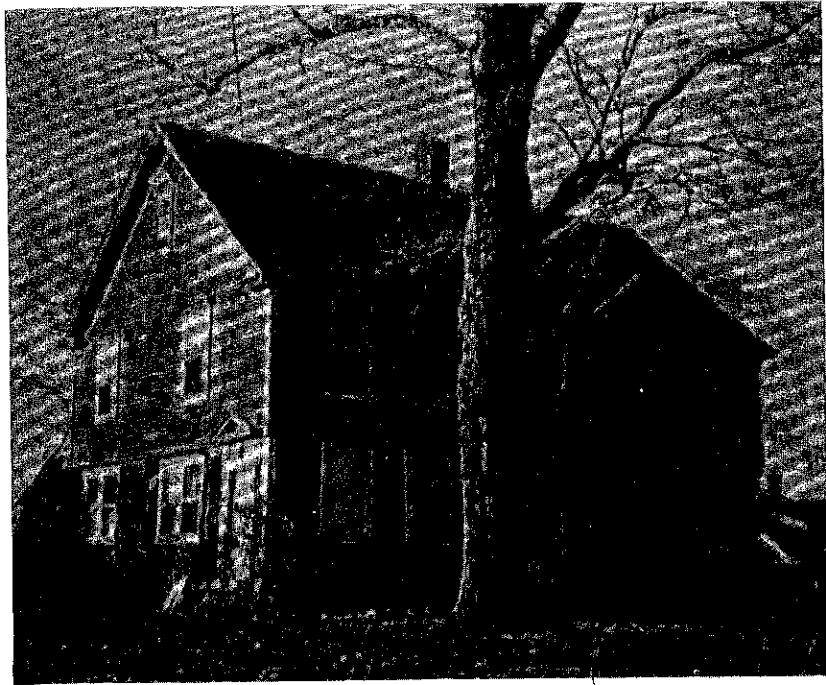
others either returning to Enfield or elsewhere. Mr. Abby returned to Enfield after the war as a Captain.

After Mr. Potter left, Mr. Hayes, not a minister, did serve for a while, but at only 3 pounds per Sunday. He left probably in early 1779. Many votes were taken on supplying the pulpit, even Mr. Potter was re-considered but no candidate, mutually acceptable to all, could be found until December 19, 1781, when Mr. Nehemiah Prudden was accepted. He served several months before he was officially installed. He probably started in October 1781, but was officially ordained into the church in 1782. He came to the church as a bachelor but soon married another daughter, Agnes, of Captain Ephraim Pease.



Parsonage at 1370 Enfield St. built by Capt. Ephraim Pease for his 23 year old daughter, Agnes when she married the Rev. Nehemiah Prudden in about 1783.

During a church meeting on August 30, 1794, Captain Ephraim Pease presented the society with a steeple bell with the understanding that it be used by the society for services and by the town for deaths and funerals. This then relieved the town of the drummer who had served for many years. This bell now hangs in the present church belfry, although it was recast in 1830.



The home of Capt. Ephraim Pease at 1380 Enfield Street. He was the giver of our church bell.

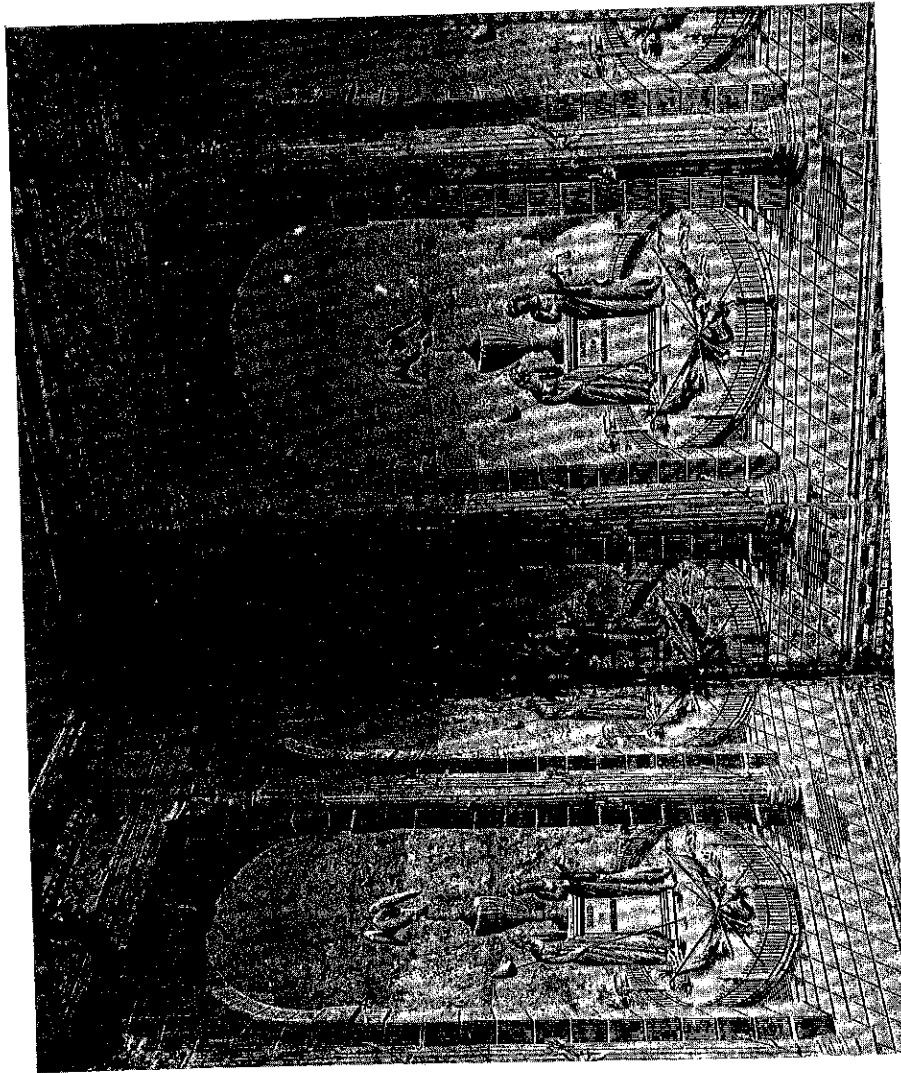
An active choir with a paid director started in 1794. Henceforth at least 4 persons were appointed to the choir. The choir, and music, of course, have undergone many changes since that time. Some of these big changes were in the musical instruments - from a pitch pipe to a bass viol in 1810, to cello, to flute, to pipe organ to electronic organ, but these will be covered as they appear in the records.

One interesting facet that seems to be important in this year of 1795 was the monetary exchange. The Revolutionary War had been over for more than 15 years, but we, in Enfield, were still operating on British currency. The Continental Congress passed the exchange bill in 1789 yet it didn't reach Enfield until seven years later. On January 1, 1796 we converted to Federal Currency as it was called.

Mr. Pruddin was ordained into our church as a bachelor in 1782. On December 10, 1783, he married Agnes Pease, the sister of Sybil, who married the controversial Mr. Potter. Her father built her a home also on Enfield Street, two houses from the one he built for Sybil. The house is still standing 191 years later and is now occupied by the Montessori School. So you see, the Pease name was certainly an important and influential name in our early church.

We now jump to the year 1800, the year following President George Washington's death. He, as everyone knows, was the General in charge of the Continental Armies and our first President, a beloved man, a leader of men, a devoted family man and a Mason. When he died in 1799, the whole country mourned and there was printed a year later a memorial wallpaper. The Parson family, of 1387 Enfield Street, had the paper installed in their front hallway and upper stairway. The paper was black and white and depicted many of the virtues that Mr. Washington had and the sorrow the country had at his death. The wallpaper is still on that wall in the Parsons home 172 years later. Now the home of the late "Miss Martha Parsons," a descendant of the old Parsons family and directly related to the Rev. Elam Potter. The paper is still in good condition considering its age and in places is as clear and distinct as the day it was put up.

On October 3, 1808, we see a change in the pew assignments. You will remember that in the early 1700's people could install their own pews and apparently in any position; then later people were seated by their importance in the town. When this new church was opened in 1775, pews were positioned according to a plan and design and people paid rent (or "bought" a pew each year as the term was) for a pew. At the meeting in 1808, the decision was made to number the pews. This probably was done to remove the possessiveness that the congregation probably felt toward church property. The church might have wanted to take over the management of its property - to have better control.



A year after Gen. George Washington's death in 1799, this memorial black and white wallpaper was installed in the Parsons' home on Enfield St. The paper features an eagle with its head buried under one wing, a justice scale, cannon ramrod, bayoneted rifles, a snare drum and military flags. The paper is still in excellent condition.



On Thursday, November 1, 1811, we find that several families who had left the church to form and build the Separatists church on south Enfield Street, desired to rejoin this church. After a discussion and several questions had been put to the families they were allowed to join. They had to agree to the confession of faith and covenant. This was done during the regular Thursday lecture meetings and they were allowed to take communion the following Sunday.

Sometime prior to 1812 the church bought a bass viol to assist in the singing. I wonder who the musician was and what happened to the old instrument?



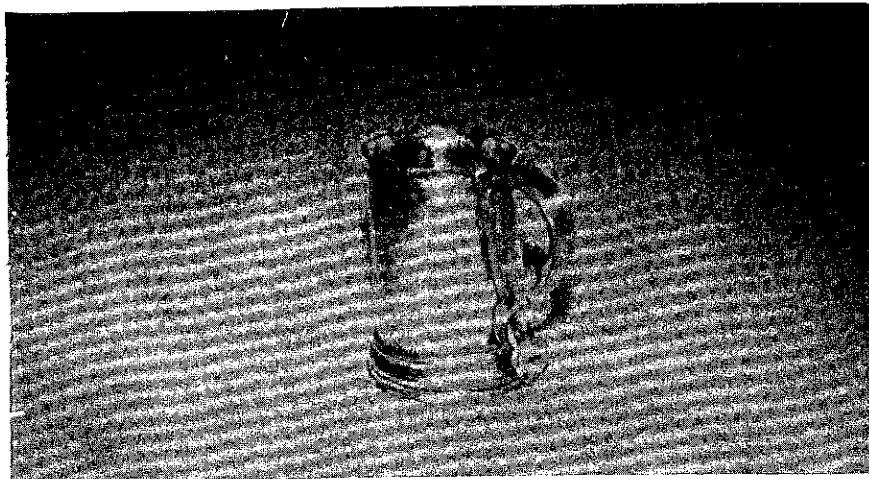
Parsonage at 1280 Enfield St. built by the Rev. Francis Robbins about 1816.

Also the steeple bell which was given by Captain Ephriam Pease in 1784 apparently cracked in 1815 thirty-one years after it was presented for there is mention in the town meeting at November 6 authorizing the selectmen to purchase a new bell or have the old one recast. However, sentimental associations over-ruled practicability but was not recast until 1830.

The Rev. Nehemiah Pruddin died in office in September, 1815, having served us 33 years. His relationship with the church was firm and affable. Although no great events took place, he helped heal

the wounds left by Mr. Potter; took strong action in the guidance of the Church; and at the end of his ministry there were 103 members. Progress was made. We rebuilt the church roof, painted the church, had a musical instrument to assist in the music, a paid choir director and numbered pews.

It was agreed in February 1816 that the Rev. Francis L. Robbins would be called to administer to our needs. He was ordained into our church about October at an annual salary of \$700. He probably came from Fairhaven, Mass. As was the custom for all the early ministers, a house was provided for them, but we see notable exceptions to this rule in the cases of Elam O. Potter and Nehemiah Pruddin. They married into wealthy families and their wives father provided them a house.



Reportedly one of the original communion mugs (prior to 1820) of the church—date unknown.

Such was not the case with Mr. Robbins. He purchased several acres of land on the West side of Enfield Street just north of the church about 1819 and then built an inexpensive farm type house. It was not a true colonial as we know it today, but a long, narrow 2-story wood building. It was a large

house with 5 bedrooms and 5 fireplaces. The house still stands (1226 Enfield Street). An interesting fact about this house is that it served as a parsonage from 1819 to 1945, virtually unchanged. The church bought the home from Mrs. Robbins after her husband died in 1850 for \$1900 and the mortgage wasn't completed until 1896. There is an interesting story connected with this house that will be related when we get to 1945.

In 1827 an entry was made that the pews would be changed to "slips". The only logical conclusion seems to be that doors or pew gates were added in an attempt to minimize the drafts and to keep the congregation warm, keeping in mind that foot warmers were still used extensively. In 1830, the seating arrangement again was changed in the church. For the first time we see that the "seaters" were assigned to seat the parishioners by town district; thus, if a person was from the 10th district, he would be assigned a seat in that area of church assigned to the 10th district.

Starting from this time and extending until 1840 a severe austerity program was necessary because of a depression. Mr. Robbins did not receive a stipulated salary; he received the money from the renting or "selling the slips". Also no provisions could be made to pay the choir director, unless funds could be especially raised.

The church building was now, in 1840, 65 years old and in poor repair due to the lack of adequate funds for the required maintenance. Many committees were formed to appraise the situation. Many recommendations were made, ranging from replacing the steeple with a cupola to moving the entire church to a better location and a major reconstruction take place. All recommendations were rejected until December 25, 1844, when a new committee was formed to circulate a subscription paper to gather funds to buy land and build a new church. One person



Pewter communion cup thought to belong to the second set. The mug was probably used from 1820 to 1863. Returned to the church in 1972. The bread tray and one chalice have been located and their return is now being negotiated.

contacted was Orrin Thompson, who had a successful weaving mill North of Enfield near Freshwater Pond on the Connecticut River. Several homes were built near this mill as were the other necessary commercial establishments. This settlement was known as Thompsons ville and in the ensuing years, through expansion, the whole area around the mill became known as Thompsonville.

Orrin Thompson lived in what is known as the Mother House of the Felician Sisters of the Roman Catholic Convent

located immediately south of our present church building. Mr. Thompson attended a meeting on March 31, 1845 and made the following proposition to those attending.

That, if the town would buy a piece of land and move the church building to it, Mr. Thompson would buy the building from the church for \$1,000 and give the building to the town to be used as a "town house" or meeting place. The town must then refit the lower section for the use of the town (the pews having been removed and saved as church property) and the upper section to be outfitted as a "select school".

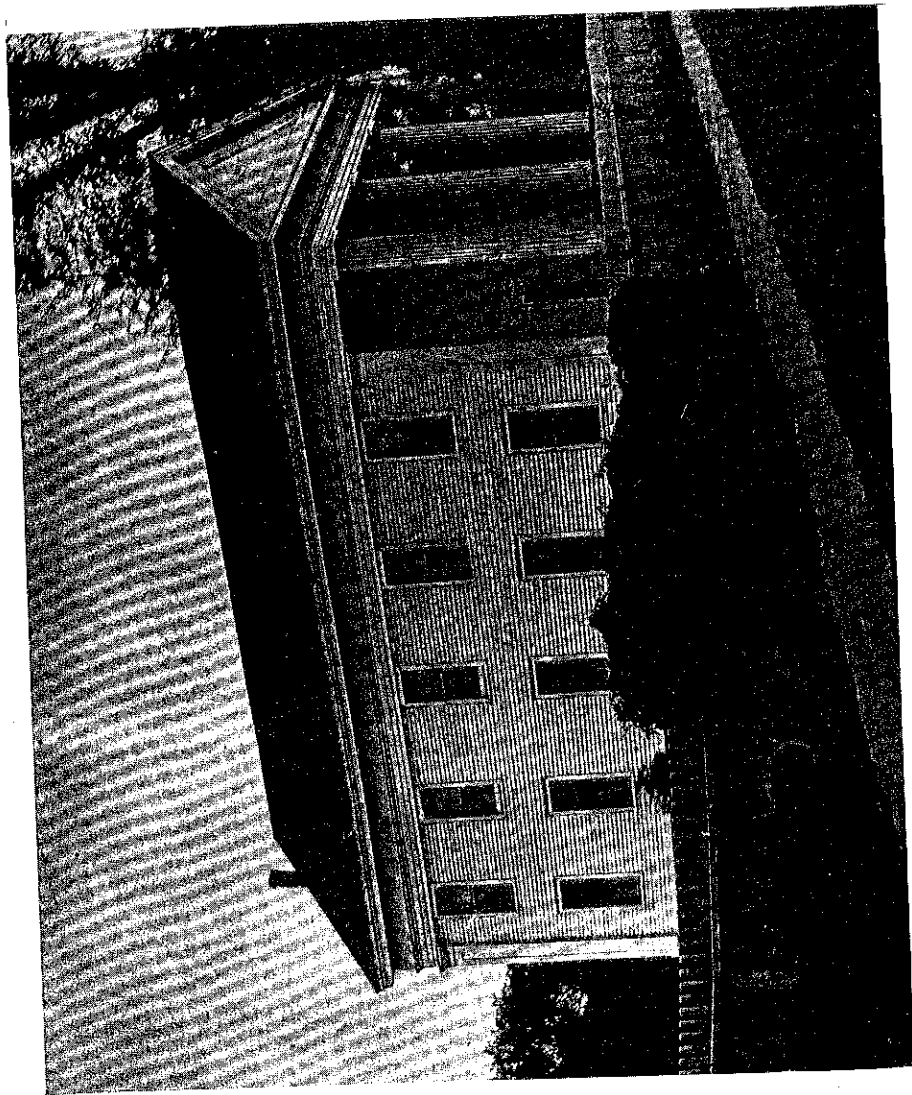
Mr. Thompson also proposed that if the church would purchase a piece of land that he designated and build a church equal to the one in East Hartford, he would donate an additional \$2,000 for its construction provided he was allowed the use of one slip (pew with gate) without any further financial support. On April 28, 1845 at a town meeting, Mr. Thompson was requested to meet with a committee to discuss with them his plans for the purchase of the church to be used for a town house.

One item of note here shows that church and state (or rather town) separated about September, 1846 and all church business was conducted by the church. Perhaps one reason for this was there were three other sects here - Methodist, Presbyterians and Shakers.

At many previous town meetings, the need for a town house was mentioned. The town had a piece of land in mind (Mrs. Dixons) on which to either move the church or build a town house (or common meeting place).

Oddly enough, Mr. Thompson was not a member of our church nor did he become one until 1856. However, a Mr. Augustus G. Hazard did join the church on November 25, 1845, an event we may be very proud of as we shall see in a short time.

No further action was taken on a town house until May 1, 1848 when a Mr. R. M. Abbe gave a piece of land to the town to build a meeting place on. The town accepted this land, obtained a deed to it, and drew up plans for a town house but later voted that \$3,000 was more than they could afford to build the building. The building was to be 40 x 58. At the same meeting the town did agree to buy the church for \$500 and move it and remodel it for a meeting place on the 1st floor and a high school on the second floor exactly as Mr. Thompson had asked 3 years before. The building was moved between May and October, 1848, where it is today, directly across the street from the present church. After it was moved, the roof was extended and the columns added to more closely match the new church.



The 3rd Meeting House now known as the Old Town Hall as it looked in 1912. The columns and "porch" roof were added in 1849. It has since decayed to its present sad condition.

GOD'S 4TH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH BUILDING

Beginning in May 1847, and continuing into January 1848, many church meetings were held to discuss places to build a new church. Many sites were chosen and approved and money raised for a building only to be voted down at a subsequent meeting. So much confusion existed that a disinterested group from neighboring towns was asked to arbitrate the matter and recommend a position. Their decision was to build a church on a previously recommended plot (Miners) on January 17, 1848. No action was taken, but on January 24, 1848, an informal note was taken to build the new church on an entirely different piece of land. A committee was again chosen to solicit funds and a member of this committee was A. G. Hazard. Oddly enough, this informal note was accepted and the land was purchased - but no price can be found. The original deed was encased in a picture frame about 8 x 10 inches showing the exact boundaries and the signatures of the responsible parties. As late as 1959, this was on display in the vestibule of the church, but since has disappeared. Isn't it a shame that documents linking us with the past are lost in the dark abyss of forgotten facts. But also how exciting it is when after years of oblivion they come to light again. Such may be this case; for someday our last deed may return to the church.

The original specifications called for 6 rows of slips, no south door and no basement; that individuals may build horse sheds, but that a committee would superintend their building and that they lie on the east boundary of the property. Until the new building was completed religious services would be held in the old church which had been moved across the street and altered. The steeple and bell were removed and 4 pillars were added to the front to be similar to the front of the new building.

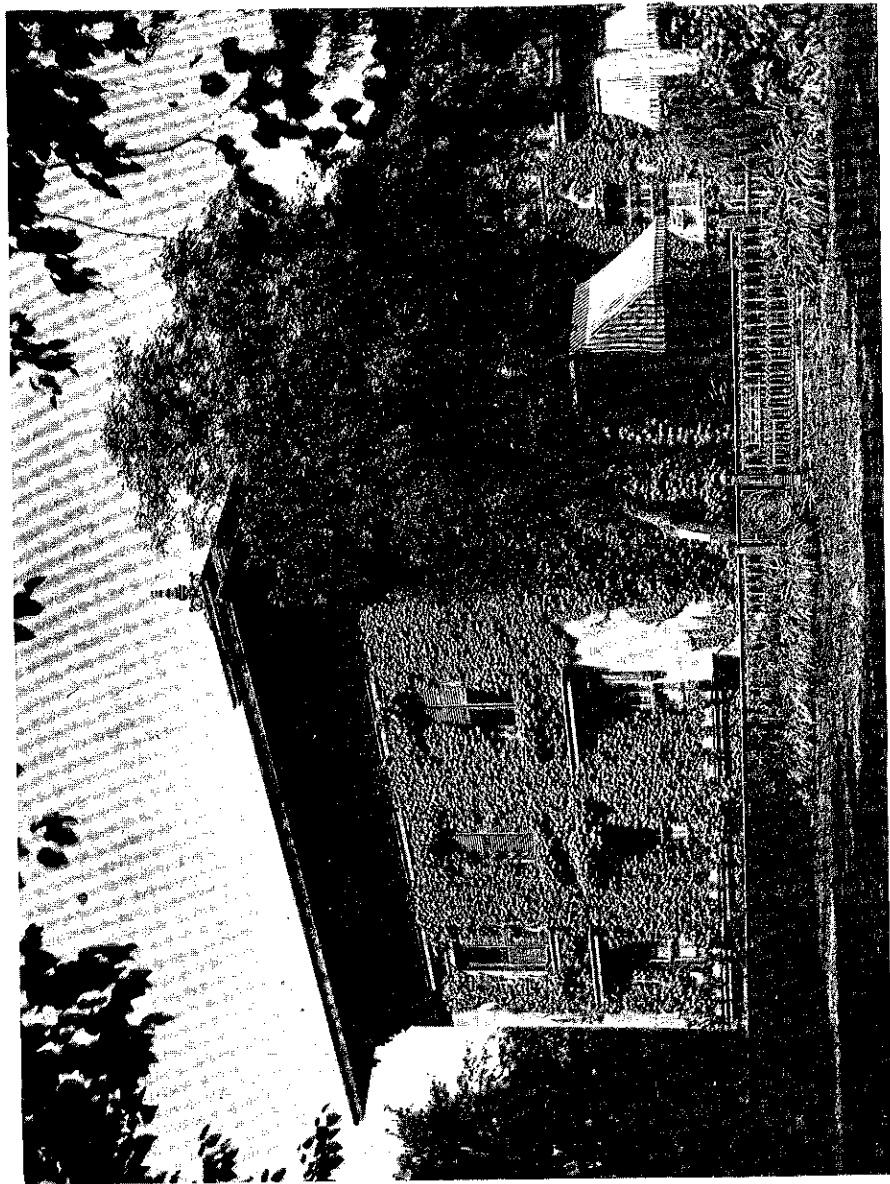
The new meeting house (our present church) was to be built by Newton Moses of New Haven entirely

to the satisfaction of the church body. The interior walls were painted in fresco by Messrs. Maloni and Allign of New York City. It is well here to acknowledge Col. Augustus G. Hazard, who designed and contributed so much to our church.

Col. Hazard was a resident of Georgia. About 1844, he had the Connecticut Valley surveyed in an attempt to set up a powder-making industry. The land must be shielded by hills and woods and provide a good source of water. His surveyors reported that in the area just east of Enfield on the banks of the Scantic River there was a small powder manufacturing company that lended itself readily to expansion. In about 1845, he procured this land. The operation was immense and very costly. Col. Hazard built large canals to all his manufacturing buildings and many large ponds connected by canals throughout this wide area. A dam was constructed across the Scantic and a power house was built. The operation of the powder-mill was extremely rewarding, however, and he became a very influential and wealthy man in the community, church and country. His powder was of excellent grade and was used extensively in the Crimea War of 1854 and the American Civil War.

Col. Hazard built a large brick home on Enfield Street. The home became the Enfield Inn and stood about 1/2 mile North of the Church. It is said that the staircase in the house cost \$20,000 and was made in France. It was here that Jefferson Davis, ~~Vice President of the Confederacy~~ came in the search for gun powder to supply his armies during the CIVIL War. Evidence indicates that Col. Hazard refused to sell and remained with the Union inasmuch as he was now a resident of Connecticut. Mr. Davis then returned to the South and purchased powder from the DuPont Company. The house was destroyed by fire in January, 1969.

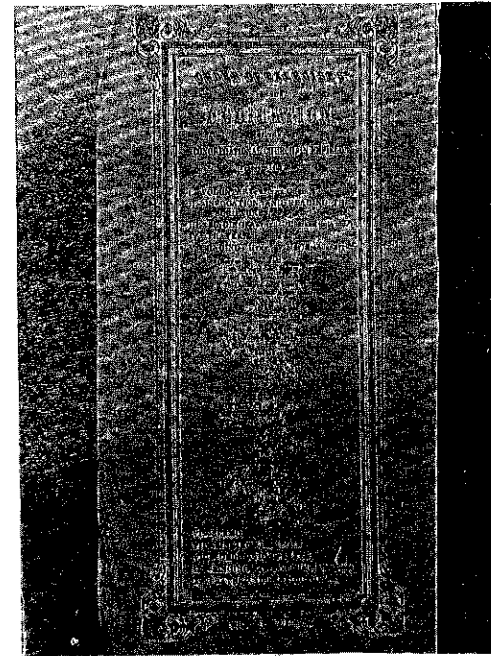
*Sec. of War
for Pres.
Pierce*



Col. Augustus Hazard's house. He was responsible for the construction of our present main building and supplied the chandelier and the 2 columns in the pulpit. An unusual feature of Hazard's house was a solid cherry, winding, cantilevered staircase that ascended 3 stories and cost \$20,000 in 1850. The house was located directly across the street from the driveway that leads to the Enfield High School. The house was completely destroyed by an unnecessary, spectacular fire in January, 1969.

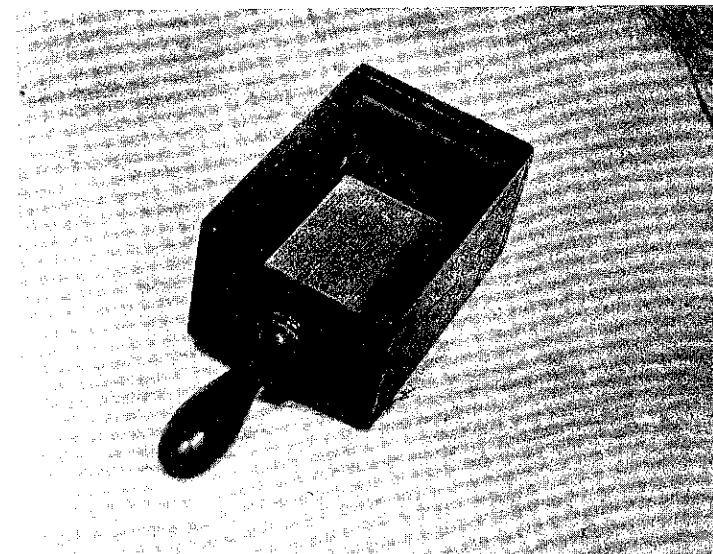
The design, construction and decoration of the new church was largely the responsibility of Col. Hazard. The large gold leaf chandelier was purchased in France and, although slightly changed, used to burn whale oil. The heat and smoke escaped through vent holes in the ceiling. The chandelier was lowered every Saturday and cleaned and refilled by a woman who lived in the house immediately east of the church. The large wooden columns that flank the pulpit were hand carved and were also purchased in France. The interior furnishings were supplied by the women of the church. Although no mention is made to describe the furnishings, I assume it means carpets, pew cushions and window draperies. The wainscoating was probably painted brown and had mortar marks to simulate brownstone. One of our old members described it as "awful". The pulpit furniture was a sofa made in New York by Mr. Hazard, specifically to fit between the columns. It was removed in 1889 and replaced with the two chairs. These chairs were replaced in 1912 with the Hazard sofa by Mr. Yale, and again replaced with the chairs (this time remodeled) in 1962. The sofa is now in the parsonage basement.

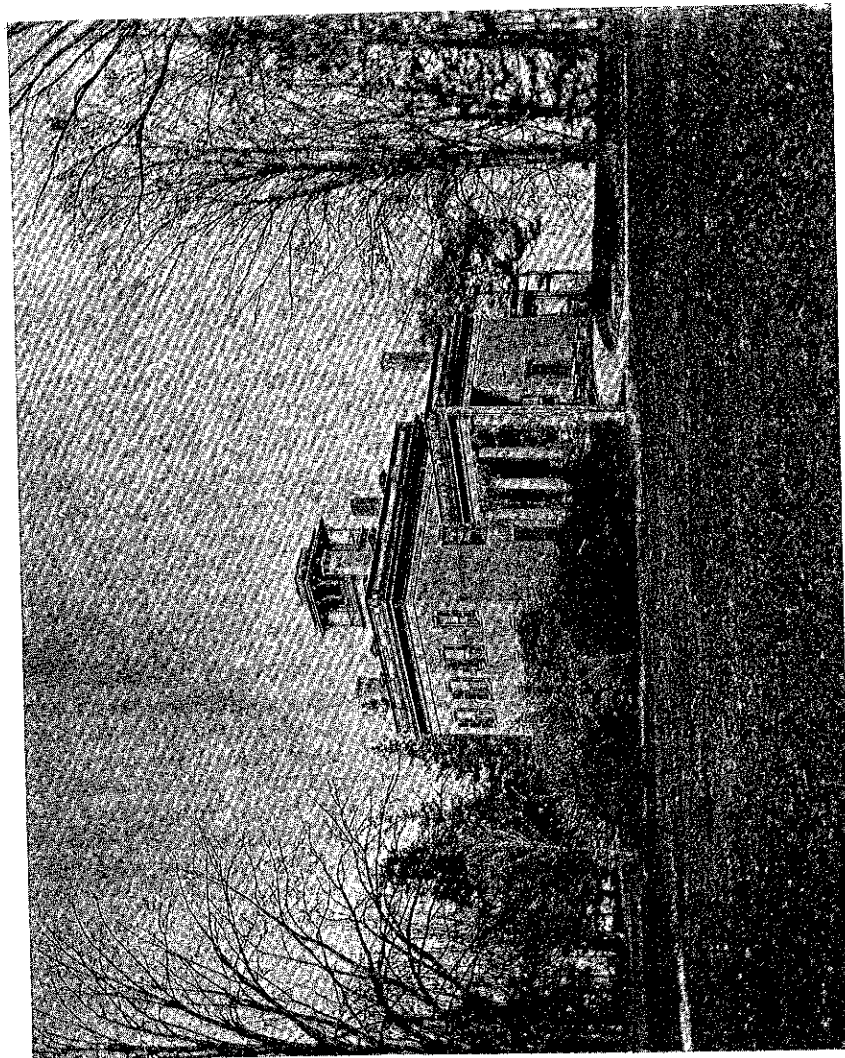
The church was dedicated on February 14, 1849, in a long service that was attended by many of the local church ministers and from as far as Hartford. A photo of the order of Service is shown here. This order was given to the writer by Miss Ruth Bridge in Hazardville who found it among some old momentos in 1960. Rewarding finds like this, add interest to intricacies of reporting. Two days after the dedication, another church meeting was held in which many resolutions were adopted expressing gratitude for a building well done and outfitted. The minister at this time was the same Rev. Francis L. Robbins. The historical records are incomplete at this period and over the years, facts were lost too. In any case, he died on April 6, 1850, and is buried in Enfield Street Cemetary. He was sick one week with pneumonia. Perhaps the strain of building a new church was too much for him. He was 63 years old at his death and had 34 years of pastoral experience at our church.



The dedication program for the present (4th) meeting house on Feb. 14, 1849. The sermon and dedication prayer by our own minister Rev. Francis L. Robbins.

This collection box was probably used from 1849 to about 1890. It was one of two used. They were transferred to the Sunday School where they were used until 1960, when the the old chapel was demolished.



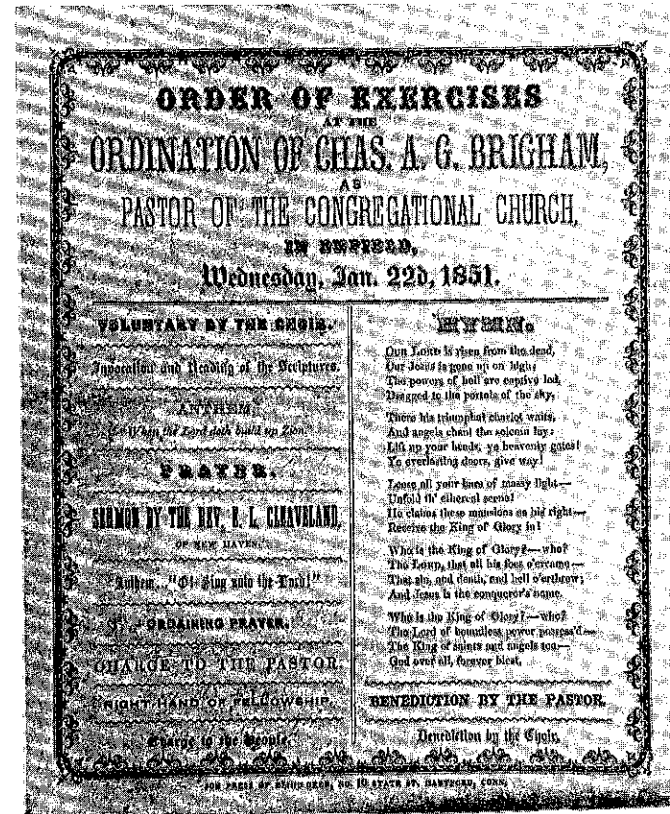


Home of Orrin Thompson as it looked in 1912. This home is now the Mother House of Felician Sisters Polish Convent immediately South of church on the old town green.

We now embark on a troubled era - a time that almost ruined our church and society - but because of God's help we still survive today, stronger, larger and healthier than we have ever been.

On December 9, 1850 at a congregation meeting at which 31 voting members were present, it was voted that a Rev. Charles A. G. Brigham be called to the pastoral duties of the Church. On January 22, 1851, Mr. Brigham was installed with the following invited churches present to conduct the service:

South Windsor, Somers, Suffield, East Granby, Second Congregational Church of Hartford, Longmeadow, Mass., West Boylston, Mass., 3rd Cong. Church, Chicopee, Mass.



Installation exercises for the controversial Charles A. G. Brigham.

And so began a very distressing period in our church. A period of harrassment and frustrations not eased for 30 years and the church almost collapsed.

No noticeable advancement was seen in the first 4 years of Mr. Brigham's stay. However, on January 27, 1855 there where three letters presented to the church. The first letter was signed by 24 members - one of them a deacon - asking the church to request an immediate meeting of the Saybrook Consociation - similar in structure to the Hartford East Association. The purpose was to "arbitrate the difficulties existing between the church and Mr. Brigham that couldn't be settled among ourselves".

The second letter signed by 32 members - 3 of them deacons - protested that no friction existed and in fact there was great unity as was evidenced by a vote of confidence on October 25, 1854. The letter stated that the Consociation should not be informed, because no attempt had been made to settle any dispute, even if one existed.

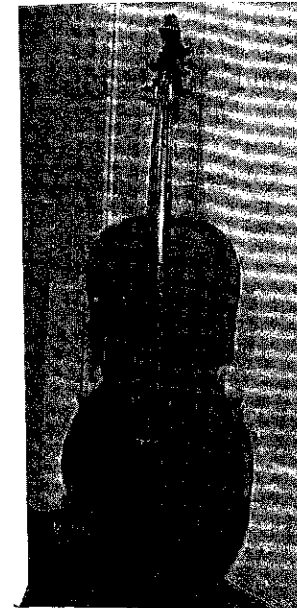
Mr. Brigham then submitted a letter in which he had stated the previous September (1854) that if there were people dissatisfied with his preaching, they should gather specific issues in point and present them to him. They should then get together and agree upon an issue and then he would agree to go before the Consociation Counsel. According to Mr. Brigham, the following 4 complaints were lodged against him:

1. That Christ died only for the elect.
2. That the Holy Spirit stays only with the elect.
3. That Christians ought to pray only for the elect.
4. That God requires of sinners that what they do they have no ability to perform."

He then went on to reprimand the signers of the 1st letter for trying to invoke the wrong Saybrook

article. Also he believed that his preachings were true and just and were God's words.

A motion was made and voted to request a Council to examine the problem. Then the vote was rescinded at the request of the minister.



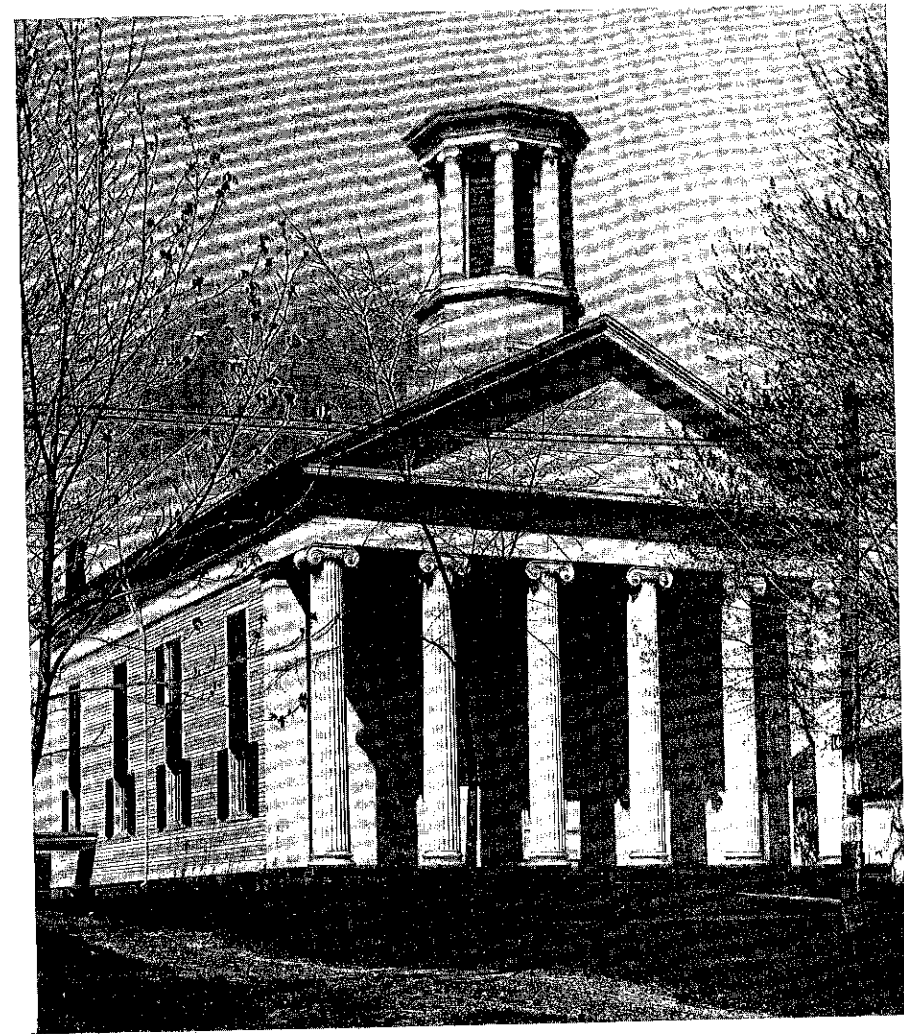
This cello is believed to have supplied the music of the church from about 1840 to 1875.

Two weeks passed while the seething continued. At a church meeting after the regular Sunday service on February 11, 1855, a letter was read, signed by 24 members, requesting a council anyway and settling a date two weeks hence. What a church! When strong willed people are determined to settle a dispute, they apparently feel that nothing should stand in their way. In spite of the apparent disregard for the church feelings, it seems much

can be gained by this procedure - the church may be a stronger church and more dedicated. However, the risks are very high. This same situation arose 100 years later that we shall discuss in detail at that time. Many of the parishioners at the service were furious that this action was felt necessary on the part of a minority. They entered many statements of their feelings that the minister had stuck with the Gospel; that he had the support of most of the church; that his approach to preaching could not be challenged. A resolution was approved anyway to call the Consociation and resolve the differences. The meeting was set for February 20 (The Con-

sociation agreed to this). As a result of this meeting, Mr. Brigham was dismissed, effective immediately.

After the church service the following Sunday, February 25, 1855, a letter was presented, signed by 93 people withdrawing from the church, to form another church. Their request was accepted by unanimous vote. Thus we end 5 years of hard feelings - 5 years of strife of trying to make a new church building grow in unity and desire. No record can be found of the number of members, but doubtless 93 was a large percentage. At this time, we will digress from our church and follow these 93 people and their newly formed church from the inception to dissolution.



The North Congregational Church as it appeared in 1912, built about 1856. It was located directly over the driveway to the present Enfield High School. Its North-South foundation walls are still there. Note the striking resemblance to our present building. The building was destroyed about 1928.

THE NORTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

We are indeed fortunate to have the records of the North Congregational Church. The late Miss Martha Parsons' father, John Parsons, was clerk of this clandestine church. When it dissolved, he returned to our own church and filed the North Church records with our historical documents.

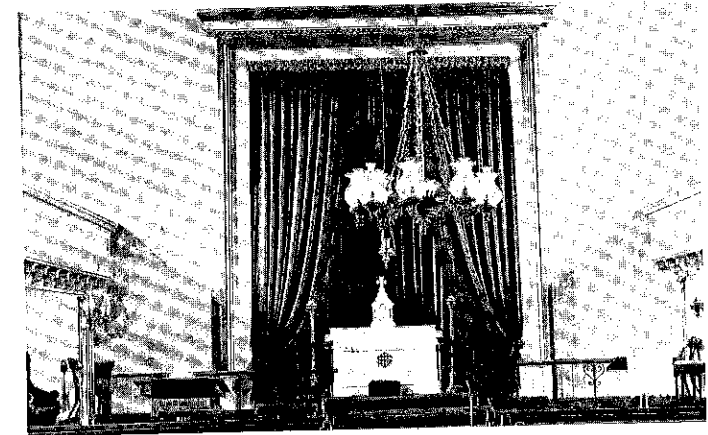
On Tuesday, March 6, 1855, the 93 original signers formed themselves into a new church called the North Congregational Church and on March 7th installed Mr. Brigham as their pastor. Many old towns people were among the new parishioners. One notably influential person was not a participant, Col. Augustus Hazard. It is possible he was not available, but probably more likely, he did not wish to leave a church which he helped to build and furnish.

Many pastors and delegates from other churches attended the council meeting to examine the purposes and desires to form a new church and install Mr. Brigham. All being in order, the new church was formed. This is likened to the first Church organization in 1683 when the future was not clear and no direct means were available for support. Where would a new church be built? What about financial support? Where would the minister live? He had to vacate the first Church's parsonage. Could they interest more people in joining?

Yet if we look at the people who were to form the congregation of the new church, we see many influential people, e.g., Deacon Luther Pierce, Col. Jabez King, and Doctor Asa L. Spaulding. Dr. Spaulding was instrumental in locating the property on which the present church is situated; and he served on the building and finance committees of the Church.

I'm sure that they formed the North Congregational Church with all the confidence and determination of a new sect. After all, they already had a minister.

They knew what to expect from him. They had almost 100 determined members - a great deal more than our fledgling first church in 1683. I wonder how many of them thought back to 1770 when the Separatists departed from the parent church to form a new church which did not survive for more than 30 years as a distinct church; the remainder of the time to be influenced by the Baptist Faith. The North Church people probably recognized this risk and studied the Separatist failure. Yet, as you will see, the North Church traveled a parallel course - they did not survive. Fortunately, we can trace its decline.



Interior of the North Congregational Church as it appeared in 1912. Note the similarities of the dentals, the full gallery and the pews to our present sanctuary.

Until a church could be built, these clandestine people met in the town building, called Center Hall. This incidentally was our own 3rd Church building moved across the street from our church (known now as the Old Town Hall). There was an immediate desire to build a church realizing that a house of worship is a necessity. A piece of land was found directly opposite the home of Col. Hazard. Ironic, isn't it, that a new church should be built across the street from the one person that was probably the most important person in town and responsible for the 1st Church building?

The North Church building was almost identical to our church in looks, both inside and outside. The photos included here show the similarity between the two. Apparently the people felt a desire to maintain a close identity. There are many different designs of churches built in that era. Why build a church which looks a great deal like the parent church if there wasn't some close tie with it. The church was completed late in 1856 or early 1857. The identity of the builders is not known but it is doubtful that they were the same as the Parent church.

By March 10, 1857 there were only 108 members; 37 of these being men; March 9, 1858, only 115. No important business was transacted except receiving and releasing members until April 22, 1872. On this date Mr. Brigham submitted his resignation; not because of any ill health, but because the church has been "greatly impaired by the causes and fact of schisms and divisions". Sounds like 1855 in the first church all over again! Unfortunately, no membership list exists as of this date, but probably he felt there was enough dissention in the church that he could not heal and in order to preserve unity, he felt "new blood" would help. His resignation was accepted. This ended the first era of a new church - born from trouble, small in growth and now troubled in spirit. Many members began leaving the church, some to the Catholic Apostolic. This was the beginning of the end of the North Congregational Church.

Almost 2 years passed before they found another minister, Rev. Fred H. Allen. He was installed on March 19, 1874. At best he was an interim minister because eight months later a move was made to unite with the 1st Church in the common interest of Christ and Unity. The 1st Church which had only an acting pastor, also was much interested in union; but many problems existed such as division of property, which church to use, supply of horse sheds, financial responsibilities, etc. Many letters were exchanged and small conferences were held; also there was some dissention. The difficulties were not resolved by

February 25, 1875. On this date, because of lack of unity, 40 members including 2 deacons, requested letters of transfer to join the 1st Church. (They were accepted by the 1st Church March 4, 1875). The Rev. Mr. Allen also left - to parts unknown.

An Acting Pastor was obtained, but the end was in sight. Regular church services were poorly attended, although about 18 new members were received. Financial support was lacking. Perhaps the spirit of 1855 had vanished with Mr. Brigham. The Church tried to continue, but couldn't. The burden was too great. Services were suspended on May 1, 1878. On April 8, 1879, 27 people were released to the 1st Church and the North Church closed as a Congregational Church.

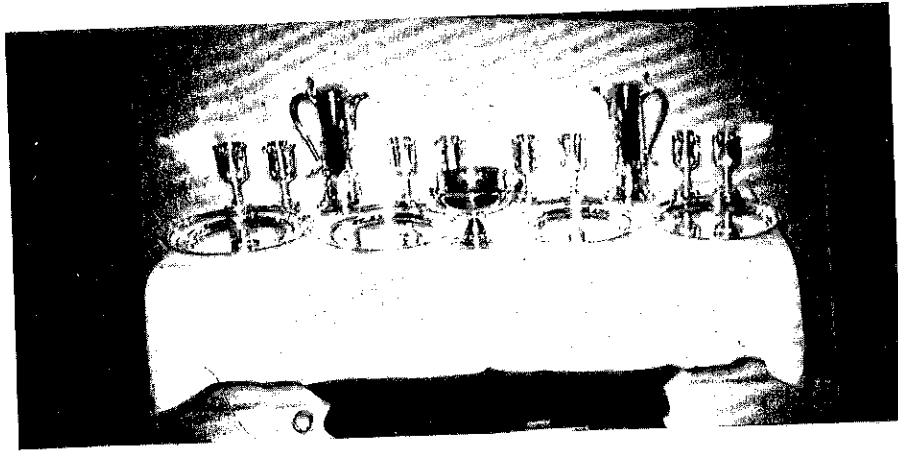
The North Church's communion set, much like our 1863 set, was given to the 1st Presbyterian Church and is now mounted in that church's sanctuary.

Thus we end another era of division and sadness. A church founded on dis-unity ended in remorse. The strain of existence proved too great. But most of its members wished to continue as Congregationalists and united with the 1st Church. The building apparently was unoccupied for some time, but later was purchased by the Catholic Apostolic Faith and existed for many years, in that faith, at least thru 1913 when the church photos were taken.

The building was torn down in 1927, however, in 1961, this writer was successful in locating the foundation, across from the Enfield Inn. The driveway leading to the new Enfield High School goes directly through this foundation, but I don't believe the north and south walls were completely removed as much brick work was found. As a matter of reference, the walls lay about 30 feet front of the homes now on Enfield Street.

Return now to a weakened and troubled parent church, destitute for a Pastor, Rev. A. L. Bloodgood was duly

installed on December 5, 1855, and served until June 9, 1862. He was a great minister, and the church did grow and many old wounds were healed. An interim Pastor, Mr. Kiah B. Glidden, served from February 1, 1863 to March 2, 1866, at \$600 per year. During his stay, a communion set was given to the church by Mrs. Laura Grant, on May 5, 1863. As can be seen by the photograph, it is a beautiful set, the goblets being gold-washed on the inside. The church authorized a mahogany chest be purchased in which to store the set.



The communion set given in 1863 which features 2 tankards, 8 gold-washed goblets, 4 bread trays, 1 baptismal font, 1 linen table cloth, and 4 linen napkins.

Only the baptismal font and the bread plates are currently in use. The set was used until 1909, when the present set was given. Our next minister, Rev. Cyrus Pickett, of Cheshire, Conn. was installed on February 28, 1867. He resigned March 8, 1870. In an historical sketch of the Cheshire Church, it is indicated he resigned here due to ill health. Our records indicate he went to another church. He did a tremendous job for this church; income doubled, church services were well attended and all liked him. A Mr. N. H. Eggleston was never installed, but did serve from June, 1871, to July 1874, by vote of the church.

Chapel Dedication

First Congregational Church,
ENFIELD.

Friday Evening, Nov. 13.

ORDER OF SERVICE

1. *Chant, 84th Psalm.*
2. *Reading of Scriptures.*
3. *Prayer.*
4. *Hymn.*
5. *Sermon, by Rev. N. H. Eggleston.*
6. *Deal of Grace.*
7. *Prayer of Dedication.*
8. *Hymn.*
9. *Benediction.*

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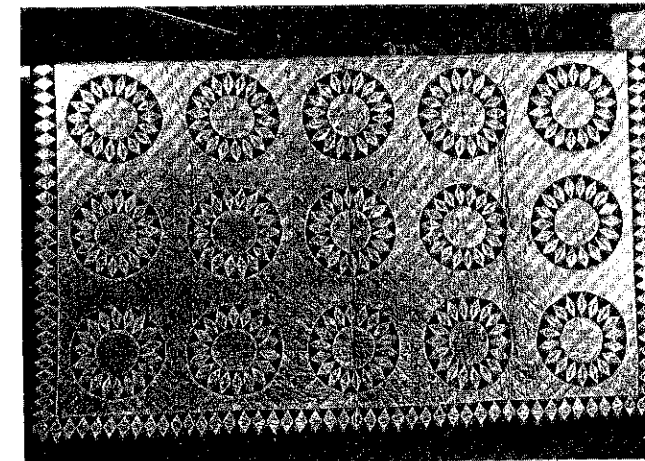
The dedication program for the old chapel, Nov. 13, 1874. It served us 80 years, before being torn down in 1960.

June 1, 1874 marked the beginning of the first expansion since the new building was erected. On this date an earnest need for an organ was realized. A Mr. Daniel Chapin, who had been clerk for many years, stated that if the church could raise \$500, he would loan another \$500 but would not charge interest. The organ, a two manual E. & G.G. Hook model, was purchased from the old South Church in Springfield, for \$1,000. It was used continuously until 1945 when an electrical organ was purchased for \$2500.

It was also in the year 1874 that a chapel was added to the rear of the sanctuary. This addition, torn down in 1960, was the gift of Doctor Harry Grant as a memorial for a daughter, who gave birth to a son, and recovered after having severe complications due to the birth. Unfortunately, the son died at an early age. Originally the chapel had an open cathedral-type ceiling and there were regular prayer and church meetings held here. Later, in 1909 it was divided into 2 floors for Sunday School meetings and regular committee gatherings. Included in the renovation was a ladies sitting room and a kitchen. The down stairs ceiling was made of stretched canvas. The building remained essentially unchanged until 1947 when it was refurnished and modernized, and the kitchen was moved downstairs. However, after 1959, it was noticeably overcrowded and structurally weak and was replaced by our new Modern parish house.

Again, in 1874, we were destitute for a minister and Rev. Fred Allen was asked, but did not serve as is described in the North Church section. However, Rev. George W. Winch did accept. He was duly installed on October 6, 1875. He came from the Congregational Church in Northfield, Vermont whose representatives also helped to install him here. After he was here a year, he published the 1st concrete statistics on membership. We had a net gain of 22 for a total of 229. Also he stated an earnest effort should be directed to rededicating those who have strayed - a drive we should endeavor to continue all the time. Records were well kept during Mr. Winch's pastorate here. One item of interest was

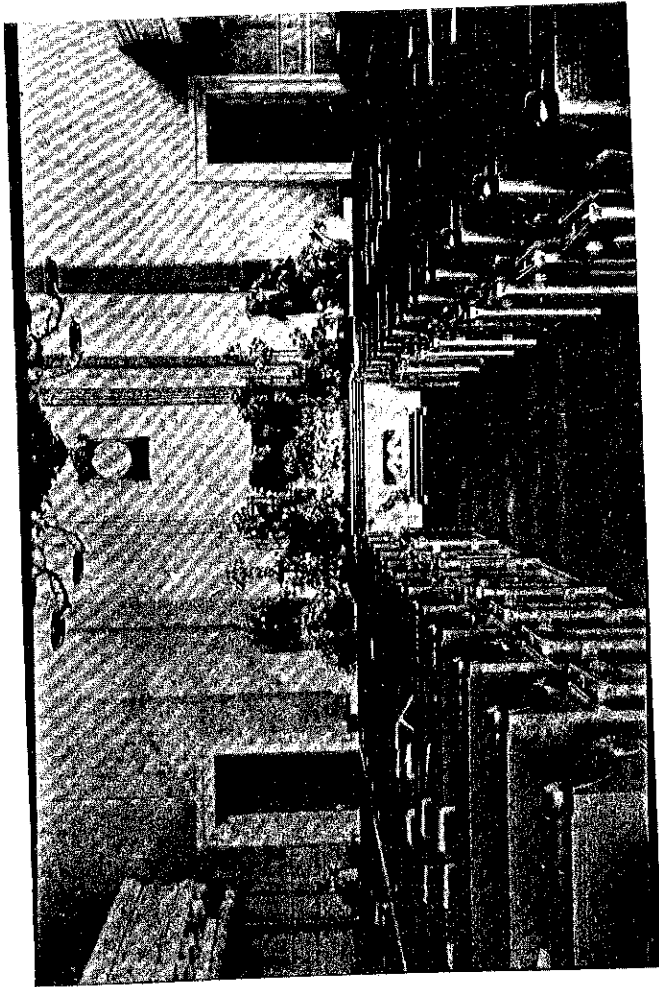
that of a trial of a member in 1881 for misconduct and dishonesty. Although the man didn't live in Enfield, he returned to the church for the trial and was convicted. What was the penalty? Excommunication. He could have obtained this without the embarrassment of appearing before his accusers. Such was the religious justice in the nineteenth century. Mr. Winch resigned his position to be effective June 1, 1888. Having served more than 13 years, his pastorate was a successful one. Membership stood about 250, an increase of about 50 more than when he started his ministry. A pipe organ was purchased and a beautiful chapel was added. The church urged him to stay, but he felt he had to move on and accepted the call of the 1st Congregational Church of Holyoke, Mass.



One half of a very large quilt hand-made in 1889 and lists family names in the center of each star and each member of that family in the smaller diamonds.

Our next minister was Oliver W. Means of Hartford, who was installed on September 19, 1888. We are indebted to Mr. Means. He made a considerable study of the Separatist Society in Enfield and wrote a lengthy essay on them. It is largely from this essay that the Separatist sketch in this historical novel is compiled.

On February 18, 1889, a group of women, young and old, met in the Chapel to discuss combining "The Ladies Sewing Society" and the "Helping Hands". The LSS was

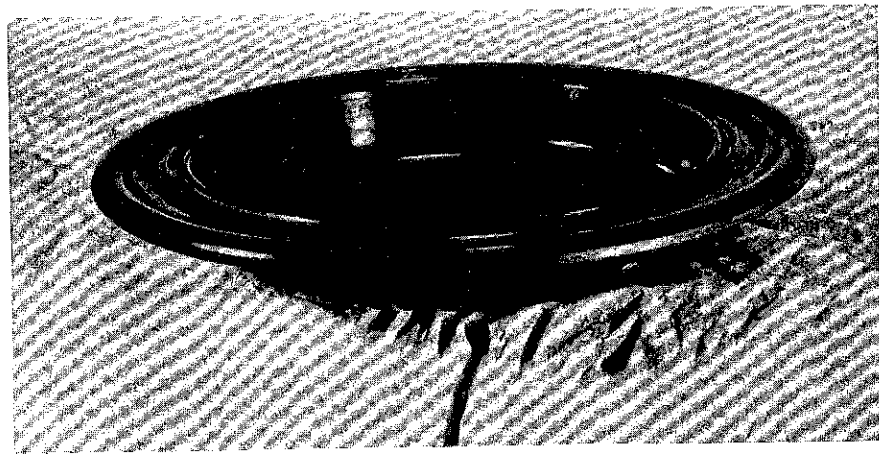


This photograph was obtained from Mrs. Arthur Stewart after the history was completed and caused a major rewrite. The photo is striking for many reasons. The clock, probably hung in 1889, was never known to have hung there. The walls had moldings to give them a "picture frame" effect and probably dates back to 1849. There were only 2 deacons chairs (not 4 as thought). Notice also the stained pews and pew doors, the smoke stacks from the 2 stoves located in the right and left aisle at the rear of the church and the lowered whaleoil chandelier. This photo was probably taken in 1889, just prior to the major redecoration when the stenciling was added just above the wainscoting rail - later to be removed by Mr. Yale.

formed in 1845 and its purpose is self-explanatory. It was composed mostly of the older ladies of the church. The Helping Hands was organized a little later and consisted mainly of young women. Attendance at both of these groups was poor and in an effort to gather strength through unity it was decided to merge the group under a new name, "The Ladies Benevolent Society" This group has reorganized and is now known as "The Womens Fellowship".

At the same time, February 14, 1889, 2 clocks were given to the church. One clock was a 20" round clock for the church sanctuary; the second was a 20" x 30" rectangular clock for the Chapel. Both of these clocks are still in existence and the rectangular clock has been returned to the parish house. These gifts were presented by Mr. S. C. Reynolds at the time of general modernizing of the church at which the electricity was added. New furnaces and carpets were also installed. The pew doors were removed because the new heating plant made the sanctuary more comfortable. The Hazard sofa was removed and replaced with 2 chairs, one upholstered, one wood. Also 2 hand carved light columns were added. The carving was done by Joel Bennett.

Mr. Means was not a dynamic minister and the church did not expand. On the contrary, it was slowly dying. Membership was down to 229 in 1893, but other activities kept morale at a high level. However, the balance in the treasury was increasing slowly, indicating diligent use of funds. The renovation of 1890 did not appear to improve church membership, and by 1896 there were still only 229. However, through a financial gift of Deacon Albert Abbe, we were able to pay off the mortgage on the parsonage - after almost 50 years of struggle.

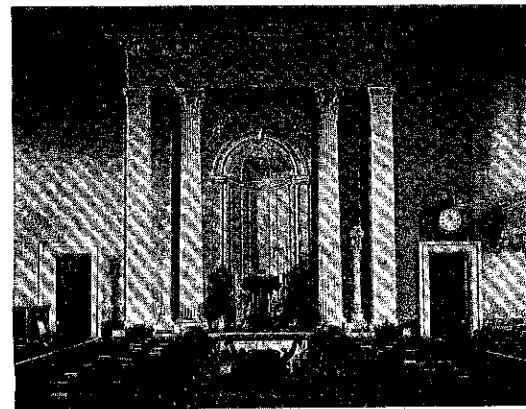


This collection plate, one of four, was probably obtained in 1890 and used until 1962.

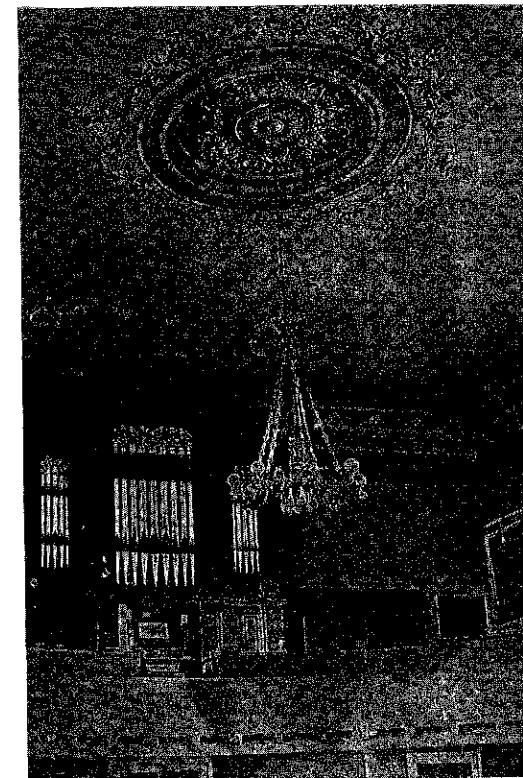
To continue to write about the austerity years of the church would be laborious and uninteresting. No great strides were taken, no unusual happenings of importance occurred. A 200th anniversary was observed on June 3 and 4, 1899. A historical sketch was written and published, the first major effort of this kind since the church was formed. Mr. Means resigned on June 1, 1902, after a pastorate of more than 13 years. Membership at the time of his resignation was 214.

Our next minister, John P. Garfield, came from Barton, Vermont and started his pastorate on September 1, 1902, but was not duly installed until October 30, 1902. Mr. Garfield's term was less eventful than Mr. Means. His interest was high, but the church did not prosper under him. We just barely held our own. Membership was at a new low of 198 when he resigned effective September 1, 1907, and accepted a position in the East Congregational Church, Cleveland, Ohio.

We now enter upon a period of great growth and renovation; the first such period since this building was erected. It is fortunate that there are many people still living locally that were here then, to express



Interior of sanctuary prior to redecoration in 1912. Of special interest is: the stenciling, the pulpit chairs (which have been remodeled and placed back in their original positions). The communion table is now in the vestibule, the deacons chairs (except one) have disappeared. The lighted columns have been stored. The relief behind the pulpit is painted. Note the unpainted pews.



The ceiling of the sanctuary prior to redecoration in 1912. The circular recess surrounding the chandelier support were actually holes in the ceiling which allowed the smoke from the original whale oil lamps to escape into the attic.

their feelings of this period. The Rev. David L. Yale accepted the call on February 27, 1908, and started his pastorate with us probably June 1, 1908. He came to us from the church in Talcottville where he was most successful and well loved. Their church grew in wisdom and strength. Our church was soon to follow.

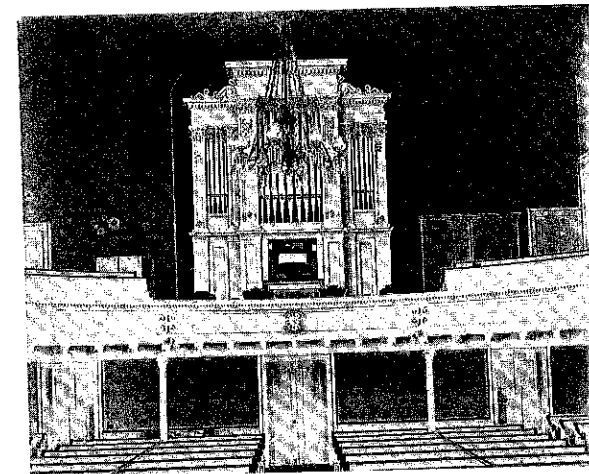
He came to us when our membership was 205. We had just completed more than 20 years of austerity and placidness. No great work was done. No great strides were taken. Yet the love of Congregationalism bound us together.

The church started to snap out of its coma on September 9, 1909, when a new individual communion set (the one used today) was used for the 1st time. It was a gift of Mrs. Gaius N. Booth, whose husband was deacon for 25 years. This was only the start of big things for this church. Mr. Yale's plan, although not specifically stated, was obvious in the records. He realized that the church had not advanced spiritually, financially or in members, so he endeavored to build up the social and spiritual side first. Get people together and talk about common interests. Let them investigate each other; let them share intellects; but keep them church-oriented. This was his plan. It worked with tremendous success. He established social groups on photography, astronomy and surveying. He was chairman of these groups and directed the discussions. What were the results? Well, in the first year of his pastorate (1909), he completely redecorated the chapel. Modern lighting was also added. This type of progress comes only from cooperation - a quality almost entirely non-existent for the 20 years previous. And this was only the beginning.

The church took on new life - a spirited drive of unity - a bright and aggressive outlook. Attendance increased and church organizations prospered and expanded. Mr. Yale then began looking into the poor water condition of the sanctuary. The roof leaked and the ceiling was badly water stained, the pipe organ was

water damaged, the stenciling on the walls was peeling and the walls were dirty from 20 years of smoke and soot accumulation. He then set about to form plans for a major renovation. I have talked to many old-time members who remember Mr. Yale. I'm told that his committees looked into adding another wing; of excavating the basement under the church into Sunday School rooms; and of adding another foundation to replace the brick and stone work that was the original support.

The program for restoration was unweildy financially at that period, so it was necessary to compromise. It was decided to concentrate on the main sanctuary only. A new ceiling was added on top of the old, enlarging and curving the cornice (it was originally straight), painting the walls gray, and covering the painted relief behind the pulpit. New pulpit furnishings were also added; i.e., the pulpit, communion table and chairs, and the original sofa was returned. Records do not indicate whether a new carpet was added, but I assume it was. The photographs included here were taken by Mr. Yale just before and after redecoration was done. Notice how the fluting has improved the looks of the gallery support columns. It was done by hand, by Charles A. Jones.



Interior of sanctuary looking west after the redecoration in 1912 under Mr. David Yale. Note the clock which was given to the church in 1889.

The following year, 1913, Mr. Yale saw there was little more he could do for this church and submitted his resignation to be effective June 30, 1913. Thus we end 5 years of tremendous growth and accomplishments. His loss was deeply felt by the congregation. Even today, 60 years after his departure, people still talk about the great work he did for the church and the chapel, until 1960, remained essentially unchanged.

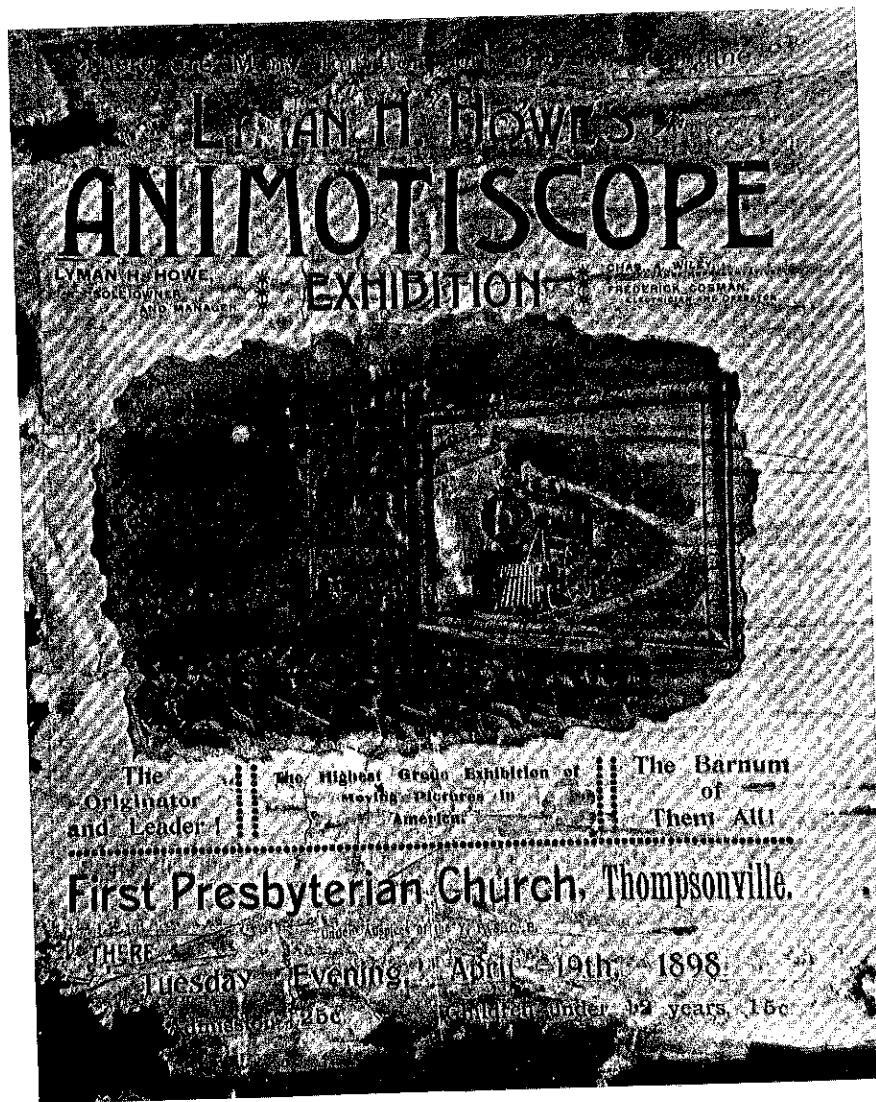
The pastorate of the Rev. David C. Reid began December 1, 1913. Of notable significance was the gift of the Thomas Abby Memorial that is in front of the church. You will remember that Mr. Abby walked around the old church building in 1775 to gather volunteers for the Revolutionary War and returned from the War as a Captain. Since that time his family and relatives had separated from Enfield and in late 1915 his descendants from New Jersey approached the church and desired to place a memorial statue in the front of the church, but its exact placement was left to the discretion of the Ecclesiastical Society. The location being agreed upon, the monument was erected and dedicated on November 4, 1916. This one celebration was the largest single affair this church has ever seen. A special train was run from New York City to Thompsonville for the dedication. The Old Town Hall, around which Mr. Abby marched on the April afternoon, in 1775, was gaily decorated, as was the portico of our church building and much of old Enfield Street. The railroad station was newly painted and draped with flags.

The dedication was attended by 2500 people. Talks were given by many dignitaries, both local and from New Jersey. Hymns and war songs were sung by Florence Milford of the New York Opera. A parade marched down Enfield Street from the Thompsonville railroad station and terminated at the memorial. The statue cost \$20,000 to erect and although given to the church and the town, the church was given a trust fund for the maintenance and upkeep of the statue, the grounds surrounding it and the lawn in front of the Old Town Hall. The monument remains today as it was in 1916 except for the thick hedge surrounding the seats.

At about 7 a.m. on December 8, 1918, a fire was discovered in the church sanctuary. It was the custom when using coal furnaces to stoke and bank the fires at night and then open up the drafts in the morning to get heat. Such was the case in our church. The fire was banked on Saturday night and in the morning as the sexton was approaching the building to prepare the church for the morning service he heard shouts of "FIRE" coming from the house just north of the church. When he opened the church door the sanctuary was so filled with smoke he could not see in. After the fire was out it was obvious that the building could not be occupied and the chapel was used for some time. Many pews in the center section were badly burned, considerable smoke and water damage occurred to the cushions, carpet, ceilings and walls. The Chapel also suffered much smoke damage. This loss was certainly sickening to the members who, only 6 years previously had completely redecorated the entire church buildings. Luckily, the Enfield Fire Department was located directly across the street in the Old Town Hall. (They were occupying the groundfloor of the old sanctuary). This crisis was met unflinchingly by the church and plans were immediately drawn for redecorating. Because the necessary funds were lacking to rebuild as it was before, it was decided to remove one complete row of pews across the front of the sanctuary and to remove the pews from the two side boxes. These pews would then be used to replace the fire-damaged pews. The two empty side boxes were then named the Grant box on the south, and the Abbe box on the north, in memory of two old dedicated church families. New carpets and seat cushions were also installed at this time to replace the damaged ones.

Re-dedication services were held on July 13, 1919, but without the services of Mr. Reid who resigned effective February 1, 1919.

Six days after the re-dedication, on July 19, 1919, the Rev. Homer W. Hildareth was requested to serve us as our spiritual leader effective August 1, 1919, but he was not duly installed until April 26, 1920. His pastorate here was a short one. He died October 28, 1920.



This "talking picture" flyer was found in 1963, stuffed beneath the floor under the old pipe organ. It was put there in 1922 by an 11 year old boy who was working on the organ with his father. An attempt was made to find the boy, but to no avail.

The Men's Brotherhood was formed on October 10, 1919. Could this formation be the result of a new drive of the young men of the church to assist it in a black hour?

Church meeting records cannot be located from 1920 to 1945. However, we are fortunate in having the Ecclesiastical records to 1938. They give a graphic picture of the financial condition of the church during this terrible roarin' twenties and depression of the 30's. Life in the church was very difficult. The furnace needed repairing; a new chimney was needed; the roof leaked in both the chapel and sanctuary. Attendance was poor; collections were falling behind. Church organizations met in private homes to avoid heating the chapel. Committees were formed year after year to collect back pledges. On top of that, Mr. French left us in 1926 having served 5 years and it was 4 more years before we were able to install another minister. A Rev. Daniel R. Kennedy, Jr., did serve as acting minister.

During the annual meeting on January 14, 1931 an informal vote was taken to see if the church wished to hire a seminary student by the name of Raymond H. Waser as a pastor. They voted no! However, a special church meeting was called on February 1, 1931 and although 29 people were present only 20 voted and 16 of these said "yes" to Mr. Waser. He was to prove the stimulant we needed. A young man with young ideas and lots of energy. New blood to excite an old heart. He had a very difficult task. The world has been in a depression for 2 years and money and good church workers were scarce. I think he realized that the future of the church and its prosperity was dependent upon the young people. In October 1931, he formed the Young Peoples Christian Endeavor! This devoted youth group evolved into today's Pilgrim fellowship. Their work and interest cannot be over estimated. Mr. Waser's plan was not to have its organizations formed around a social nucleus, but that their programs should be religious in concept. Social groups have their function in the church, but should be centered about a young married group (which he formed and is still going strong). He also formed a Vacation

Bible School for school children (and this is going strong, too). All of this took place prior to his ordination on February 28, 1933.

The following month he was granted permission to accept a fellowship grant at Yale University if he agreed to preach and remain as active as possible in our parish. He also requested a year's leave of absence beginning in September 1934 to obtain his DD degree from Scotland. Due to financial limitations and the poor rate of exchange existing it would be impossible for him to go. If you could read the minutes of these meetings you would see a love that has not been shown any minister for more than 20 years. The relationship was indeed one of admiration and sincerity. Unsolicited personal letters were entered into the records to indicate high regard for this young man; and for good reason. He was a hard driving man who saw the future in young people and during these trying years, something that most churches did not do. This spiritual drive and dedication carried over to many of the older families. Many substantial gifts were recorded such as those by the Parsons family. Miss Martha Parson gave generously year after year to the treasury and to the flower committee. She was a very influential person and one who always had the church at heart.

There were many gifts which don't show on the records. The importance of the gifts speak for themselves because the church is still here. Mr. Arthur J. Stewart and Mr. Arthur Goldthorpe and Mr. Robert Houghton were perhaps the most dedicated financial churchmen we had at the time. These three men together worked out many of the financial problems we had. Such items as paying the ministers salary, paying for furnace and chimney repairs, etc. As we look back 35 years, it's difficult to appreciate what took place or understand the poverty that sickened our church. When families like the Parsons, or Stewarts or Goldthrope, or other religious personalities shoulder the load - how can we not come out on top? This was the silver lining

to a dark cloud! It was with deep regret that Mr. Waser resigned effective January 14, 1937 to accept the offer of the Amherst, Massachusetts Church.

One notable addition was made to the church grounds during his pastorate which now has disappeared beneath the cloud of improvement. That was the circular drive which entered from South Road and traveled along the side of the church and re-entered South Road. It's convenience was to allow Sunday School children to enter the old Chapel with a minimum of walking in any weather.

Urgency many times spun unity and speed. Only a month went by before the Rev. Charles S. Nichols accepted our call for \$1950 per year. His pastorate started on Sunday March 21, 1937. On September 21, 1938 a disastrous hurricane fell on Enfield and blew the sanctuary roof off, knocked out several windows and allowed torrents of water to soak the interior walls and the old pipe organ. However, this great demand on an already over-taxed treasury was met and we went on to further the religious pulse of the town. The church continued to struggle against the financial conditions of the Depression and, during the War, to pray for the young men fighting to preserve the very thing about which I am writing.

Mr. Nichols resigned his position here during the late summer of 1941 and was replaced with the Rev. B. Paul Pardy on December 9, 1941. His job was to keep us gathered together under one roof when the rest of the world seemed to be falling apart. His term was short. He resigned August 30, 1944.

Our next minister was a young man not yet out of Seminary. He was hired into our church with the hope that he would be the young minister to meet and solve the problems of the men returning from the war. His name was Donald Simpson and this was his 1st pastorate. Our anticipations were never realized. Because his annual salary was small (\$1,900), he felt it necessary to work another job and spend only a portion of his time here. He also wanted to continue with his schooling after he was ordained. Under these circumstances

it was most difficult to hold a church together, to say nothing of advance. Unlike Mr. Waser who came to us during a Depression, we desperately needed a full-time minister to help us shoulder the burden of war.

His stay with us was not successful or happy. One experience that will always be remembered by those who witnessed it involved the furnace of the parsonage. You will remember that the parsonage was built in about 1826. It remained essentially unchanged until probably 1910 when central heat was added. A hot air furnace was added about this time and because of many destitute years, little good maintenance was performed.

We now come to a cold Saturday night in late 1944 or early 1945. All was quiet in Enfield that night. The war kept most active men away from home and others engaged in the war effort. Mr. Simpson banked the coal fire for the long night and, with his wife and small child, retired for the night. Sometime during the early morning both Mr. Simpson and his wife were awakened by a strong odor or smoke which filled the house. When they got to their son, he was unconscious and had to be rushed to the hospital where revival was quick. Mr. Simpson felt that now was the time to deliver a tirade against the house. He had long felt the house was too big and drafty for his young family.

He abandoned his regular sermon that Sunday and delivered, what many people thought, a direct request to sell the parsonage and further that he would not live there another night. Well it worked! That night and for some time he lived in the house south of his.

This was a serious state of affairs - for the church was not financially able to put the house in perfect condition. Yet the minister refused to live there. I have learned that the furnace had just been repaired and declared in good condition. Perhaps Mr. Simpson needed some instruction in fire making. Fortunately, Mr. James Knight was a member of this church. He came forward and offered to sell a house on Spier Avenue, to the

church. The house was of brick construction - had two bedrooms and was available for \$10,000. The church decided that if they could sell the present parsonage for \$10,000 they would purchase the Spier Avenue house. A sale was consummated and the new parsonage was occupied in October 1945. Mr. Simpson felt that he could better serve Christianity in another place and resigned effective August 31, 1947, to go to Holyoke, Massachusetts.



Parsonage at 1 Spier Ave. acquired in 1945 and used until September 1960.

Although the financial strain was considerable, plans were prepared to redecorate the church in preparation for the 100th anniversary of the church building which was to be in 1949. It was not known what the cost would be, but because we have always had willing and able workers, much of the labor was contributed. Many gifts were forthcoming. These included the chandelier in the vestibule and the money to redecorate the vestibule. Some of the paint for the Chapel was also donated. All the necessary funds were not available to complete everything that was desired, but the major items were completed. The furnaces were re-built and the roofs were replaced.

As is often the case in human relationship and guidance, when you have had an unsuccessful association

with a minister in one age bracket, you quite often swing to the other extreme attempting to seek maturity and understanding in the next minister. Such was the case with our next minister. He was the Rev. Dr. David Vaughan, who joined us on November 9, 1947, at age 65. He did much to bind us together.

This was a period of melding in our church. We had now a minister of maturity and accomplishment. This is just what we needed. He brought to us the charm and grace that a struggling country church needed. But his tenure with us was one of paying debts and re-establishing us on a good base. His stay was an enjoyable one but he resigned effective September 1, 1952. His desire was to return to Brookline, Mass. in retirement and write, which he did until his death.

We now enter in a great period of growth in the town. Home building was just starting to such an extent as to astound an outsider. During the 10 year period between 1950 and 1960, Enfield expanded from about 15000 to over 33000. The majority of these homes were built in the large sub divisions by 4 major builders. The homes were very liveable and due to the then current zoning requirements, the homes could be built on small lots and contain about 1000 square feet of living space. They were designed for the person of average means and could be purchased for little or nothing down. These developments were located in the four extreme areas of the town and thus ministered calling needs were somewhat extended. Such was the condition of the town in the fifties!

After the resignation of Dr. Vaughn a pastoral committee was formed and it's fingers reached to many places in search for the right man to hold the reins of our struggling Society. Two men were found of equal ability, and after 3 votes on Sunday, September 14, 1952, the call was sent to the Rev. Edwin E. Aiken of Baldwinville, Mass.

He seemed ideally suited to our needs. A son of a missionary, born in China, active in USO work during World War II and served churches of comparable size to ours. His wife was a very dedicated missionary worker and was executive director of a missionary rest home in Goshen, Mass. He was a mature man of 58 when he joined us on November 9, 1952. He put the church, its work, and its goals ahead of his own aims. All of his qualifications pointed to a happy marriage with us. Not only was he a deeply religious man, but his work with young people seemed a requirement for our growth. At the time Mr. Aiken joined us there were 198 members of the church. As is the case of most small country churches. we were never solvent. On the contrary, we always had places to spend our income and more. The parsonage had to be redecorated and the church roofs were leaking, the exterior needed to be painted etc., etc.

In all fairness to the church and to those who lived and worshipped with us during these years and to those who scan our records in the years to come it should be known that Mr. Aiken was a compromise minister.

There was another minister considered for the job. He came and preached to us, as did Mr. Aiken. I don't believe it necessary to delve into the necessity of not bringing more than one candidate to the church to preach to us. Suffice it to say that this was the last time such a practice was done. It required 3 votes of the church before Mr. Aiken was accepted as our minister.

Thus began the 6 years tenure of a minister who was never completely appreciated or understood, least of all by the young married people who were to be the influential group within 10 years.

The majority of the time was spent in consolidating our income position and striving to maintain a balanced budget. One great stride was evident - the invested funds which were in the hands of the Conn. Bank & Trust

in Hartford were removed and re-invested in Investors Mutual which in recent years has shown a steady increase in value.

Many activities were evident and interest was high. Perhaps the single most important social activity that took place was the Annual Bazaar conducted by the women. This affair was held in the fall and was successful financially and socially. The bazaars were always well attended and the barbecues were excellent. The proceeds from each was about \$1,000.

However, it should be remembered that Enfield was expanding rapidly and yet attendance at church services was not. A typical Sunday would seldom see 80 people in church. Sometime in 1957, several of the young married people were beginning to voice their objections that the minister should be asked to resign. We were not growing, our physical plant was slowly deteriorating, we were not getting the young people, new to Enfield, to join the church. No one objected to Mr. Aiken as a man. He was loved and respected as was his wife. But he could not capture the imagination of the people when he was in the pulpit.

There were even many private meetings among the young married couples as early as 1955 and 1956 to tell him directly and bluntly what the feelings were. However, each time the wives said "no". Don't do it! Let's keep peace and harmony. The situation came to a head at the couples club picnic in June, 1958. It was a unanimous feeling that the minister should be told the situation, and the feeling of the young people, and asked to resign. Mr. Richard Thews, then moderator, felt that inasmuch as Mr. Aiken was approaching 65, it would be more fitting to ask him to retire. After several alternatives were discussed it was felt that the retirement approach was best and Mr. Thews then proceeded to discuss the situation with Mr. Aiken. He had no immediate plans to retire and in fact, liked the Enfield Church and its people. He was asked to modernize his sermons and omit the "campaigns" he would so often preach. He agreed to modernize his sermons but the church did not rally behind him.

The concern for the church grew among the young people. In the Spring of 1959, a petition was circulated to demand a church meeting to discuss the problem openly or to ask for Mr. Aiken's resignation.

At that time only ten names were needed for a church meeting. Ten names were obtained (20 including wives) to show the members that there were more than the minimum number interested. The resultant meeting is difficult to describe. It was obvious that most of those attending were in favor of the resignation. However, the deacons felt that the situation should have been handled by them, and they said that they were not aware of the problem. Many of the petitioners felt that it was the deacons' job to keep a pulse on the religious direction of the church. They also admitted privately though, that the deacons should have been appraised of the difficulty and they were not. Since that time, through many changes in the committee responsibilities, the deacons now have a strong finger on the religious pulse of the church. The result of the meeting was that Mr. Aiken was asked to resign, which he did effective September 1, 1959.

A pastoral supply committee was formed comprising many of the petitioners. The requirements were that we should get a young man (in spirit) who liked young people, understood the problems of the church and community and was willing to work hard for both. Our search was soon rewarded. There was a 32 year old minister in Coventry, Connecticut who exactly matched our requirements. It was a spontaneous thought of all who heard him that he should come to Enfield. He surveyed the town with a few of the members to satisfy himself that this was what he was looking for.

We now began the biggest expansion in the history of the church. The events leading up to this growth had their roots started in the early 1950's. The town census in 1950 was about 15,000. There were several builder-developers who were actively purchasing land for future subdivisions and the town, being

approximately 43 square miles, had many huge farms and undeveloped acreage. Such property was readily available for purchase and existing zoning and housing codes allowed the builders to construct small homes on 1/4 acre lots. This condition was not remedied until the mid-sixties, however, land purchased up to this time would still be subdivided into 1/4 acre lots well into the 1970's. The builder-developers saw a ready market for low priced homes; and for several years, hundreds of homes a year were sold.

Enfield provided an excellent living area for two reasons. First, and foremost, it provided country living but close proximity to good shopping and industrial cities of Hartford and Springfield. Secondly, the tax rate was very low; a situation that changed drastically in coming years. With so many people moving into Enfield in the 1950's it was natural to assume that our church membership would increase in proportion to the town. Such was not the case.

The Rev. Arthur Bradley joined us on November 1, 1959. His stay was not made without great sacrifice on the part of the church members and friends. In the spring of 1960, Mrs. Bradley was pregnant with her third child and the then present parsonage had only two bedrooms. Miss Martha Parsons had property immediately south and adjoining her property which she felt should be returned to the church as it was part of the original property deeded to the church in 1680. She donated the property to the church and she required that a new house of colonial structure blending with the neighborhood and comprising two stairways be built within 3 months. A committee was formed to satisfy these demands. Mrs. Gertrude Burbank of Suffield was chosen as architect and a plan was drawn and submitted to Miss Parsons. The double stairway was not included as in present day construction it was not needed. She agreed to the plan and a home having 2150 square feet including a private study, four bedrooms and 2-1/2 baths was started. It's cost was \$33,000 excluding the land or landscaping. It was felt that in the interest of time wet plaster walls would be omitted in favor of double course dry walls. It was occupied in September 1960.



Ground breaking for the present parsonage in July 1960. left to right: Rev. C. Arthur Bradley, Mrs. Gertrude Burbank (architect) Realtus McCuin, (chairman of bldg. comm), Miss Martha Parsons (giver of the land), Miss Parsons Cousin.

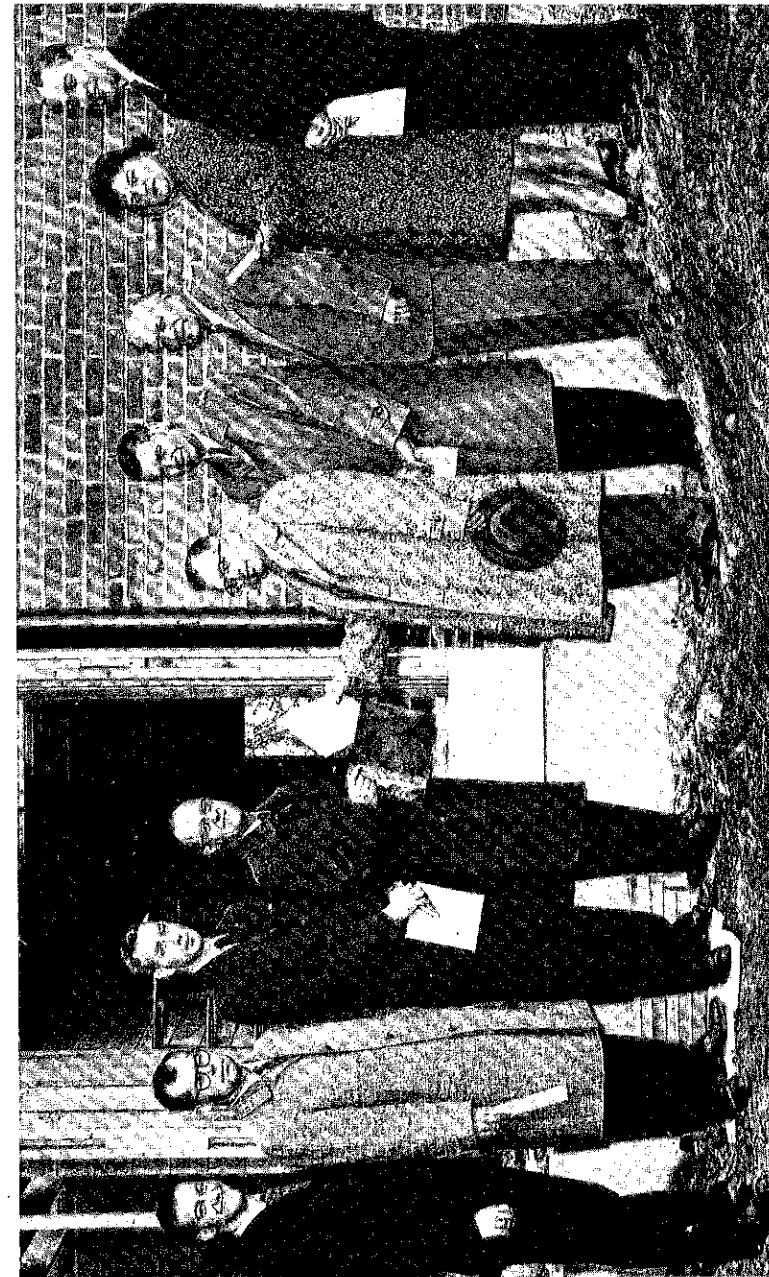


Present Parsonage at 1395 Enfield St. build on land that was part of the original church property in 1680. The property was donated to the church by Miss Martha Parsons in 1960.

Mr. Bradley felt in the spring of 1960, that a survey should be made of the newer housing developments to see what the potential would be for our church. For several Saturdays, he and two members canvassed neighborhoods to determine if the homeowner was new to town, were they members of a local church - if not - were they interested in a local church and particularly the Enfield Congregational. The results of the study were encouraging and a committee was formed to compile and publish a brochure (To Welcome You) for distribution to new and prospective members. The results of this and other efforts were excellent. At the time Mr. Bradley left, in 1964, there were 800 members and it was necessary to expand to two services.

In October 1960, it was proposed that we join in the merger with the E&R Church to become the United Church of Christ Congregational. This merger had been under study for quite some time in this and other churches. Our church was split over it with strong forces on both sides. Mr. Bradley felt that we were not going to gain anything by waiting for the legal contests, then being fought at higher levels, to be settled. He personally was for it and proceeded to push the point with several members. At a meeting held on October 24, 1960, both sides were prepared for the evening. The pro side greatly outnumbered the con side. Although much preparation had been put into the evening, the meeting lasted only 1-1/2 hours with the pro arguments being challenged by only one man. When the voting was done seven had voted against our joining the merger. There was no count made of those that voted for it because it was obviously an overwhelming amount. Although the attendance count was not made it was estimated that 70-75 were present. Some discussion was made following the meeting as to whether the vote would split the church. It was thought that a review be made in six (6) months to see what the effect was. In six months, however, we had progressed so far in growth the thought of the study was never remembered.

At approximately this same time, there was considerable study made of our building. The Chapel, which was given to the church in 1875, and extensively modified in 1909,

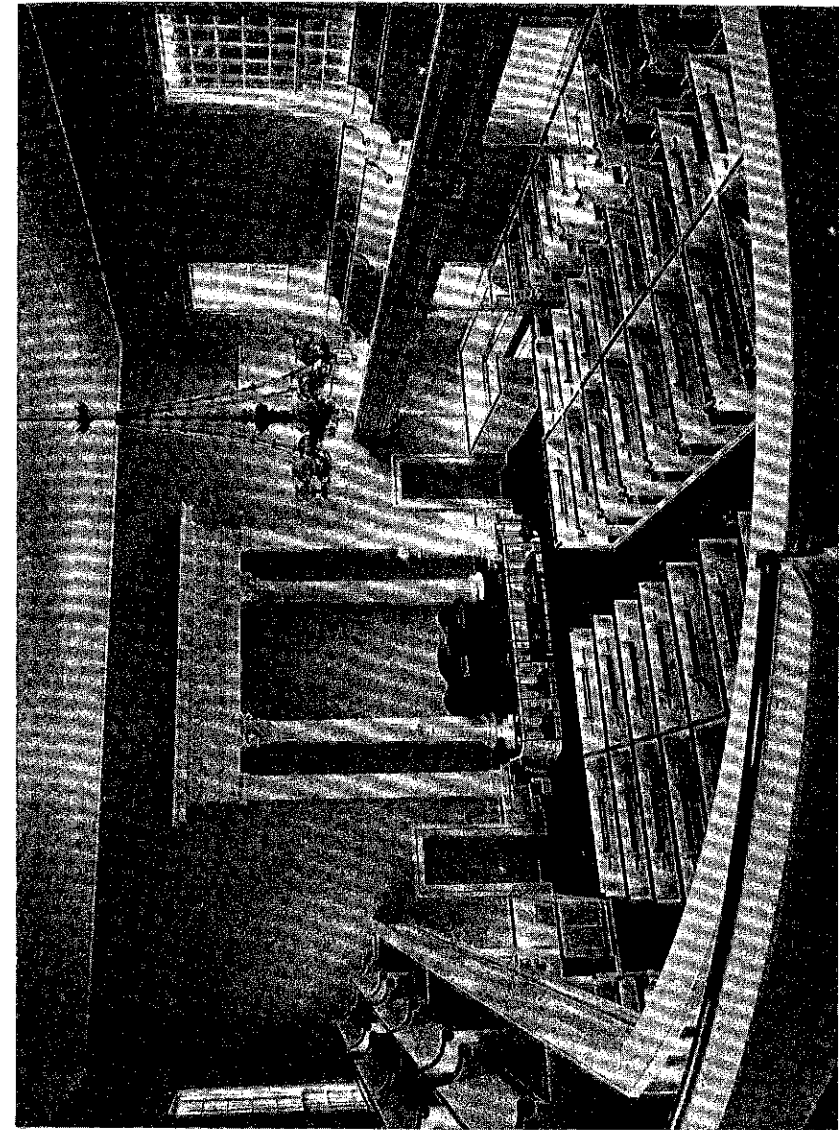


Behind the corner stone of the Parish house is the copper box being held to receive the mementos (see text), left to right—John McCuin, Donald Spencer, F. Russell Meyer, Realtus McCuin, Stanley Cook, the Rev. C. Arthur Bradley, James Richards, Betty Kozlowski, and Richard Thews. Picture taken December 3, 1961.

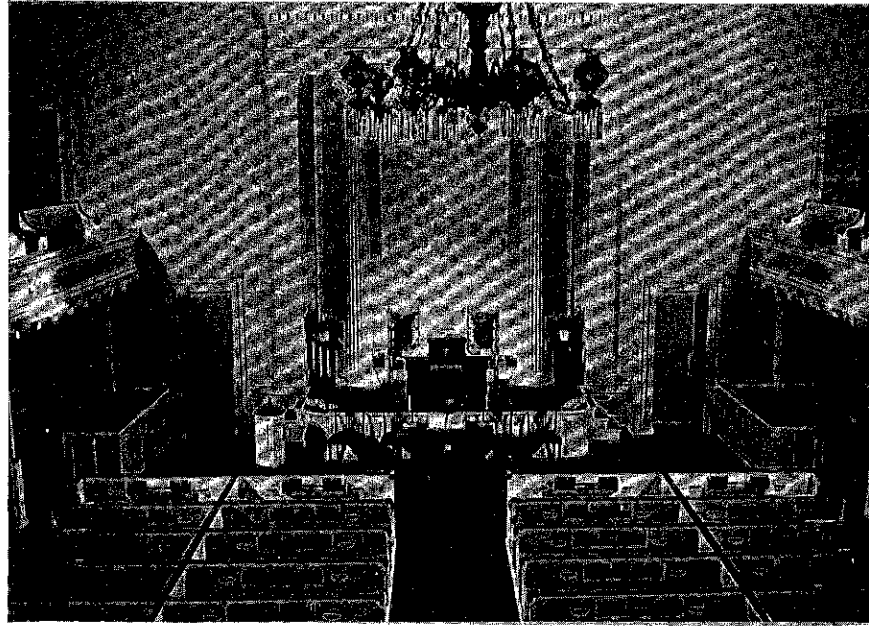
and re-done in 1949, was overcrowded, in poor repair and a fire trap. Some felt we should renovate the building extensively and keep it in good condition. But it was obvious to most that it must be destroyed in the interest of progress because we needed more space for Sunday Schools classrooms and office space. The difficulty we all saw was where was the money coming from. A study was made of the finances and the decision was made to hire the professional fund raiser from the New York Church Headquarters. The cost of the building, campaign and associated charges was \$102,000 and was to be financed by separate pledges over two, two-year periods when it was hoped that the entire cost would be paid. Such was not the case!

The building was completed as it is today and occupied in early 1962. There is a corner stone with the date 1961 chiseled in it near the main door into the building. Behind the stone is a copper box containing many small items important to the church at the time. (i.e., a photograph of the building committee, a short history, To Welcome You, a church calendar, members of the various committees, Sunday School list, daily newspaper and the church membership list.) It would be interesting to return when the building is destroyed in some future time to see how the church operated in 1961. I wonder what the people will be like? Will there still be a church?

In 1962, a study was made of the interior of the sanctuary. It too had seen better times. Since it was redecorated in 1949, it had suffered years of soot accumulation from antiquated oil burners. It was decided that we should rip out the interior walls and ceiling to the studs and install new wall siding and a new ceiling. The work was started in the summer of 1963 with careful protection being made of the brand new red carpet given as a gift from Herbert Carson, the previous Christmas. In the meantime, church services were held in the Elementary School across the street. We also installed a new heating system which improved our fire protection by having the furnaces in the furnace room in the Parish House.

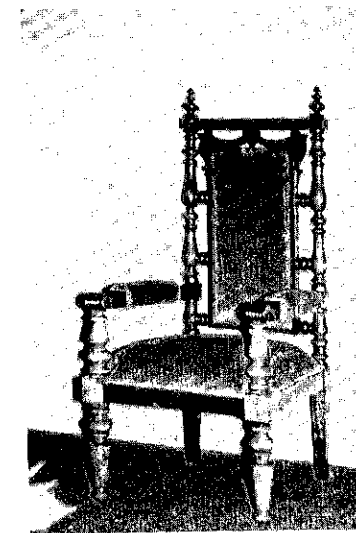


Interior of present sanctuary just prior to the major redecoration in 1962.



The interior of the sanctuary after redecoration in 1963 with the 1890 pulpit chairs remodeled and reinstalled. Although only 5 deacons chairs are present, the 6th is in use at the parsonage.

During the renovation, it was decided to give all the old organ pipes away in exchange for 3 years free service to the electronic organ. At the same time, the organ frame was moved back to its present position. In the process of moving it, it was necessary to remove part of the floor. Buried in a pile of rubble, was discovered the items in the photo. The cost of the renovation was \$10,000 and was added to our already staggering debt. The newly redecorated interior was opened for the first service on September 8, 1963.



One of the 1890 pulpit chairs, after it was retrieved from a truck going to the dump, remodeled, refinished and recovered in red velvet.

At about this time the atmosphere of the church began to change. There were some members who were beginning to balk at Mr. Bradley's approach to committees and their direction. Some felt that the committees were being packed with members who felt Mr. Bradley was right in all his ideas instead of having the church's benefit in mind. He was taking a stronger and stronger hand in the direction of the finances and

invested funds. He took upon himself, with no approval from any committee, to attempt to negotiate for the purchase of the house and property directly North of and adjacent to the church. The budgets were very high and some falling off of building fund pledges was noticed. In short, it was the beginning of the end of the relationship between Mr. Bradley and the church. Although the deterioration was not complete for almost two years, it was long in coming. He left the church in August, 1964, leaving a great many friends. The church was fortunate to have him for five years. He performed his task with distinction. He took command when it was needed and got the job done.

It was felt that now we were a large church with adequate facilities we had to solidify our position. Many of our members were members in name only and we must encourage our people to participate. Using this idea as a goal, a new pastoral supply committee was formed to locate a minister who was mature yet would mold us together into one strongly unified body. Our search was rewarded early. The Rev. C. Thomas Barbour, who was assistant minister in New Britain, exactly filled our requirements. He was in his fifties yet had the drive and spark of a younger man. He accepted our call to come to us in November 1964. His stay with us was not a happy one for him. The church did not rally behind him until he was in his second year. Then it was too late.

Yet, this church did not have a minister more dedicated to the causes of this church and ecumenism. He was a tireless worker. Church committees, however, were slow to move and react. In retrospect, it appears that the change from a young, dynamic take-control leader to a mature, smooth, dedicated one was difficult to adjust to. How unfortunate! Through the efforts of Mr. Barbour, the young people of the church took on new importance. The ecumenical movement was underway with determination. We were beginning to solidify at last! Although our membership dropped slightly, those remaining were true members. We were most concerned about our youth and their direction and hired a youth director. This choice might not have been a wise one,

yet we did have a teacher that knew children and they related well to her. However, some parents felt that she was too liberal with them.

In January 1967, during one of several ecumenical movements in Enfield, Mr. Barbour was stricken with a heart attack and died. This threw the church into disorder that was not settled until we called our next minister Mr. Robert Lane. Mr. Barbour did do an excellent job and we were a more dedicated church. Some lasting additions were made to our physical plant. We purchased a new electronic organ for \$15,000. Some of its expense was added to the budget when the organ pledges dropped off considerably. We also obtained an option on the property North of the Church. Its exact purchase is, as yet, undefined.

As is the case in much of our history, when a task is left undone, it is the hope that the minister that follows will pick up the loose ends and continue with the programs already in operation.

The Rev. Robert C. Lane joined us on September 1, 1967. He came to us at a time when the church was in the process of consolidation and change. The undeclared war in Vietnam was providing the younger generation with reasons for strikes, student unrest and challenges to adult ideals and philosophies. Much of the concern and unrest affected adults as well. Our church was no exception. Mr. Lane faces these challenges today, not just to satisfy the youth, but also to placate and soothe the adults and parents. He came to us ably qualified and with good credentials. He came from a ministerial family as did his wife, who was ordained in our church on June 6, 1971 in an impressive ceremony. She is currently director of Religious Education and meets well with the young people.

A significant acquisition is about to be made to the church property. The purchase of the young property is about complete and it should be in our hands shortly. The building is to be purchased for \$34,000 at 8-1/2% interest for 25 years. Although there is no

immediate church requirement to use the entire house, some of the various organizations could use part of the home. The church will then have to do some necessary redecorating of the rest of the buildings and rent it. As time passes the home will be a beautiful addition to the church grounds. As it is of the same general age as the church with a large front lawn it should blend with our old Meeting House to look like an old typical New England Town.

To continue to write about the current direction of our church would not be fair as it is difficult to write about current events when you are in the same period. When future historians continue this story, at some future date, only then will today's events take on a proper perspective. We are undergoing a moral revolution in our society. Whether this is just a swinging of the pendulum or a new direction is difficult to determine. Churches have a huge task to keep society headed toward God. Religious teaching must take a new approach to problem solution. The young people today are challenging adult methods and ideology. Only when tomorrow comes will we know that we made the right decisions today. I am deeply concerned about our future. Inflation, prosperity, high unemployment, sexual freedom, and youthful disturbances create pressures on the ministry and dedicated Christians that did not exist as little as 5 years ago. If we are to survive, and we surely will, we must understand this trend and answer the questions and challenges. This requires forcefulness and a positive direction. Distrust and contempt breed on indecision - we must show strength and love in the face of adversity. There is but one direction to go - one path to follow - one light at the end of the dark road - one law to cultivate - only one, for all people - to GOD, for GOD, in GOD.

F. Russell Meyer
Historian

October 1973

RECENT DISCOVERIES

After this history was typed and ready to be delivered to the printers, I received a small box of material from a church member long standing. She had received it from the estate of the late Mrs. Arthur Stewart. She was the granddaughter of one of our earlier ministers and she and her husband had been extremely active in the church all their lives. Both were life-long residents of Enfield and were knowledgeable and concerned about the local history. Much that I have written in this novel came from conversations with both of the Stewarts.

Although much of the material I received is duplicates of existing material, there is much that sheds light on the life and times of the church and town that helps to fill the void.

One such item is a letter written by Frederick King, grandson of Col. Jabez King to Rev. David Yale sometime between 1907 and 1912. In it Mr. King states that the pulpit in the 3rd church building was a high pulpit. He recalls that as a child he remembers "...the enclosed pulpit, reached by a hidden flight of stairs. Priest Robbins (as he was called) would enter a door in the wall and we children would watch to see him appear at the opening above where stood the circular pulpit behind which was delivered the long sermon with its firstly, secondly, thirdly, and lastly".

"I remember that soon after the completion of the church (present church) the old hotel which stood opposite known as the Bob Abbis Tavern, was burned and during the fire the doors of the church were thrown open, and while one of Mr. Abbis' daughters stood in the vestibule crying, I saw a young man who was afterwards her husband take a ring from his finger and place it upon hers. I can see her

smile now as she looked up into his face." You can see the church is a haven for all!

In another article I see that the 3rd building, although open in 1775, was not complete and additional time was needed to complete the front steps. You will remember that the original building did not have the pillars as they do now. The building was at the north end of the parade ground (now the front lawn of the Felician Sisters Convent). Another note indicates that the high pulpit was lowered sometime after the building was taken over by the town, so that the ballot box could be put on it. The second floor was added sometime after the Civil War. Part of the circular pews still remain on the second floor "...which were once used by the boys who helped to give us the right to be proud of the American Flag".

Other material indicates that there was a fort built on the farm now known as Sapsusiam and just north of this was a building used by the local people for refuge from Indian attacks.

There are probably much other interesting items which should be recorded, but time does not permit the search to continue. It is discoveries like this that make histories intriguing and re-kindle the flame of "I wonder what..." A logical follow-on question is "I wonder whatever happened to...?" It gives me a warm feeling to have church property returned to the archives. Just recently (December 1973) the missing communion goblet, lost since 1969, was discovered and returned. This now makes the 1863 gift complete.

MINISTERS

Rev. Nathaniel Welch	Accepted call, died in Charlestown - 1689, aged 23, never installed
Rev. Nathaniel Collins	Started 1699, resigned about Feb. 1724
Rev. Peter Raynolds	Started about Nov. 1725, died in office, May 1768
Rev. Elam Potter	Started March 1769, dismissed about October 1776
Rev. Nehemiah Prudden	Started Nov. 20, 1782; died in office Sept. 7, 1815
Rev. Francis L. Robbins	Started Apr. 24, 1816; died in office April 6, 1850
Rev. Charles A.G. Brigham	Started Jan. 22, 1851; dismissed Feb. 20, 1855
Rev. A.L. Bloodgood	Started Dec. 5, 1855; resigned June 9, 1862
Rev. Kiah B. Glidden	Started Oct. 1862; resigned Apr. 1865 (Acting)
Rev. Cyrus Prickett	Started Feb. 28, 1867; resigned Apr. 26, 1870
Rev. N.H. Eggiston	Started Jan. 8, 1871; resigned July 1, 1874 (Acting)
Rev. George W. Winch	Started Oct. 6, 1875; resigned May 23, 1888
Rev. Oliver W. Means	Started Sept. 19, 1888; resigned June 1, 1902