
Historical Discourse

—BY—

REV. A. C. PIERCE,

BROOKFIELD, CONN.

R

"DAYS OF OLD" REMEMBERED.

A

HISTORICAL DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN

The Congregational Church, Brookfield, Conn.,

JULY 16th, 1876.

BY

A. C. PIERCE, PASTOR.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

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BROOKFIELD CENTRE, Conn., }
August 1st, 1876. }

REV. A. C. PIERCE :

Dear Sir :—The undersigned, desirous of seeing in print the historical discourse delivered by you on the morning of July 16th, 1876, would request, on their own and others behalf, a copy of the same for publication :

BENJ. M. STARR,

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R. H. PARKER,

HENRY S. PECK,

E. N. CORNWALL,

HARVEY ROE,

FRED'K S. FRISBIE,

H. W. GREEN,

CHAS. HAWLEY,

AMOS L. WILLIAMS,

B. FAIRCHILD,

EDWIN C. SMITH,

ALFRED SOMERS,

S. E. HAWLEY,

SHERMAN FOOTE,

ALMON H. TAYLOR.

Gentlemen :—Deferring to your judgment in respect to the desirableness of the historical discourse to which you refer appearing in print, I herewith submit it in manuscript to your disposal.

With high esteem, I am yours,

A. C. PIERCE.

PARSONAGE, August 2d, 1876.

SERMON.

DEUT., XXXII: 7.—“REMEMBER THE DAYS OF OLD;
CONSIDER THE YEARS OF MANY GENERATIONS.”

The discourse of this morning, my hearers, undertakes to inform you of the “days of old” as related to

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AND THE FIRST ECCLESIASTICAL SOCIETY OF BROOKFIELD,

the history of the town, and the other churches and parishes within it, being referred to but incidentally to this main design. Underlying all history is God’s providence, and mingling in the details are lessons of wisdom for such as desire to gather instruction from the ways of the Almighty. It is so in respect to the narrower as well as to the broader fields which lie under His supreme control, with respect to restricted communities as well as kingdoms and empires, and *therefore*, because God is in history, manifesting Himself in the events which transpire, it is suitable that the “days of old” should pass under review. It is one of the duties, moreover, which we owe to the past, and to men in the past, who have bequeathed to posterity the legacy of a virtuous example and of Christian deeds, to cherish the memory of what has been praise-worthy in history, and to hand down from generation to generation the names of those who have “obtained a good report” and made their influence felt for the public weal. In this way alone it is that the good influences of by-gone days can be properly preserved and transmitted, its virtues emulated, and its toils and sacrifices—so far as depends upon us—can be justly rewarded.

To be remembered in lively and grateful appreciation is a far more enviable tribute of respect than the most laudatory epitaph chiselled upon the tomb-stone; and is not this a part of that honorable distinction which God will have good men enjoy after death? In cherishing such venerating and grateful recollections, do we not serve that purpose which He has declared, "The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance," and do we not testify to the truth he has affirmed, "The memory of the just is blessed"? There is an appropriateness then, a practical utility in the service in which we engage this morning. It is fitting, it is *religiously* obligatory, that we "remember the days of old," as they have passed over *this* community; that we "consider the years of many generations" that have here lived and died, and have their sepulchers among us even at this day.

As introductory to the particular history, viz., that of the church and society to which we are mainly to attend, it will be appropriate that I briefly allude to that which went before these distinctive organizations for Christian objects—that I speak of

THE FIELD

upon which these religious institutions were planted and where they have had their growth. It would be of interest to us could we successfully interrogate that period of dimness and uncertainty, reaching backward from the time when the first settlers of the town (settlers of the English stock, I mean,) built here their homes and here began their endeavors for thrift and comfort. The aboriginal inhabitant doubtless had his rude cabin here, his ties of love and hope, and his rudely constructed civilization. Doubtless by the side of "Still River" and the "Housatonic," he dexterously cast the spear and threw the hook for fish, trapped by "Beaver Brook," and pursued on plain and hillside fur-clad or savory game, the evidence of this being a few Indian names not yet obliterated, as "Whisconier" and "Pokono," here and

there an arrow head gathered from the soil, with a few faded legends, as of the maiden of "Lover's Leap." Precisely who these aboriginal dwellers were, in respect to their tribe, how numerous they were, and whither they went, are all matters which lie much in the haze of an unchronicled and even an untraditional period. The probability, at least to my own mind is, that they were an outlying portion of an Indian settlement, two hundred warriors strong, at New Milford, where a somewhat distinguished chief or sachem, Werauhamaug* held his seat of government, and where there are still pointed out Indian burial places, and a neighborhood on the western bank of the river known as "Indian Field." It is pleasant to know that this chief became a convert to Christianity under the labors of Moravian missionaries, and received the consolations of the Gospel in his last sickness from the lips of Rev. David Boardman, the first minister settled over the church in New Milford. Who shall be able to say that the Gospel was not preached occasionally, at least, to these sons of the forest in Brookfield by the devoted Moravian, long before in the white man's "meeting house" the voice of Pastor Brooks began to be heard? But this, as I have observed, is matter lying in the background of veritable history, and is scarcely, perhaps, within the province of this discourse.

I come now to speak of the

SOCIETY OR PARISH OF NEWBURY,

for under this name the place was known from its first organization for ecclesiastical and school purposes in 1754, to the time of its incorporation with town privileges in 1788,

* "For some time after the white people came here an Indian chief or sachem named *Werauhamaug* had a palace, standing near Great Falls, where he resided. On the inner walls of this palace, (which were of bark with the smooth side inwards,) were pictured every known species of beast, bird, fish and insect, from the largest down to the smallest. This was said to have been done by artists whom a friendly prince at a great distance sent to him for the purpose, as Hiram to Solomon."—BARBER.

that is to say for a period of thirty-four years. Newbury (now Brookfield) was constituted of portions of three adjacent towns, viz., New Milford, Newtown and Danbury, these portions meeting at a common center near the present residence of Mr. Abel Sherman. A rock now blasted away, lying within the limits of his door-yard, was recognized as the "bound stone" between these different towns, and, of course, the different sections of the parish.

With reference to the

FIRST SETTLERS

who planted here their homes, opened the school house and set up the altars of religion, it is not possible now to designate them so clearly as perhaps their enterprise and worth demand. Tradition affirms that they came here from the town of Milford. They were probably induced to settle here from the fact that some of their kindred and townspeople had previously located in Danbury and New Milford. They who came to these neighboring communities, not unlikely reported to their former neighbors and friends, as the children of Reuben and of Gad did concerning the land of Gilead, "Even the country is a land for cattle," and allured by the prospect of pecuniary advantage, as well as being in the immediate neighborhood of former friends and acquaintances, they came hither into what was comparatively a new country and kindled their home fires. Exactly *when* this first settlement took place it is difficult now to determine, there being no authentic record, although in an old historical sermon preached in Danbury at the beginning of the present century by "Thomas Robbins, candidate for the Gospel ministry," I find it asserted that "the first settlement of Danbury was begun in the summer of 1684," and elsewhere the record "The western part of the town called Miry Brook, and the eastern part which now comprises a part of the town of Brookfield, were settled within a few years after the 'Center,'" that is the center of Danbury. New Milford

was settled in 1707, and Newtown still earlier; so we are warranted in the inference that a pioneer population was here not long subsequent to 1700, perhaps still earlier than that, in the Danbury portion of the Society. It is equally difficult to determine accurately *who* the first settlers were; but from the earliest dates that are found upon tomb-stones in the various cemeteries, and from some other sources of information, it is evident that among the earliest dwellers here were Tibbals and Jared Baldwin, whose homes were on Long Meadow Hill near the school house, Samuel Merwin, whose residence was where the family of Noah Taylor have had their home, Deacon Matthew Baldwin, who lived a little south of Mr. Edwin Smith's, Samuel Sherman, who lived near where Mr. Abel Sherman now resides, and Deacon Amiel Peck, who lived at the corner just east of the "Merwin Brook" crossing. Among the earlier, if not the earliest dwellers here, were also Mr. John Dunning and Deacon Michael Dunning, the last of whom came to his death under peculiarly sad circumstances. On his return from a religious meeting one night to his home, now known as the "Benham" place, by some mishap he fell into his own well and was either drowned or killed by the fall. Mr. Henry Peck, the Dibbles of Bound Swamp, and the Smiths and Hurds of "Whisconier," were also veterans in the field.

Just here quite as appropriately as at any subsequent point in our statement of facts, I may say that the society of Newbury was by an act of the General Assembly

INCORPORATED AS A TOWN

in 1788, Mr. Amos Wheeler acting as the Society's agent in carrying its memorial to the Assembly and obtaining the act of incorporation. It would seem from the *repeated* efforts of the Society in this direction before the final success was achieved, that either the people were unduly ambitious for manhood before they had got their growth, or else that the then law-makers of Connecticut, wise and conservative men

as they doubtless were, were chary of allowing upstart societies to "put on airs" and have their ambitious notions gratified too hastily. Application was made for town privileges as early as 1772, and the purpose prosecuted through successive years, before many sessions of Assembly, until the final victory over opposition as I have said, in 1788. Hope deferred and endeavors made for sixteen years would certainly indicate a good measure of *will* on the part of our town ancestors. It is a little more than possible that Danbury, Newtown and New Milford knew something of the reasons why the success was so long in coming!

There is no record now available by which can be ascertained when religious services began to be held in Newbury, or the date when

THE PARISH WAS ORGANIZED.

We may naturally suppose that in the first years of their settlement the people worshipped in the towns to which they respectively belonged, some at Newtown where a church was organized in 1715, some at New Milford, where a church was organized in 1716, and some in Danbury, where the present first church was gathered in 1696. It is to be presumed that, for some time after separation from these churches, the people gathered in private houses for their Sabbath day devotions; I say the *people*, for those were days in which all held it their duty and their privilege to be worshippers on the Lord's day. A book of Society records supposed to have been lost but recently recovered, makes it certain that the Society was in working order so early as in 1755, and two years later than this, viz., in 1757, the

CHURCH WAS ORGANIZED,

the only account of that organization being the following entry in the records of Consociation: "A number of this Society that came well recommended from neighboring

churches appeared before this Council, gave their consent to the Saybrook Confession of Faith and Platform of Church discipline, unitedly consented to a church covenant, and as members of a Church, gave a unanimous 'call' to Mr. Brooks to be their minister, to which he gave his consent."

In this somewhat informal way the "living temple" began here to be builded.

All the facts of its early history have passed beyond our knowledge, by reason of the circumstance much to be regretted that no church records were kept prior to the settlement of Rev. Richard Williams in 1807. Not even a catalogue of members was kept, unless by the pastor for his own private information. As I have said, the earliest Sabbath day services were probably held in private houses, perhaps at the residence of Joshua Northrop, Amos Northrop, or Peter Hubbell, where society meetings were held. While a sanctuary was being prepared, the ark of the Lord rested in "the house of Obed-Edom," and we shall not hazard much if we believe that "the Lord blessed the house of Obed-Edom, and all that pertained unto him because of the ark of the Lord."

But a change was at hand.

CHURCH EDIFICES.

"At a lawful meeting, January 21, 1755, of the inhabitants of the established religious society of Newbury, more than two-thirds of the inhabitants of said society then present and qualified by law to vote, declared it necessary to build a Meeting House"; and either because of differences of opinion concerning the site, or through prudent desire to avoid future divisions, such as are very likely to grow out of locating public buildings, they made application to the Court of Fairfield County "to appoint and fix the place whereon the meeting house should be erected and built"; and the Court thereupon appointed a commission to "fix the place." For reasons not stated the returns of this commission were nega-

tived by the Court. In the following April the Court took still further action in the case, and a new commission was appointed, consisting of Increase Mosely, Benj. Stiles (?), and Gideon Walker, all of Woodbury in Litchfield County, who were empowered "to fix a place whereon to set a meeting house." The doings of this commission were accepted by the Society and approved by the Court, and so the place of the sanctuary was "fixed." If the setting of the stake at the spot where we are now gathered determined the site of the village, we can only say that the commissioners may have acted very wisely in their own judgment, but they could scarcely have acted more unwisely in the judgment of succeeding generations! In December the society made appointment of a building committee, consisting of Messrs. Joseph Murray, Benj. Dunning, Joseph Smith, John Dunning and Robert Bostwick, and took action with reference to the finance of the undertaking. It was also voted that the structure should be "forty-six feet in length and thirty-six feet in width, and that the posts should be twenty *foots* long." The committee were instructed "to get cedar shingles if they can be attained to, to cover the fore side of the *ruff* and chestnut for the back side, and to cover the upright with oak *clab-boards*." This building seems to have been simply "covered in" at the first, and to have been used for a period without seats other than benches carried in for temporary convenience, and even without a floor except of loose boards on which these benches were located. Seats and pews were introduced into the building in 1759, four years after its erection. In 1769 it was voted that "the Society will *oyl* and *culler* the *winders*, and doors and corner *bords*" and a committee was appointed with power "to *git* and *precuer oyl* and *stuf* to fulfill the said vote." Four years later galleries were added to the accommodations already existing. The house was internally decorated with "plaster" in 1790, and was externally shingled upon "both sides and each end." The

structure was at first without a steeple, and this was added in 1824, after the house had been occupied nearly seventy years, though a bell was never mounted upon its deck, the town house bell, after its purchase, being used for calling the people to their religious services. Evidently the spirit of improvement was not of very rapid development. The house of the Lord thus builded piece-meal as we might say, a kind of accretion of the prayers and endeavors of two entire generations, gathered the worshippers beneath its roof until 1854, an entire century lacking a single year, from the time when its foundations were laid, when it was taken down that *this* edifice might be erected upon its site. What varied scenes, joyful and sorrowful, had been witnessed in that hundred years within its consecrated walls! What experiences had crowded there which can have no unfolding until the final day! The house was a structure of what I may call the *barn* style of architecture, having doors upon the south side, and each end east and west, with a pulpit on the north side opposite the main entrance. Aisles passed through the center of the house from door to pulpit, and entirely around the body pews; and yet other pews between these aisles and the walls of the building, making up the lower floor sittings. The old-time "sounding-board," and the "deacons' seat" beneath the pulpit were not wanting. It was creditable to the good taste of the people, and reflected somewhat of their good habits at home, that a tax of thirty shillings was assessed annually for the purpose of sweeping the meeting house; the sweeping to be done by some competent person "once in three weeks, nine months in the year, and once a month for the three winter months." Evidently our fathers were believers in the sentiment, "cleanliness is next to godliness." The house in which we now worship has been so recently erected, that it is not necessary that I should speak in respect to it, further than to say that it was built according to plans furnished by Mr. Nash, an architect of

Bridgeport, that in March, 1854, the bell which calls us to our devotions was purchased, and that on the 12th day of April the edifice was set apart to its appropriate use by services of dedication, the sermon being preached by Rev. Mr. Churchill of Woodbury, and the dedicatory prayer being offered by the pastor, Rev. Mr. Curtiss.

I come next to speak of the

MINISTRY

as here established and maintained, and I cannot forbear the remark, what a clear and satisfying argument for the value of God's method of sustaining morality, and promoting the spiritual welfare of the people, even to the saving of their souls, (viz., "by the foolishness of preaching,") is furnished in perhaps every community where a faithful Christian ministry has been enjoyed, by its historical records for a century or more; and by the thoughts which crowd back from the past in respect to the influence thus exerted, and the benefits for all time and for eternity thus achieved! Let the man who sets a low value upon the work and influence of the ministry, withholding perhaps all contribution to its support though God has blessed him with means in abundance, let such a man, I say, sit down with the records in his hands, and opening his mind to associations naturally springing from the retrospect, glance his eye along the pages of baptisms, revivals, church admissions, and christian deaths, and say if God's appointment was not wise. Let him go to the cemetery where sleeps the reverend man of God, who for two or three score years perhaps, in all wisdom and faithfulness dispensed the messages of divine authority and tenderness, let him survey the field of sepulchers around, embracing the dust of an entire generation who fell asleep during such ministry, and calling to mind how many of this number died in the joyful hope of a Christian immortality, let him answer if that ministry has not been worth to that community *all* it cost.

Let him in thought approach the bedside of the dying and see how faith and hope spring forward to scenes immortal, see how in tranquil or exultant mood the spirit passes to its prepared mansion, the visions celestial more alluring than the terrestrial, and the farewells cheerfully spoken; let him, I say, contemplate such a scene of Christian triumph and think of the departing one as *his* wife, *his* son or daughter, *his* parent or endeared friend, and will he not henceforth confess "The Gospel which can nurture such faith and hope is above *all* price, and no community can *afford* that the preaching of that Gospel should cease from its weekly privileges!" But to return from this digression. In September of 1755, the Society voted "to have the Gospel preached amongst us," and likewise "to invite Mr. Josiah Sherman, a candidate, to preach the Gospel on the Sabbath in this Society, to join with New Preston for the term of time as may be agreed upon." It would thus appear that at first there was preaching but part of the time, probably on alternate Sabbaths, and for this service the Society paid "fifteen shillings prock or old tenner," or equivalent provisions per Sabbath. The arrangement of filling the pulpit by supplies as they could be secured, continued for about two years, when the Society at their meeting "manifested their unanimous desire to have a Gospel minister settled among" them, and a committee was appointed, "to crave the advice and direction of the Reverend members of the association in so important an affair." As a result of such advice, or without regard to it, at a meeting of the Society held in June, 1757, it was proposed to vote "whether we will choose ye worthy Mr. Thomas Brooks, who preaches with us on probation, to be settled as our minister and Pastor," and it was voted in the affirmative. The Church organized three months later, uniting as we have seen in the "call."

The provision made for his pecuniary support was a "settlement" of one hundred pounds to be paid in three

yearly installments, and for yearly salary forty-five pounds for three years, with addition afterward of forty shillings each year until the amount should be fifty pounds, this sum to be the permanent allowance. This financial basis being mutually satisfactory, a day of solemn fasting and prayer was held preparatory to the services of ordination, and on the 28th day of September, 1757, the young candidate was set apart by imposition of hands and installed as Pastor of the Church and Society, the parts in the service being conducted as follows: Rev. James Beebe, prayer; Rev. Ebenezer White, sermon; Rev. Jedediah Mills, ordaining prayer; Rev. Daniel Judson, charge; Rev. Nathan Taylor, right hand; Rev. Elisha Kent, concluding prayer. It is creditable to the memory of Pastor Brooks that his ministry continued through a period of forty-two years, and that the people when incorporated as a town accepted his name as a part of the designation by which the place should be known, thus: Brook's-field or "Brookfield." He is remembered by a few still living, as a man small in stature,—a Zacheus whom Jesus called—of fair abilities, and of marked eccentricities, especially absent-mindedness, and a somewhat quick and uncontrollable temper. In evidence of the first of these characteristics, the well authenticated anecdote is told of him, that on one occasion when he had worn for his comfort two pairs of stockings at a ministers' meeting, in the morning on dressing he was unable to find but a *single* stocking. His delegate, however, Mr. Henry Peck, coming to his assistance, shortly ascertained that the four stockings were all upon *one foot*. As an illustration of the last peculiarity mentioned, it is told of him that meeting with provocation from a parishioner, over-mastered by his impetuous spirit, he seized hold of his person, and caused him to shake in his presence in a different manner from that in which the Phillipian jailor did in the presence of Paul. This first pastor, on account of impaired health and growing infirmities, was relieved from the active duties of his office (whether

formally dismissed or not I have no means of determining,) in 1796, and reached the end of his pilgrimage three years after. On an unostentatious grave-stone in the "Hawleyville" cemetery there is the modest record:

"In memory of Rev. Thos. Brooks, who departed this life Sept. 13, 1799, aged 80 years.

'Mors mihi vita est'

(Death to me is life).

O mortal wander where you will,
Your destiny is cast,
The rising stone and verdant hill
Proclaim your rest at last."

After the voluntary retirement of Mr. Brooks from the active duties of his office, various candidates were heard, and among them Rev. Erastus Ripley, who assumed the pastorate in March, 1800. Dissatisfaction early arose under this ministry, and it was consequently of short continuance, the relation being dissolved by Consociation, November 6, 1801, one year and eight months being the length of the pastorate, an evidence, as were also several other pastorates here, that short settlements often spoken of so regretfully, have not been confined to these degenerate days.

A protracted period of candidating ensued after this dismissal, continuing for a period of six years. At length, Rev. Richard Williams was called, a "six months notice" clause being inserted in the terms of his settlement. His ordination took place June 2nd, 1807, Rev. Daniel Huntington of Litchfield, preaching the sermon, Rev. David Ely of Huntington, offering the consecratory prayer, and the right hand of fellowship being extended by the Rev. John Clark of Newtown. His house was at the place now occupied by Mr. Howland. In November, 1801, after a service of a little more than three years he took advantage (if it was an advantage) of the "six months notice" clause in his settlement, and notified the Church and Society of his

intention of withdrawing from the pastorate, which was done with the consent of the Consociation in the following April. Among the causes of this early separation, was the fact that there was an *unexpressed* opposition at the time of his settlement, and I take occasion to emphasize here the remark that it is neither fairness to the candidate under call, nor good policy for the calling party that there should be any disguise, any lack of openness and honesty in the action preliminary to a minister's settlement. If there is opposition or any lack of cordiality, the candidate ought to know it, that he may give it proper weight in his decision. Shortly after the dismissal of Mr. Williams, Rev. Nathaniel W. Taylor (subsequently renowned as the New Haven pastor and theological professor,) received a "call" to the pastorate, but the "call" was declined, and the choice of Church and Society passed over to Rev. Bela Kellogg, who was ordained in January of 1813. Short pastorates seem to have become chronic in connection with this church at this period, and Mr. Kellogg's was no exception. Upon the ground of inadequate support he went before Consociation in October, 1816, it being but little more than three years from the time of his settlement, and requested dismissal, which request was granted. The church remained without a settled minister during the next four years and six months, when the Rev. Abner Brundage favorably entertained a "call," and was installed May 15th, 1821, Rev. Wm. Andrews preaching the sermon, Rev. Medad Rodgers offering the installing prayer, and Rev. Thomas Punderson giving the right hand of fellowship. The memory of Mr. Brundage's ministry in the minds of many of you is still green, and he yet lives, in a respected old age, in the State of New Jersey. It is not needful therefore, perhaps scarcely fitting, that I should say more than, that through his pastorate of eighteen years he lived in the esteem of the people, and evidences of his ministerial success were neither few nor slight. Mainly on the ground of failing health he

took a dismissal from his charge in October, 1839, and at the same time virtually took leave of the active duties of his profession. For yet another five years the flock was again without the watch-care and feeding of a shepherd abiding in its midst. Candidates and supplies for a longer or shorter period (of whom Rev. A. B. Hull was in charge for an entire year,) were the order. Rev. Daniel C. Curtiss assumed the pastorate in 1843, retaining the position for a period of twelve years. In 1859, Rev. Thomas N. Benedict entered upon his duties as stated supply, and continued to discharge them till 1862. The Rev. Mr. Hollister was called shortly after, and after a service of two years resigned his charge. Rev. F. Munson succeeded him in the duties of the pastorate, although not installed in the office. The present incumbent of the pulpit was called in July, 1870, and installed on the 19th of October, having thus completed nearly six years of service, pleasant years as he can honestly testify, and not as he hopes without some advantage to those to whom he ministers.

In connection with this record of the ministry some notice should be taken of the other office-bearers of the Church, viz., those who have officiated as its

DEACONS.

So far as I have been able to ascertain they have served in the following order: John Dunning and Joseph Smith, the first deacons, and after them Henry Peck and Abraham Camp. Precisely when these were chosen and how long they served, it is impossible now to determine. Deacons Samuel Merwin and Mathew Baldwin were the successors of these in office. No record exists of when they were chosen, but they served respectively until 1828 and 1836. In their days of age and feebleness, Deacons Levi Dibble and Michael Dunning were appointed as their assistants. Their successors in office have been Ashbel Dunning, elected in

1827, Abel S. Taylor, elected in 1843, Deacon Luther Smith, chosen in 1849, Alfred Somers, in 1858, and William Skidmore in 1863. Of these all, save one, have fallen asleep.

A very important part of a church's history is its

PERIODS OF REVIVAL,

and some account of them should here be taken. As already affirmed no church records were kept prior to Mr. Williams' ministry in 1807. Concerning seasons of special religious refreshing and ingathering back of this date, if such occurred, we must remain in ignorance. Rev. Mr. Williams seems to have been blessed in the first year of his labors as an instrument of an awakened interest, for, within a year from July 1st, thirty-eight were added to the church membership. It was a part of that general religious interest which characterized the close of the last century and the beginning of this, especially in the New England and Middle States, and which seems to have been a sort of return wave of spiritual influence after the sad effects of the long war, and which, in the mercy of God, came as a stay to the disastrous influence of French infidelity which swept in after the Revolutionary War. The years 1809 and 1816 were years of more than ordinary prosperity in a religious way, in one of which fifteen, and in the other seventeen were received on profession of their faith. That year of precious memory to so many of the New England Churches, to Churches indeed throughout the entire land, viz., 1831, brought its quickening and saving influences to this community, and Rev. Mr. Brundage was permitted to gather forty members into the fold. Under the ministry of Mr. Curtiss, who called Rev. Mr. Underwood to his assistance, a revival of wide extent was enjoyed, resulting in an ingathering of fifty-two. In 1862, under the labors of Rev. Mr. Benedict, eighteen were added to

the Church, and since that date the largest number admitted at any *one* communion season was seven, who were received on the first Sabbath of the present month, July, 1876, though isolated cases of conversion have been numerous, and thus the waste of the church by removal and death has been partially repaired. While our hearts are gladdened by the record of these years of grace, and our thanksgivings rise, there is occasion for sadness also in the fact, that so many have been the years when the heavens gave no rain, and these fields of Zion were exceeding dry, when there was little fruit upon the ground, and the song of harvest home was not heard.

In respect to the

DOCTRINES AND PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH POLITY

held by this Church, so far as evidence can now be gathered, they have been, as to belief, from the first as they still are, Calvinistic modified into the Edwardian type, and, as to mode of administration, Congregational. The first formula of doctrine on record—and its adoption must have been early, judging from its heading in these words, “Confession of Faith adopted by the *Presbyterian* Church in Brookfield,” (long ago this was the mode of denominating our churches, though they were Congregational in fact,)—was a somewhat formidable document extending through twenty-five long articles, and being a very respectable compend of systematic theology, without any perceptible flavor of heterodoxy, and the covenant was proportionably extended and comprehensive. In 1827, during the ministry of Rev. Mr. Brundage, the articles were much abbreviated, and put in the form now in use by the Church. The attachment felt to evangelical doctrine and to proper Congregational principles had illustration in the fact that when it was proposed a few years since to settle a pastor over one of the churches of Consociation by a council composed of representatives of differing denom-

inations and differing beliefs, including Universalists and Unitarians, the church refused to sit upon the council.

It is suitable here that mention should be made of

OTHER CHURCHES

which have sprung from this as their common origin. Almost from the first formation of the parish there were persons residing here whose sentiments affiliated with other forms of worship, as evidenced in the fact that so early as 1757 a vote was passed to memorialize the General Assembly for a "Land tax of two pence on the acre of all ye uninclosed land in Newbury, exclusive of lands of Church-of-England men residing among us." On the 21st of January, 1785, thirty years subsequent to the establishment of Congregational worship, fifty-five persons, all of whom were males, lodged a certificate with the Society's clerk, declaring themselves "to belong to the Episcopal Church." This may be presumed, I think, to be the date of separate worship under Episcopal forms, though this cannot be authenticated by any record of the organization of the Episcopal parish, no records of that parish of early date being in existence so far as I have been able to ascertain. An edifice was built for the accommodation of these persons and their families upon the triangular spot midway between Mrs. Lucy Northrop's residence and that of Mr. Sherman Foote, where services were held under this form until 1837, when the parish entered the more commodious house where our Episcopal friends now meet. When this change took place, certain Methodist brethren residing at the "Iron Works" and in the neighborhood, united with others of like views living at "Southville," and forming one society, purchased the old Episcopal meeting house, and there continued services for nearly twenty years, when a portion of the worshippers resumed their separate status at "Southville," and the remaining portion began to hold services at the "Iron

Works," continuing to hold ground there until the church, as a local organization, became extinct, I believe about the year 1865. The Baptist Church, which drew to itself numerous worshippers, once members of the congregation worshipping here, was recognized by an ecclesiastical council in 1846, the *Society* dating back to 1843. The Reformed Church began its organic life in 1869, receiving to its membership at that time eleven individuals from this church. In yet another manner, and by yet another cause far more potent, this church and congregation have been invaded, and those in membership have been taken away. From out of its successive sanctuary doors, and out of its homes, the dead of generation after generation have been borne, and as I have spoken of where the assembly of the living gathered, so I briefly speak of

BURIAL PLACES

to which the departed have been gathered as these almost two hundred years have been passing. How long the procession! how large the assemblage compared with the little remnant that still lives! The Newbury fathers, while united for ecclesiastical purposes, seem to have maintained, not unnaturally perhaps, something of the *town* feeling, and hence the cemetery on "the plain" for the New Milford portion of the Society, that by the Danbury railroad track, below Mr. David Northrop's, for the Danbury portion, and that near Hawleyville for the Newtown portion, while a spot marked by a few remaining stones by the side of "Hop Brook," on the left of the road to Obtuse, was a resort to those having no town preferences, but looking only to convenience of distance. The Cemeteries on the road west of Mr. Beman Fairchild's, on the west of "Still River," and at the "Iron Works," are of later beginning. In the burial place referred to by "Hop Brook," I find a stone erected

"To the memory of Mr. Henry Baldwin, drowned April 4th, 1798," with this somewhat singular poetic inscription :

"Here lies interred a blooming youth,
He lived in love, and died in truth.
Call, and behold as you pass by
As you are now, so once was I;
As I am now, so you must be,
Prepare to die, and follow me."

For the benefit of such as are always looking into the past for *the golden*, and upon the present with disparagement, I may state in this connection that within the memory of some now living among us, on funeral occasions liquors were provided for the "bearers," and as the procession moved here and there on the route, when the "bier" was changed from the shoulders of one set of men to those of another, the bottle carried by an attendant was brought into requisition.

Surely there is *some* progress!

The history of a place is to be estimated in part by its out-going influences, and I may refer therefore to

THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS

who have gone out to labor as ministers and missionaries in other portions of the Lord's vineyard. These have been as follows: Rev. Wm. A. Hawley, (your present pastor received, in his infancy, baptism at his hands,) Rev. Wm. Dibble, Rev. Bennet F. Northrop, Rev. Beebe Stevens, Rev. Oliver Taylor, Rev. Oliver St. John, and Rev. Frank Lobdell;—Missionaries, Mr. Samuel Ruggles and Mrs. Lucia Holman.

In this centennial year it is fitting, perhaps, that I shall make reference to the stormy

PERIODS OF 1776 AND 1812,

the war times of our distant history, though in this reference no very thrilling exploits are to be narrated, nor chapters of deep interest are to be unfolded. In respect to what *did* transpire in the revolutionary period, no record remains so

far as I am aware, and even the generation to whom the immediate actors told the story of sacrifice and suffering, has grown into such infirmity of memory, that all recital is now fragmentary and vague. When the Revolutionary War broke out it found here a company of militia already organized, which did service under Maj.-General Wooster, and probably was present when he received his death wound at Ridgefield. It is represented to me that when Gov. Tryon of "*blazing* memory" burned Danbury, great excitement swept over Newbury, and that many of the people, their patriotism stirred by the words of good Pastor Brooks, rushed to the aid of their Danbury neighbors; also that, in another stage of the conflict, royal troops were, for a little time, quartered here. In the war of 1812, a "draught" was served upon the people here, and additional to this Lieut. Ruggles enlisted a company of volunteers, the whole being sent to New London for service. But, I believe the perils of these men were more dreadful in anticipation than in reality, and that their exploits of war were not of such account as to cover either themselves or their country with imperishable glory!

It should be added to this war record in order to its completeness that in response to the call of the country for the suppressing of

THE REBELLION,

forty-five men enlisted from Brookfield, serving for a longer or a shorter period, of which number two, Albert Clarke and Frank Benson, were killed in action, and ten died while in the service, their names as follows: Thomas Hoye, Thomas Prentice, Edwin Wheeler, Rockwell H. Smith, Abner Johnson, Patrick Sullivan, Lemuel Peck, William R. Hamlin, Thomas Sherman and Chas. T. Delevan. In our thoughts let us lay fresh garlands upon their graves to-day.

I have thus passed under review the most prominent times

presented in the history of the Parish and Church, and have reached the point where I must speak my

CLOSING WORDS.

I am impressed with the thought how much there is of unwritten, never to be written history, in connection with these generations of whom I have been speaking, the fathers and the mothers, the sires and the grandsires, who have rounded out their lives and have been gathered to their rest ! Life, in every view of it, is a conflict, stern and irrepressible, requiring patience, and courage, and energy, even to meet its ordinary responsibilities, and doubtless those who have gone before us in these paths and over these fields of endeavor, struggled as we do now ! Let us honor their memories for all that they were, for what of service they rendered to their respective generations, and for what we have attained to, better than they experienced, for they were the instruments of our advantage. "They labored, and we have entered into their labors."

And I am impressed yet again with the thought : we, like our fathers who have passed away, are the makers of history. We, even as they did, are giving character and tone to that which shall be when we are sleeping in the dust, and let us ask ourselves in some of our thoughtful hours, whether some unknown chronicler, who a hundred years from now may take a retrospect of the century, shall find that century bright and aglow with honored names and honorable incidents as connected with ourselves. God give us determination and strength so to act that it shall be so, so to act that we shall leave after us at our departure well-defined and even conspicuous memorials of our having lived. Let it stimulate us to know that,

"As the light
Not only serves to show, but renders us
Mutually profitable, so our lives,
In acts exemplary, not only win
Ourselves good names, but do to others give
Matter for virtuous deeds."

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