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A YEAR'S HISTORY

OF THE

ASYLUM HILL

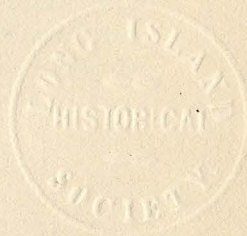
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

OF

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

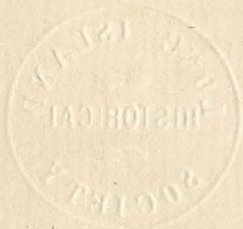
By Lewis J. Reid

Read at
The Annual Meeting of the Church
February 3, 1898



PLIMPTON PRINT,
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HISTORY OF THE
Asylum Hill Congregational Church
FOR 1897

AGAIN, and yet again, have our voices joined in
Bickersteth's sweet but pathetic song:

"Our years are like the shadows
"On sunny hills that lie."

A picture of shadows falling upon and darkening sunlit
fields that a moment ago were smiling in the sunshine.

Why may not this suggest its antithesis—sunshine
banishing the shadows? The bright upon the dark?

Why not sing?

The Christian's faith, like sunshine,
Beams o'er his darkened way.

Or—

"Light of Light shine o'er us, . . .
"To the endless day."

Retrospect in any form must needs bring sadness,
pathos, tears; for memory recalls the brightness gone
in the glad days of the past. But let us make *our* look-
ing backward to-night like that of Whittier, when he
sang:

"That care and trial seem at last,
"Through memory's sun-set air,
"Like mountain ranges overpast,
"In purple distance fair."

Our Church To-Day

Has a membership of 787. Of these fifty-five were admitted in 1897. Of the fifty-five, twenty-eight were on profession, twenty-seven by letter or certificate. There were nineteen removals, of which eight were by death.

It is "meet and fitting," if not "our bounden duty," to stop at least with the coming of each new year, in order that, as fellow-servants of one Lord, we may exchange words of encouragement and Christian cheer; that we may tell one another of our labors, our endeavors, our successes, our failures, during another year of our mortal service. As our Church has an established custom—and a most excellent one—of having an "Annual Record" made and issued in printed form, the task of preparing a paper annually, called the "Church History," is greatly different from what it otherwise would be as well as from what it should be.

Our Pastor

Dear Pastor, Brother, Friend: There is no reason or occasion for telling you of our deep, devoted love. Of that you know. But surely we must be allowed to speak a word of thankfulness and of thanksgiving. For in duty and in love you have helped us in our hardships; you have smiled with us and brought us cheer and gladness; you have prayed for us and sympathized with us in our sorrows. We thank you for those prayers and

tears for us, for your wise words fitly spoken, for your sermons strong and true. For these we thank you. But more than for these, *we thank God for you.*

Our Fields of Christian Service

Like other Christian churches, we are organized in many associations or various departments of Christian work: The Sunday School, The Ladies' Benevolent Society, The Mission Band, The Daisy Chain, The Glenwood Church, The Young Men's Union, The Teachers' Club, Our Mid-Week Meeting, The Young People's Meeting, Our Church Music, Choir and Choir Master, The Business Side of Church Work—*i. e.*, the duties of the Society's Committee, Collection and Disbursement of our money gifts for others. Then, too, without trying to name further our other activities of Christian service within our Church life, many of us engage as individuals in our Master's work outside church lines. There are the Home for the Blind, the Young Men's Christian Association, the Good Will Club, the City Mission, the Open Hearth, the Hospital, the Jail. All these and many more show how varied is our field of work.

The Sunday School

Our Sunday School is a department of Christian work in importance second to no other. So few would dissent from this "article of religion" that we submit no reasons to prove the truth. As an axiom we admit it without challenge.

The report of the Sunday School has brought to us details of the year's record. The enrollment for the year 1897 is 602.

The Home Department's success seems almost phenomenal. This is a splendid illustration of the coming and staying of new and potent agencies of Christian life and work. Put in a peg there, ye pessimists, if any there be. When some institution of our fathers' has finished its useful career and goes to its eternal reward, say ye not "These be degenerate days." When the female house-to-house prayer meeting went out, perhaps the Young Women's Christian Association came in. Your Historian believes that it is enough and a most important duty for us all individually to stop, and with prayer and much thought consider this question: *What is my duty as my Master's servant in regard to Christian service in the Sunday School?*

The Teachers' Club

Under wise guidance in carefully planned meetings (six within the year), this club has a highly satisfactory account to give of itself for 1897. The two-hour limit, 6 to 8 P. M., is strictly regarded. The supper and table talk of the first hour prove an admirable preparation for the serious, earnest, helpful, suggestive interchange of thought and experience that follows. But this form of meeting is but one of many; and it strikes the Historian that he can do naught better than to say that the meetings, which he has had the good fortune to attend, impressed him as most stimulating and inspiring. The

Scripture saith: "Honor to whom honor." The father, founder, faithful friend of the Teachers' Club is Waldo Selden Pratt.

The Ladies' Benevolent Society

Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri and Texas each has to-day within its borders a family of willing, winning workers in receipt of a box of blessings from our Ladies' Benevolent Society. Since one box—presumably the Texas box—had to hold blessings for eleven persons (blessings in the shape of babies having probably arrived first), a fifth box was not attempted, the fourth being counted as twins. In a word, the full measure of work, and more, was done, though an ex-president (not many years ex) writes: "The ladies do such good, faithful work, I wish there might be more interest, for we always need money sadly." Three afternoon teas were given, and, with the co-operation of the Social Committee, a six-o'clock supper, called a Donation Party, which was an unqualified success.

The Mission Band

The good work of the Mission Band shows (above and beyond the earnest, consecrated effort, always essential, but not in sight,) *these noteworthy items*: Nine meetings of the Band were held during the season. The practical outcome of these was a missionary box sent to Rev. Mr. Curtis, of Killingworth, Conn. The year's work ended with a fair in the chapel in October.

The elaborate preparation for the fair more than repaid all the effort it cost. One hundred and sixty dollars were in the treasury at the close of the year.

The Daisy Chain

Here are some of the links for '97:

1. Meetings each month from November to June.
2. A June picnic at the end.
3. "Gathered flowers for a settlement concert."
4. Studies of the work in varied mission fields.
5. A talk by Miss Lewis on the children's work in the McCall Mission.
6. A picture exhibition with stories of life in India.
7. A cruise among the Micronesian Islands in the Morning-Star.
8. Visits to the village schools in China, Turkey and India, under guidance of three young girls in native costume.
9. At Christmas a dolls' tea party to the Little Happy Hour Club.

And all the rest of the acts, too many further to enumerate, and the dollars that were given, are they not written on the happy hearts of merry children?

The Young Men's Union

This club is strictly a social organization, established in 1893 for the purpose (as set forth in its printed statement) "of promoting social intercourse among its members, and to render aid to other organizations of

the parish." Mr. H. S. Conklin, president, reports that the Union now numbers eighty members. It is receiving and doing good.

This club met nine times during the year. Musical entertainments, talks by men who know how to talk, debates, mock trials, dinners, etc., combined to render each meeting better than any of the other eight.

The Parish Visitor

An outline of the work extending over several years of our Parish Visitor shows four important facts: (1) An initial canvass of all the homes on the Hill. (2) The extent of the work of the Parish Visitor is immensely greater than is generally known. Your Historian takes pleasure in calling your attention to the fact that a record made by actual count showed that a maximum of fifty families a month had been visited during the period in which this record was kept. (3) These visits destroy the false idea that everybody connected with our Church has a gilt-edged bank account. Our Visitor finds the East-side kind of poverty rare, but the bank-account idea is a myth or a fable. (4) And—most important—tact, wisdom, sympathy, kindness, have won confidence and love, and only Our Father in Heaven knows the extent of the blessed service which our Visitor and her helpers have rendered. Surely it will be hers to hear: "Inasmuch as thou didst the Master's service, come, thou blessed of my Father."

The King's Daughters

Is an institution absolutely independent of the Church and separate from it (that is, in its organization), but the local chapters are so identified in membership with our Church and Sunday School that a failure to tell the year's story of these royal workers would be like a Sunday School history minus the report of its most important class. The magnitude of the work done, as well as its excellence, is a matter of astonishment. There are three chapters, whose membership is largely composed of members of our Church. These chapters are named the Hyacinth, Miss Capron, president; the Goldenrod, Miss Rathbun, president; the Violet, Miss Worthington, president. The aggregate membership is about forty-five, not including some fourteen or fifteen honorary members. Of the sixty names enrolled (including the honorary members), about fifty are members of our Church or Sunday School. Through the kindness of their officers in writing many letters and in other ways, the details of the splendid work of our King's Daughters have been secured. But, as elsewhere, they form a part of the permanent record of good works. I bring to your attention, here and now, only the following two of many noteworthy features of the record. First, they seem to have sought out and found many needy, but hard-to-be-found-out and specially deserving places where to bestow their Christian help. An illustration of this is Christian work among the Gloucester deep sea fishermen. Second, they have, by great output of personal effort, secured some \$400,

which they have invested in good works for others. If any here have equalled these princesses in good works, they are invited *now* to rise and be counted!

Of the one hundred members of the Cheerful Workers' Chapter of the King's Daughters, about one in five is identified with this Church. For their sake it seems but fitting to call attention to the really remarkable history of the work which culminated, but did not end—far from it!—in the completion of the Chapter-house, on Prospect Avenue. To raise \$7,000 for that purpose was no small task; and only the time limit has decided me to omit an account of the devoted service of these royal workers.

However, I may refer you to the most excellent history of their good work by their leader, Miss Mary R. Fenn. This report appeared in the "Young People at Work," the issue of September, '97.

The Glenwood Church

For more than a score of years, regular religious services have been maintained by our Church in the conduct of what has been known as the Glenwood Mission. Not only has the financial support, in large measure, come from our Church, but, what sometimes is worth more, Christian service has been rendered by those in our church fellowship. Long years of patient effort are now blessed in the building and dedication of a new house of worship in the year of our Lord 1897. The property—consisting of an ample lot well located, the new church edifice, and the pastor's residence—is now valued at from \$8,000 to \$10,000. The finan-

cial situation is exceptionally satisfactory. The membership is between sixty and seventy. Rev. Mr. Williams, pastor, has rendered glad, heroic, successful service; is rendering *more*; and, with God's blessing, is sure to render *most*. Beyond question the right man in the right place. Think of this Church. Imagine what it is sure to be, ye, whose prayers and whose patient service, whose deeds and whose dollars are the solid foundation on which this new Church of Christ now stands.

Notable Sunday Evening Services

The custom is now fairly established—a good thing come to stay—of devoting the first Sunday evening of each month to a musical service. Of this, as a part of our regular worship, a report is made elsewhere.

During the year a number of Sunday evening services were held for specific purposes. Of these the more notable were: In January a Jubilee Quintette from Nashville brought us a message of word and song of quite exceptional value and interest. A large congregation came to listen, and were well repaid. Almost an identical report could be made of the Atlanta Quartette service in June. But probably no Sunday evening of the year included a service of greater interest than that of an evening in the autumn, when Mrs. Gates, wife of President C. F. Gates, of Harpoot College, told of her personal experiences amid the horrors of the Armenian massacres.

Notable Thursday Evening Services

Here should be recorded: *First*—Professor Stearns' lecture on "The Catacombs," based upon personal investigation and study during a residence in Rome of several months, and also being the interpretation of some 1,500 inscriptions—data which your Historian happens to know are not duplicated in the world. This lecture was one of unique interest and importance. *Second*—The pathetic stories of heroic hardship and financial woe, as they exist in some ten colleges or schools, each of great importance, were told by their presidents or other accredited emissaries. And these stories were well told. To many of us, doubtless, the most sobering and discouraging fact in regard to all forms of missionary effort is the apparent increase of need in the geometric ratio, while our gifts and efforts seem never capable of increase except in arithmetical ratio. *Third*—The meeting in recognition of the "Day of Prayer for Colleges" was one of the important meetings. Mr. Willis I. Twitchell, for many years the rightly honored principal of the "Arsenal School," made a strong and an effective address. *Fourth*—Another meeting of note was devoted to an account, by Mr. E. B. Dillingham, of his Christian work among the prisoners of both jail and state prison at Wethersfield. *Fifth*—The nine summer vacation Thursday evenings this year fell to the lot of the Church Committee; and the authorization of proxies resulted in our being favored on three of the nine evenings by Professor Beardslie, of the Theological Seminary. Professor Merriam conducted the prepara-

tory service preceding the September communion, a service which for exceptional reasons was deserving special acknowledgment.

Our Church Music in '97

One approaches this subject with absolute confidence and serene assurance, inasmuch as he feels it to be impossible to go astray by reason of the absolute unison—or, rather, unanimity—of opinion and harmony of judgment, especially in regard to church music, on the part of all. For some reason the absolute truthfulness of that statement has been called in question. Hence your Historian, who loves music so much that he is enthusiastically devoted to all kinds, except the best, was careful to have expert assistance in what he herewith submits.

An earnest effort has been made during the past year to render the musical part of our religious services helpful, devotional, and in every way acceptable. The hearty assistance of the chorus-choir, composed of our young people, has been an invaluable help, both in leadership of congregational singing and in the rendering of a wider range of anthems than those within the limits of a quartette. The work of the quartette has been sympathetic and greatly appreciated. In addition to the monthly services of song, works of a more comprehensive scope have been sung. Mr. Lord has given frequent organ recitals in the Church, which have been largely attended.

Dollars

Good music, like most good things, comes not, like manna, from heaven. It requires work and money;

and you have heard with pleasure, or now hear, that the faithful service of the chorus-choir, as well as that of the quartette, has been reported to the Historian for special commendation.

The word "dollars" calls our attention to the financial record of the year. The Treasurer's report, which we heard read at the appointed time, was, as it ever has been—at least for the twenty years of Col. Thompson's term as treasurer—a report of superlative interest, presented with ideal accuracy and completeness. From that report record is here made of but a single item: Legacies to the amount of over \$30,000 were paid, and cash gifts to the amount of over \$40,000 make the year's total of money invested in the Master's work in '97 over \$70,000.

The Society's Committee

We have, up to this point, directed our attention to the work of a complicated machine. We have inspected its intricacies and noted what all the different parts are "for," and what they all "do." But the machine doesn't go of itself. And often the "power" is unnoticed. We do not see the electric power that *does*. And, in our church life, let us stop and think what we owe to the energy and wisdom of our friends and brothers of the Society's Committee. Your Historian has had the experience of responsible service on a certain Society's Committee—once upon a time—and he may be pardoned for telling you that "it is not *all* angels' food and Marechal Niel roses."

For a long list of unnamed blessings we owe our Society's Committee sincere thanks. And we will not

pass unnoted their kind service in securing for us an exceptionally acceptable pulpit supply for the eight summer Sundays (July 25th—Sept. 12th). The reverend gentlemen are:

L. W. BACON,	.	.	Norwich.
J. W. COOPER,	.	.	New Britain.
HEBER H. BEADLE,	.	.	Bridgeton, N. J.
F. T. EMERSON,	.	.	Providence.
CLAYTON WELLES,	.	.	Taunton.
CHAS. S. MILLS,	.	.	Cleveland.

Work not in sight is often unnoticed, if not unknown. If an enrollment were made of the names of doers of this kind of work among us, and their deeds, what startling surprises would surprise us!

Two Notable Gifts

THE FONT

A notable gift to the Church was made on Easter Sunday by our brother in Christian fellowship, Mr. George L. Chase. Mr. Chase's letter is as follows:

To the Asylum Hill Congregational Church:

On this beautiful Easter morning, in behalf of myself, Mrs. Chase, Mr. Charles E. Chase and family and Mr. C. H. Longley, I present and ask you to accept as an Easter gift this baptismal font, in blessed memory of a beloved daughter, a loving sister and a devoted wife, who for many years was a consistent member of this Church.

Very sincerely yours,

April 18, 1897.

GEORGE L. CHASE.

A fitting acknowledgment by our pastor voiced our thanks at the time the font was put in place, and later, by formal action of our Church Committee, a message

of acceptance and of loving appreciation of the beautiful and costly gift was sent to Mr. Chase. At the beginning of the morning service on Easter Sunday, April 18, 1897, a dedicatory baptismal service was held, Mr. Twichell officiating. Following a brief prayer of consecration, the right of baptism was administered to Mr. Chase's grandson, Porter Bourne Chase, the infant son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles E. Chase.

A brief description of Mr. Chase's gift, valued in its deep and rich spiritual significance even beyond its great material worth, is as follows:

The font is of pure white Carrara marble, imported from Italy especially for the purpose, being all in one piece, chiseled out of a solid block of the famous stone. It stands about three feet high, on a circular base, twenty-six inches in diameter and five inches thick. The marble has the soft "hone" finish—the natural stone without polish. On the top, engraved on a two-inch outward bevel, is the inscription, cut in ornamental text:

One Lord. One Faith. One Baptism.

On the base of the font is the inscription:

In memory of
1852. Isabel Chase Longley, 1893.
Daughter of
Geo. L. and C. M. Chase.

The outside of the bowl is highly ornamented with arabesque work and Greek crosses. The bowl is chiseled out eight inches deep, and the water is contained in a copper bowl, gold lined.

The font was cut by P. Sonius & Son, of New York, from a design drawn by Cleveland Cady, of the firm of Cady, Berg & See.

THE CLOCK

A second notable gift came to the Church—to us—in September. The character of the record here made, the simple reading of parts of two short letters, is determined by the attempt to make the record in the way most acceptable to the giver.

To THOMAS TURNBULL, Esq., Chairman of Committee of the Asylum Hill Congregational Society:

In June last your committee gave Mrs. Julia M. Turner, of Philadelphia, permission to place a clock in the steeple of your Church in memory of her father, Mr. Roland Mather.

Mrs. Turner now formally presents the completed work to the Society, and desires also to express the pleasure it has given her to finish, in a sense, the work which her father carried to so successful a conclusion by his generous donations towards the completion of the Church edifice.

Sincerely yours,

JULIA M. TURNER,

By G. L. C.

We omit the technical description, which the Historian has from the makers. An inscription plate has been placed as follows:

Presented to the
Asylum Hill Congregational Church,
September, 1897,
In memory of Roland Mather,
By his Daughter.

Letters were sent thanking the donor in due form, and making acknowledgment of the Church's—*i. e.*, *our*—sincere appreciation of the gift.

Memoranda Questions

Justice to you who have followed our outline of the Church history for '97 thus far, forbids my including some pages devoted to various incidents worth keeping, for which data were obtained. Instead of reading these—the most important are to appear in the Annual Report—let me ask a few questions. This is a teacher's privilege, and a good way, at least with mature students, of starting trains of thought which may carry us to desired destinations. Have you an idea how hard the battle is that the "shut-ins" are called to fight? A Hartford writer of distinction said, in writing of General Grant, most truly: "General Grant fought a far harder and more noble fight at Mt. McGregor than he ever fought at Vicksburg or in the Wilderness." Have you thought often or much of the little but important things of our church life? The arranging of the flowers, e. g.? Would you wish to try and "fix the fires" in the six furnaces to please everybody? Do you know about the never till now mentioned Friday Evening Club? What would you say to an advanced class in Bible study outside of Sunday and Sunday School and Sunday School lessons? A class that might enjoy the rare opportunity of drawing on the treasure-house of the theological professors? Prof. W. S. Pratt can tell you the rest. What would you say of the plan of selecting your deacons by sending printed ballots to the 787 members, after some simple selection of candidates, and thus accomplishing several good results? Is there any danger of losing a humble mind

and lowly spirit because, from the materialistic point of view, the record of '97 is good? God grant us ever a lowly and contrite heart.

Called Home

DISMISSALS BY DEATH

NORTHEND, CHARLES A.,	March 1
CARPENTER, ELISHA,	March 22
ALLEN, HARRIET R. SHARPE (Mrs. Chas.), .	April 25
MATHER, ROLAND,	May 10
ELLSWORTH, ELLEN TULLER (Mrs. Fred'k),	July 21
KELSEY, WM. H. JR.,	Sept. 22
BULLARD, REV. CHARLES H.,	Oct. 15
CHASE, CALISTA M. TAFT (Mrs. Geo. L.), .	Dec. 9

It is not for the Historian to include either biographical sketches or character studies of our comrades who, within the bounds of 1897, have heard the bells from the towers of the Celestial City call them home. As our Whittier sings:

"Happy is he who heareth
 "The signal of his release
 "In the bells of the Holy City,
 "The chimes of eternal peace!"

To-night I am accorded the rare privilege of bringing to you what may be regarded as a loving message of farewell from our brother in Christ, Mr. Roland Mather, in which we may read wise and helpful Christian counsel between as well as in the lines.

Roland Mather

Among the personal papers of Mr. Roland Mather was found a little memorandum book, of which I am permitted to speak, and from which to read.

During a long series of years—just how long we do not know—Mr. Mather made an occasional memorandum of some important historical event with which his life came in contact. But most of the entries were of the nature of short, concise, terse statements, which summed up in aphoristic form the truth, as observation and experience presented it to him. Full of wisdom, they are greatly characteristic of the man. These are some of them :

I.

I have now come to the conclusion that money does not pay unless it is used in a proper way.

II.

Save a dollar when you can as well as not. Then you will have a dollar to give to some worthy object.

III.

Excelsior seems to be the universal motto; and this, with Christ for our guide, will bring us right.

IV.

Intellect and Christianity, combined with industry, give the highest style of man.

V.

It may be called selfishness, but a person who has something of his own to occupy his mind is less liable to meddle with the affairs of others.

VI.

A liability. Great want of Christianity in the world. *Heaven is my home.*

And with some lines, in part quoted, which these words suggested, your Historian would turn your thought with his own toward that rest into which, as the days go by, our dear ones are entering "Through the Gates." Into the Heavenly City. HOME.

Looking Forward

We will not mourn. God's way is best;
For, toil and trial past,
"The soul that bravely meets life's work"
Finds heaven—and rest—at last.
"But we would lay upon those graves,
"When summer flowers shall spring,
"The memories green of steadfast hearts,
"Our love's best offering."

Of us you ask?

With warfare we're not through—
Calls the battle-cry to fight.
God grant our hearts prove ever true
To Honor, Faith, and Right.
"That, following our Great Captain's call,
"We may each battle win.
"And when the bells of Earth ring out,
"May bells of Heaven ring in!"



