

1957

225<sup>th</sup>

# Anniversary

History given by Clerk Kenneth Ross

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Newspaper reports

225th Anniversary Celebration 1732-1957

In order to fittingly observe this Anniversary it seemed to be most fitting to prepare some sort of paper to provide for the background of the occasion. I had thought that not more than five minutes of this meeting would be devoted to this review.

Without any thought of special effort or search I began to gather various materials easily available and found that the further I look the more interested I became until at last there was so much that could not be omitted that I fear the telling will now take longer than the history was in the making. The highlights of the history of this church are presented in the hope that at least a few of you may find some interest such as I developed in the preparation.

None of the material is original with me and most of the words are as they were found some of the interpretation may not be ~~xxxxxxxx~~ accurate due to incompleteness of my studies.

The research done by Miss Eleanor Stetson and the information supplied by Mr. Metcalf has been very helpful, I have quoted at times from The Ecclesiastical History of Essex County, and used freely portions of Addresses by Rev. George E. Cary and Rev. Charles Holton at the 160th Anniversary Celebration of the Essex North Association on October 17, 1928, various Church records have also been used.

I start with a quotation from a book written by a Mr. Marshall at the time of the Rowley Celebration, "In 1638, Rev. Ezekiel Rogers sailed from England for the Massachusetts Bay Colony and arrived in December of that same year. With him were twenty families from his former parish of Rowley England. It was not the time of year to start a new settlement, so the company was divided up, some spent the winter in Salem, some in Boston, and some in Ipswich.



A site between Ipswich and Newbury was chosen and in May 1639, Mr. Rogers came, with between fifty and sixty families, to the site of their new home and named the district for the home he had left behind in England, Rowley.

In 1669, John Spofford, with his family, left Rowley and journeyed into the wilderness and became the first settler of New Rowley.

More families followed and so at last there were enough for another settlement. That settlement is now Georgetown.

It was a long trip to Rowley every Sunday, probably by ox-cart, to worship. Sunday lasted all day in those early years of our country, and it was a long trip back home, with, no doubt, chores to be done in the barn and the coals of banked fires raked forward and the house made warm again. Nor could it have been a comfortable ride in a springless wagon. So a church was erected nearer home."

A generous editing of material from here on attempts to give as nearly a chronological picture as possible.

On June 3, 1719 a group of seven clergymen met in the parsonage in Bradford and the first ministerial association hereabouts was founded. This was before the church was established in Georgetown but I wish to point out that the first pastor of Byfield, Rev. Moses Hale was in that group

In 1725 and 1726, after meetings and discussions in the new settlement, and with the help of the Byfield pastor, it was decided to build a meeting house on land about 100 feet away from what is now known as Rocky Hill Farm on East Main Street. The frame was raised on June 5, 1729 and the next step was to petition the General Court for the establishment of an independent parish. This was done on May 27, 1730 and New Rowley was now separated from the



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Mr. Chandler was born in Andover in 1706, graduated from Harvard in 1728 and married Mercy, daughter of Rev. Moses Hale of Byfield. Byfield really had a big part in getting the new church started here. The Chandlers had no children. He was a man of sound doctrine, exemplary life and conversation, dignified deportment, and greatly esteemed by his own people : highly respected abroad, and very successful in the ministry. He died April 19, 1789, aged 83, in the 57th year of his ministry here.

On September 8, 1761 a new association of ministers, including some from Haverhill, was formed here in West Rowley (Georgetown). Of course Mr. Chandler was host and perhaps the men went out into his orchard and looked over his trees, for he was a great fruit grower and issaid to have introduced here the cultivation of all the best kinds of apples. He also grew medicinal herbs. The Association formed here that day in 1761 later took the name of Essex North, the Association to which this church now belongs.

During his pastorate, new ideas were being preached, notably by Rev. George Whitfield, and some these ideas of revival were opposed by Rev. Chandler. Some of the people in his church were becoming interested in these new gospel ideas and because they were not allowed to listen to them in this church, finally withdrew and in 1784 formed the Baptist Church, leaving a much smaller congregation here. Their building was near what is now the North Street end of Mill St.

Even though some of the parishoners had left, the first church was outgrown, and so after thirty-six years in their little church, it was decided to erect another building on a site nearer the center of population. The church green was selected, the plot



of land between East Main Street and Elm Street. On July 5, 1769 a building fifty-five feet by forty feet with steeple and porch was raised in one day. This building <sup>was</sup> dedicated Sept. 12-23, 1770, the dedicatory sermon was given by Rev. Whitfield.

There is a tradition regarding the raising of the money for this building and one Cuffee Dole. His name wasn't Dole, nor maybe Cuffee, but he made his home with a family by the name of Dole. When the subject arose of the need of a new building Cuffee gave the first dollar. Cuffee was a respectable gentleman of color, who, when he closed his eyes in the long sleep which has no waking, could not be buried in the plot of ground sacred to "white folks", but had to be laid to rest outside the fence. Cuffee who gave the first dollar so that white folks could have a new meeting house was given a piece of ground where he could look through the bars at white people. But the burial plot was enlarged as more and more of the settlers were gathered to their fathers and the remains of Cuffee Dole now lie nearly in the exact center of Union Cemetery, surrounded by the descendants of our first settlers.

Another story is told about the difference of opinion during the discussion about the new building. Three men of influence in the society and probably good contributors, vowed never to enter the new building. What was good enough for the first settlers was good enough for them. Where they intended to worship is not recorded but before services were conducted for even the first time in the new building all three men had been called to the Land of Endless Day where there is no more weeping, and no more arguing.



After the passing of Rev. Chandler the Church held a day of "fasting and prayer to seek to heaven for direction in the great affair of getting a Gospel Minister". The Church voted to invite the ministers of the Association to assist in the work of the day and to invite the congregation to join in the fast. The parish, being divided equally between Arminian and Hopkinsian views, after hearing sixty-three candidates during a period of eight years, finally succeeded in settling on the sixty-fourth, Rev. Isaac Braman. The church at this time consisted of twelve resident male members, and a few females. This number was still further reduced by a secession of three male members together with fifteen members of the parish, who, having presented a remonstrance to the council against Mr. Braman's ordination giving as reasons that "he appears to decline to give that satisfying account of Christian experience which we think we are bound to look for in a candidate for ordination, neither does it appear to us that Mr. Braman manifests anything that he has any internal call to engage in the Greatest Work", withdrew and united with the Baptist society. The council did not find the objections sufficient to decline to ordinate. They set before him the strength of the opposition and left him to decide whether he wished to be ordained under the circumstances and he "declared his fixed resolution to be ordained."

The ordination took place on June 7, 1797, he remained as pastor until his death on Dec. 26, 1858 at the age of eighty-eight and in the sixty-first year of his pastorate. The ministry of our two first ministers had covered the span of the first 125 years of the church in Georgetown.



Rev. Preman was born in 1770 in Norton, Mass., graduated from Harvard and studied divinity under Dr. West of New Bedford. He was a man of good solid talents. "He had excellent common sense and a kind of unostentatious diligence, which was never in a bustle, but showed its energy only in its effects". He usually was chosen moderator at the Association meetings of his day.

During the late years of Rev. Preman's pastorate several colleague pastors were called. Two of these men had, by coincidence, met together as boys with a group of eight others aged 11-15 in Bangor, Maine for weekly prayer and discussions to compare religious experiences. The first, Rev. Enoch Pond, Jr., was ordained Colleague Pastor on Dec. 3, 1842 and after a brief but useful ministry died on Dec. 17, 1846. The second of these boyhood friends, John M. Prince, Jr., was ordained Colleague Pastor on Feb. 3, 1847 and during his term here was soon actively urging progressive action in the operation of the Essex North Conference meetings and appears to have been responsible for action taken to make the meetings more lively and practical. He was taken sick and had to resign his work here, he was dismissed on November 19, 1857 by a council convened for that purpose, and in a few years filled an early grave.

On the same day on which Rev. Prince was dismissed the Rev. Charles Beecher, brother of the better known Henry Ward Beecher, was ordained Colleague Pastor by the same council. Charles Beecher was "tall of frame and crowned with a noble head". "He had a portion of the Beecher genius and a deep emotional nature. He was gifted as a preacher and still more moving in his public prayers. His praying was often just intimate talking with the Heavenly Father in simplest language, out of a heart so surcharged with spiritual emotion that he sometimes had to pause several seconds to gain control of his voice.



You seemed to be, with him, in the very presence and glory of the Mercyseat".

In 1867 eighty-three members withdrew, because of some of the theological views of Rev. Beecher, and organized their own church, known later as the Memorial Church. Their first pastor David D. Marsh, was installed in Sept. 1868. Their building was given by George Peabody, who was unaware of the split and thought he was giving to the original church, in memory of his mother.

In 1872 Rev. Thomas Beeber was called to become a helper to Rev. Beecher, who was failing in health.

The present church building was begun in 1873 and dedicated on December 18, 1874.

Rev. Beeber remained until 1875 and was followed by Rev. Alfred Marsh, who served thru 1877.

Mr. Beecher had tried to resign in 1867, at the time of the split, and again about 1870 but ~~xxx~~he had many devoted and loyal friends who, in spite of the feeling against him in other churches and in their own church, kept him as pastor and provided assistants for him. Another resignation was submitted in 1880 and this time ~~xx~~ was accepted. His leadership had continued through 23 years.

Rev. Levi Rogers served from 1881 through 1888

Rev. Henry McCartney from 1888 through 1898

Rev. Frank P. Estabrook from 1899 to 1901

Rev. Warren F. Low from 1902 to 1910. In 1908 when the church reopened after the summer vacation period the parishioners from the Memorial Church reunited with the First Church. They had been having a hard time to maintain their building which had developed structural defects and was deeded conditionally to the Town, which used it for



town meetings, moving pictures and other events, including the Town's welcome home celebration to the returning Veterans of World War I, and for Memorial Day services. The building was almost entirely destroyed by fire in 1920. Although the tower stood for many years the clock which had become a landmark of the town no longer ran and its striking of the hours was sadly missed.

In 1911 the Rev. Arthur S. Burrill became pastor serving until 1916.

For several of the last few Sundays we have had the pleasure of having Rev. Mr. Pike in our pulpit again. He served from 1916 until 1920 and under his leadership many changes for comfort, convenience and appearance were made. The old original furnaces were replaced with new ones which lasted until the present system was installed recently.

Mr. Pike has expressed his regrets at being unable to be with us tonight but night travel is not agreeable to one of his age.

Most of our more recent ministers are with us here tonight and will speak for themselves in bringing the history up to date.

The Rev. Mr. William O. Conrad, who was with us from 1924 until 1933, and has been our ~~xxxxx~~ Minister Emeritus since that time died on July 23 of this year at Wells, Maine, in his 96th year.

I pray that this review will impel us to continue in the Love of God exhibited by our forefathers and with the courage to build for tomorrow so that one day our children may look at the church we leave to them and feel that we too made a contribution to the furthering of the Kingdom.



# First Congregational Church To Observe 225th Anniversary

GEORGETOWN — The First Congregational Church will observe its 225th anniversary next week, beginning with a service Sunday morning. The Rev. David Pike, pastor from 1916 to 1920, will be the preacher.

A dinner will be held Friday, Oct. 18, at 7 p.m., in the vestry. All living former pastors have been invited to attend with their families. Several officers of the State Congregational Conference are among the invited guests.

The anniversary observance will close with a service Sunday, Oct. 20. The Rev. Arthur Coulthard will be the preacher. Mr. Coulthard, who served as pastor until Sept. 1, is now pastor

## Georgetown

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of the Union Congregational Church, New Bedford.

### PARISH HISTORY

The second parish of Rowley (now Georgetown) was set apart by the General Court, Oct. 1, 1731. Even earlier, in 1729, a rough building was set up on East Main st. near Pillsbury ln., to serve as a meeting house. There were then about 40 families in the parish.

The law in those days required church attendance.

The present First Congregational Church was instituted on Oct. 4, 1732, by 18 members who withdrew from the parish in Byfield.

In the early days the church had a dual organization of "parish," founded in 1731, the "church," founded in 1732. The parish was concerned for many years with the school business, including hiring and fixing the pay of teachers and locating and building schools.

For a long time the parish had in its membership many who

never came into church membership, who nevertheless were active workers.

In recent years, nearly all the people who are members of the parish or society, as it was also called, are also church members. In 1954, the society and church were merged and became incorporated.

### Built In One Day

The original church building was used about 40 years. A new building was built in one day, July 5, 1769. This building stood at the junction of East Main, Elm and Chestnut sts.

The second church was enlarged three times before it was decided to build a new one. This building, the present one at the corner of Andover and Clark sts., was built in 1873 and 1874, and was dedicated in 1874.

The Rev. James Chandler, first minister, and the Rev. Isaac Braiman, the second, were interested in many things. They raised fruit and vegetables, and carried on profitable farms.

After a time a small group who were dissatisfied with the preaching withdrew from the church, calling themselves Separatists.

They transferred to the Baptist Church in Haverhill, and later became the First Baptist Church in Georgetown.

### Split In Membership

In 1864, the Rev. Charles Beecher became the pastor. His theology was advanced in comparison with that to which the people were accustomed. Many were disturbed. Mr. Beecher tendered his resignation, but it was not accepted. A split in membership took place, and a large number withdrew.

Mr. Beecher tried to resign in 1867, and again about 1870. Each time his offer was declined, and he was given an extended leave of absence.

Shortly after the split in membership there came a offer from George Peabody, a financier, to build a church in memory of his mother, who was born on Bailey ln. Her maiden name was Judith Dodge. Mr. Peabody reportedly did not know of the split, and though he was giving a church

to the mother group. The new group got the new church and moved it in January, 1868.

In 1872, the Rev. Thomas Beeber was called as associate pastor. He remained for four years. Then the Rev. Alfred Marsh came to the church for three years. Mr. Beecher again offered a resignation, and in 1880 it was accepted.

The Rev. Levi Rogers was the next minister. He was followed in 1888 by the Rev. Henry R. MacCartney. Mr. MacCartney was a forceful preacher and active in the community.

He was instrumental in forming the Georgetown Moral Improvement Society. More than once he was one of the raiding squad when raids were made on alleged illegal liquor establishments. This Society opened and conducted for a number of years a reading room and a game room.

### Brick Building

The Peabody church was a beautiful brick building, but it had some defect that made rebuilding the outer walls necessary in about 20 years. A few years later more work was required. Still more overhauling became needed, which the people were unable to meet. Costs of repairs had risen, and the people had less means than formerly. As a result, a reunion with the mother body was arranged and completed in 1908, after the older group had been in their present building for 34 years.

Since the end of Mr. MacCartney's pastorate in 1892, the following men have served as pastors: the Rev. Frank P. Estabrook, 1899-1901; the Rev. Warren F. Low, 1902-1910; the Rev. Arthur S. Burrill, 1911-1916; the Rev. David Pike, 1916-1920; the Rev. Hugh Penney, 1921-1923; the Rev. William O. Conrad, 1924-1933; the Rev. Hammond I. Peterson, 1933-1936; the Rev. W. Irving Munroe Jr., 1937-1939; the Rev. Bernard Renner, 1939-1941; the Rev. H. Gardner Anderson, 1941-1944; the Rev. Osmond J. Billings, 1945-1952, and the Rev. Arthur Coulthard, 1953-1957.



## Georgetown

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### 200 At Banquet

Upwards of 200 parishioners were seated Friday evening in the vestry of First Congregational church to attend a banquet marking the 225th anniversary of the founding of the parish. Richard Nicholas was master of ceremonies and introduced those seated at the head table including Rev. and Mrs. Arthur Coulthard of New Bedford, Rev. and Mrs. Osmond Billings of Amherst, Rev. David Pike of Needham, Rev. and Mrs. Hugh Penney of Ayer, Rev. and Mrs. W. Irving Monroe of Dorchester, all former pastors and Rev. and Mrs. George E. Carey of Haverhill, Rev. Mr. Carey is scribe of the North Essex association, and Mr. and Mrs. William Greenwood. The latter representing the state Congregational conference.

All of the former pastors were called on to speak and they related various incidents, some humorous, that happened during their pastorates.

Kenneth Ross, parish clerk, read a history of the church.

One of the highlights of the memorable occasion was a display of historical articles pertaining to the church and its parish provided by Albert Meader. These articles included oil lamps, chirstening bowls, communion sets, pictures, books; also the antique weather vane which topped the old church formerly located on the green on East Main street opposite the home of Everett Spaulding. He also featured in his display several old church programs and letters.

Two former pastors, Rev. Bernard Renner and Rev. H. Gardner Anderson, were unable to be present, but sent letters of congratulations. The banquet, under the direction of Mrs. Dorothy Reed, featured chicken pie.



## Special Service To Mark 225th Anniversary

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The anniversary observance will close with another special service on Sunday, October 20, when the Rev. Arthur Coulthard will be the preacher. Mr. Coulthard who served as pastor of the local church until September 1, 1957, is now pastor of the Union Congregational church, New Bedford.

### Set Apart By General Court

The second parish of Rowley (now Georgetown) was set apart by the General Court on Oct. 1, 1731. Even earlier, in 1729, a rough building was set up on East Main street near Pillsbury Lane to serve as a meeting house.

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(Continued from Page One)

There were then about forty families in the parish.

Everyone went to meeting, not only by inclination, but because the law in those days required church attendance.

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In the early days the church had a dual organization of "Parish" founded in 1731 and "Church" founded in 1732. The Parish was concerned for many years with the school business, including hiring and fixing the pay of teachers and locating and building schools.

For a long time the Parish had in its membership many who never came into Church membership, who nevertheless were active workers and contributed greatly to the strength of the Church, particularly in business and financial matters.

In recent years, nearly all the people who are members of the "Parish" or "Society," as it was also called, are also Church members. Therefore, in 1954 the Society and Church were merged and became incorporated.

The original church building was used about forty years, as a new building was raised on July 5, 1709, the raising being done all in one day. This building stood at the junction of East Main street, Elm and Chestnut streets, and even today the spot is sometimes spoken of as the "Church Green."

Enlarged Three Times

LAWRENCE DAILY EAGLE—SATURDAY, OCT. 12, 1957

The second church was enlarged three times before it was decided to build a new one. This building, the present one at the corner of Andover and Clark streets, was built in 1873 and '74, and dedicated in 1874.

The church was fortunate in many respects in its choice of pastors; the men who served were leaders in thought, highly respected among neighboring churches and by townspeople generally.

Rev. James Chandler, the first minister, and Rev. Isaac Brannan, the second, were interested in many things. They raised fruit and vegetables, and carried on profitable farms.

After a time a small group who were dissatisfied with the preaching withdrew from the church, calling them Separatists.

They then attached themselves to the Baptist church in Haverhill, and later became the First Baptist church in Georgetown.

Mr. Chandler died in the 57th year of his pastorate, and Mr. Brannan died in his 61st year of service here.

### Became Pastor In 1864

In 1864 Rev. Charles Beecher became the pastor. His theology was very advanced in comparison with that to which the people were accustomed. Many of his people were disturbed, and many meetings were held to consider the matter. Mr. Beecher tendered his resignation, but it was not accepted. A split in membership took place, and a large number withdrew.

The disturbance over Mr. Beecher had been taken to the local Association of Churches, and the decision seems to have been against him, as the Georgetown church lost its good standing in the association. Mr. Beecher tried to resign in 1867, and again about 1870. Each time his offer was declined, and he was given an extended leave of absence.

Shortly after the split in membership there came an offer from George Peabody, the great financier, to build a church in memory of his mother, who was born on Bailey lane, her maiden name being Judith Dodge. It has been said that Mr. Peabody did not know of the split, and thought he was giving a church to the mother group, but no writing is available to prove it. Anyway, the new group got the new church and moved in in January, 1868.

### Not In Records

Who preached in the mother church during the leaves of Mr. Beecher does not appear in the records, but in 1872 Rev. Thomas Beeber was called as Associate Pastor. He remained for four years, then the Rev. Alfred Marsh came to the church for three years. Mr. Beecher again offered a resignation, and in 1880 it was accepted.

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ters in town. More than once he was one of the raiding squad when raids were made on alleged illegal liquor establishments. This Society opened and conducted for a number of years a reading room and a game room. These were both enjoyed by many men and boys.

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