

## The West or Second Parish in Rowley-

At the beginning of the year 1700, there were about twenty families settled within the limits of the territory now known as Georgetown. who with one or two possible exceptions, they all attended church in Rowley.

In 1706 a new parish was formed, and a church built near the present Byfield church. to which most of the settlers belonged who located here between 1700 and 1730.

In 1730 "judging that there is a sufficient number to maintain a minister in the Northwest part of our Town" a petition signed by forty two persons was sent to the General Court asking that they might be set off as a separate precinct or Parish. Their request was granted. and the Parish was incorporated Oct 1 1731. It is variously referred to in the records as "the new precinct in the town of Rowley." "The West Parish in Rowley" and "The West or Second Parish in Rowley."

In 1729 a meeting house was built.



near the spot where Mr David Brocklebank's house now stands and services had been held with some regularity. After calling over man to the pastorate who refused - in Jan 1732 they "agreed & voted to call Mr Chandler of Andover to be our minister and it was voted by every man that was then assembled." Mr Chandler accepted their call, and his salary was fixed at 110 £ a year "the money to be stated by the standard according as money shall grow better or worse" The parish also voted to give him 300 £. for settlement - and twenty cords of wood a year - <sup>afterwards described as</sup> "good" ~~the date for his ordination was fixed~~ they decided upon Oct 18 1732 as the date for his ordination - merchantable wood

Oct 4 1732 eighteen men, who had been dismissed from the church in Byfield for the purpose of forming a church in this parish assembled in the meeting house and publicly consented to the covenant. This was read to them by Rev. Mr Hale of Byfield. "The members



all standing together while it was read" they declared their consent to it "by lifting up the hands" whereupon he pronounced them "a church of Christ, regularly constituted and founded in Gospel order"

Mr Chandler's ordination took place Oct 18 1732 - It was conducted in the manner of the present day - and attended by representatives from the churches in Byfield Bradford Boxford Rowley and Newbury who were entertained at the expense of the Parish -

The record closes with these words - "Thus this church was gathered and settled, and a pastor ordained over it, and being thus qualified to proceed as a church of Christ, to admit members, administer seals &c. they act accordingly"

The original members of the church were the following men -

James Chandler	William Fisk	Sam <sup>l</sup> Hammon
Richard Boynton	William Scob	William Adams
John Adams	Thomas Barpee	Richard Thurston
Thomas Plummer	Sam <sup>l</sup> Woodbury	Jeremiah Chaplin
Jos <sup>a</sup> Boynton	Jos <sup>a</sup> Thurston	Job Perry
John Brocklebank	David Pearson	Ebenzer Barpee



In November of the same year four other men who had been dismissed from the church in Byfield, and were prevented by sickness from being present at the incorporation of the church joined themselves with them.

They were John Holmes, Francis Brocklebank, Jon<sup>as</sup> Spafard and Samuel Hazzen.

In December twenty one persons, most of them the wives of the original members were dismissed from the Byfield church and received into the new church.

The Byfield church gave them "some of the furniture for ye Lord's table" and with some individual gifts of pewter and money they were able to "provide what was needful".

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered every sixth Sabbath, each member paying a portion of the expense - and later a certain sum was levied upon each member for the purpose, at the beginning of the year.

Our services were held each Sunday - and as a large part of the congregation



5-

lived a long distance from the meeting house many "fairied between meetings" on the Lord's day. To "prevent profanation of the Sabbath" they adopted the custom of having "a sermon of some Orthodox divine" read between meetings and the tithing men were "desired to tarry at the meeting house to keep order." This custom was continued during the summer months until 1773.

In November 1732 two deacons were chosen, William Fisk and William Seab. who were the only officers for many years. All the records were kept by Mr Chandler. one of the deacons acted as treasurer, and probably the Pastor and Deacons composed the committee for examining candidates for admission to the church.

Cases of discipline were numerous from the first, for the members of the church believed it to be their duty to "watch one another according to the rules of the Gospel" and no member could absent himself from the stated meetings of the church unless known to be hindered by



Providence, "without being called before the church to give his reason - nor could any one do anything inconsistent with his "covenant room" without the matter coming before the church for consideration and admonition. Page after page of the church records is devoted to the details of such cases.

Many persons were suspended from church privileges until they confessed their sins to the satisfaction of the church, and some who did not were excommunicated.

Many persons "recognized the baptismal covenant" at one time and later on were "admitted to full communion."

This was doubtless the same as the Half Way Covenant of which Fiske speaks in his "Beginnings of New England" which entitled persons to the privilege of baptism for their children, and perhaps the right to vote. Fiske says "the exercise of the franchise was made an incident of church membership - Unless a man could take part in the Lord's Supper, as administered in the churches of the colony, he could not vote or hold office"



There were from time to time some persons who grew dissatisfied with Mr Chaudler's preaching claiming that "they were not edified by it". One Timothy Symmes held meetings with some of these people and opposed the church by speaking most reproachfully of a sermon <sup>that the</sup> preached by Mr Chaudler saying "it was ~~doctrine he preached~~ as destructive to souls as he could have invented and as artfully done as if he had been one of the damnedest devils in hell." For this injurious and impious speech the church chose a committee to demand satisfaction of Mr Symmes.

In 1760 quite a company of these disaffected persons withdrew and sustained worship by themselves, calling themselves "Separatists" at first and later Anabaptists. This withdrawal laid the foundation of the Baptist church.

In 1749 the church voted to keep the next Thursday, June 8 as a day of Fasting and prayer on occasion of a Drought. August 1 of the same year was also observed as a fast. But there is no record of an Annual Fast until 1768.

The first notice of an Annual Thanksgiving bears the date of Nov. 21 1771.



Address 2



At the first meeting of the Parish, Oct 5. 1731 they chose a clerk - five assessors - and two collectors, to serve until the following March - At first no Treasurer was elected - But in 1735 Deacon <sup>M<sup>rs</sup></sup> Searl was appointed to receive the money which the town of Bowley was to give the Parish - about 17 £. and the rent of the Parish Thatch Bank - and he was soon after made Treasurer -

In 1733 Lieut Jon<sup>d</sup> Bradstreet was allowed "1 £. for sweeping of the meeting house, and opening and shutting of the door -" But the Parish Officers served without pay for several years. In 1739 it was voted that the Clerk "should have ten shillings for his services" and the assessors should have three pence a pound for the gathering of rates. Later they received "2 £ for taking care of the meeting house and 3 £ for their services in assessing the rents -"

In the summer of 1733 the Parish "provided provision for raising Mr Chawdler's house and barn" which stood upon the spot now occupied by the Humphrey Nelson



house and west of the meeting house.  
 For many years part of the Parish Business  
 was to "lease out the woodlots that fell  
 to the Parish" and to "lease out the Parish  
 Shalots Bank". One half of this shalots bank  
 was in 1759 given to Mr Chandler and  
 the church has a manuscript letter from  
 him regarding the division of the property.

It would seem that the meeting house  
 had not been finished at once. for one of  
 the earliest records is of a vote passed  
 that Leift Jon Spofford should "build the  
 galery stairs, provide joices for the galery  
 floor - and make ~~three~~ seats in the front  
 galery and two seats in the side galeries".  
 In 1741 they decided to "build the three kind  
 seats in the gallery" lay out the room for  
 the pews and sell it to the hiest bidder".  
 Soon after they contracted to "build an adison  
 of thirteen fette four inches". At this time  
 the meeting house was also 'whit washed'  
 and the "glas" mended - and in 1744, they  
 voted to "Reed the meeting house - and  
 paint the pulpit".



In 1758 a proposition to repair the meeting house met with much opposition - inasmuch as many felt that it would be wiser to build a new one. For more than ten years the matter was discussed frequently - and there was wide difference of opinion as to the location to be chosen, many wishing it moved to the "centre of the parish" -

Votes to repair were rescinded - votes to build annulled and finally a committee from outside chosen to advise them - but through it all there was a strong sentiment in favor of building and the location preferred was "at the southeasterly end of Mr Solomon Nelson's house." The matter ran on until Jan 1769 when the purchase of the lot was concluded, and the following March they voted to "set the new meeting house on the southerly side of the road - face to the south, leaving a convenient way on the north side of said house" At the same time it was voted to "build a porch on the easterly end of the house - with one door and one window, with good



stairs up the gallery - Also to "build the four square of a steeple," "where the stairs should go up provided there was no steeple" - This steeple must have been at the westerly end of the house - opposite the porch for before the building was finished it was voted "that there shall be a <sup>tear</sup> of square pews in the galleries - from the steeple floor round the front gallery till it comes to the porch door -"

On July 5, 1769, "they raised their new meeting house frame, and compleatly raised it in one day -"

In October of the same year, they chose a committee to "dignify the pew room in the meeting house and to say how high each tier of pews shall be raised from the floor and to sell the pew room in the house to the highest bidders" - Every one who purchased pew room was "absolutely entitled to the same, to himself, to his heirs and assigns" and the money received from the sale of the pews was used in paying for the old building - The floor space was not all used for pews at first and the next year more were built



5

to defray the charges of building an "eight square and spire to the steeple". When this was finished they decided to add "a weather-cock on top of the spindle of the spire". A key to the meeting house was provided in 1778.

After the new meeting <sup>house</sup> was built - the old one was sold to the Separatists - and taken down and rebuilt at Itale's Corner. After this seat became an independent Baptist Church - the building was again taken down and rebuilt near the old Gordon place - about 1785 and served the church until 1823 when it was replaced by a new one near the old house on the "Parsonage" grounds. This building was removed to its present site in 1838 in the face of much opposition - which was largely responsible for the founding of the Methodist Society in the Byfield District -

In 1781 the parish voted to "congratulate Mr Chandler's husbandry work on his place in good husbandry manner



the ensuing year, and chose a committee to "see Mr Chandler supported" if his salary and the income of his place does not reasonably do it."

From this time on it is difficult to understand just what were the relations between pastor and people. Mr Chandler was now an old man, and although he received a salary until the time of his death - the records several times refer to "treating with Mr Chandler respecting his further support" and money was raised to pay for preaching by candidates "by way of assistance to Mr Chandler." During all these years new members were constantly being added to the church, and many were dismissed to the fellowship of other churches, two were dismissed to become pastors of churches. Mr Daniel Choplin to the church in Groton Mass. and Mr J<sup>r</sup> Seab to the church in Salisbury N. H.

Many persons recognized the "baptismal covenant" at one time and later on were received to "full communion" - This is doubtless



7  
the same as the "Half Way Covenant" of which Fiske speaks in his "Beginnings of New England" which probably entitled persons to the right of baptism for their children and perhaps the right to vote.

Fiske says "The exercise of the franchise was made an incident of church membership. Unless a man could take part in the Lord's supper, as administered in the churches of the colony, he could not vote or hold office. Church and state, parish and town were thus virtually identified."

Mr Chandler died April 19, 1789 in the 83<sup>rd</sup> year of his age. The parish chose a committee "to make suitable provision for his funeral in the most decent manner they can" and appropriated 15 £ 10s "to defray the charges" - He left his place by will to the parish, on condition that they pay 200 £ for it, and clear it of taxes during Modow Chandler's life. They decided at first to accept it - But finally disposed of it to Mr Solomon Nelson on the same terms. The house was burned in 1825 -



During <sup>the</sup> time between Mr Chandler's death and Mr <sup>placard</sup> Braman's settlement in 1797, sixty four candidates and pulpit supplies made their gifts - known to the parish - and Mr Braman was finally chosen, in the face of such strong opposition that the ordination exercises were delayed until evening -

June 5 1797 was the date of this great event which was attended by people from far and near. Every one in the parish kept open house. one hospitable family entertaining three hundred guests -

Booths and refreshment wagons supplied food. and it is even reported that side shows of various kinds did not lack patronage and that liquor circulated freely even in the meeting house -

Certainly times <sup>after</sup> have changed for the better!

~~Between the time of Mr Chandler's death and Mr Braman's settlement.~~  
the church records are very meager - only a few items of unusual interest finding a place <sup>until</sup> there. After Mr Braman assumed his duties <sup>when</sup> - the records were kept by him.



and it was not  
 until about 1848, when he was probably  
 too old to do it longer - and at that time  
 that the first clerk of the church was chosen.  
 There are frequent references to disagreements  
 and dissatisfactions. But in those  
 days it apparently did not occur to  
 any one to sever the relations between  
 pastor and people - and his <sup>long</sup> pastorate  
 only ended with his death in 1858.

In 1816 extensive repairs were made on  
 the meeting house, and the Paul Revere  
 bell which now hangs in the First Church  
 Steeple was purchased and hung.  
 There is an itemized statement of the  
 cost in the Parish records, with the names  
 of the donors. Capt Benj Adams headed  
 the list with \$61.00 - and Cuffey Dole  
 with a single dollar, ended it -

A stove was set up in 1822. But there had  
 been no heat in the building until that  
 time. Later Mr Paul Spofford gave them  
 another on an improved pattern -

In 1832 a complete change of the  
 interior was made by taking out the



substituting modern slips for the old square pews, and removing the pulpit to the easterly end of the building.

The Universalist Society was formed in 1830 and after holding services in a school house for a year or two - they built a church on the site of the Central School.

Here they had preaching about half the time for a number of years - but after a time the interest waned - and in 1855 they disposed of the property to the town - the church was rebuilt into the dwelling on Central St. known as the Wm Boynton House - and the lot was used for the Town Hall -

Later they held services and Sunday School in the hall - but they never had a Church organization and after a few years disbanded.

Mr Braman served his people until 1842, when it became necessary to furnish a colleague - as the parish must have been very large by this time - and he was an old man.

Their choice fell upon Mr Enoch Pond -



a young man of great promise

11

of Bangor, Maine, who served them only four years - and died at the early age of twenty six -

Soon after his settlement, the church celebrated the Fiftieth anniversary of Mr. Brawley's ordination - on which occasion the aged man himself preached as sermon. Many outside guests were present - and he received many gifts - and a banquet was given in his honor - During Mr. Pond's ministry, the meeting house was widened eleven feet on each side by a one story extension the entire length of the audience room - making the "wings" some of us remember -

Furnaces also were put in, a new pulpit and furnishings - the gift of Mr. George Peabody replaced the old - and a clock was given by Mrs. Aphie Tenney -

About this time also - the "Female Benevolent Society" was organized - their first work was the purchase of the building which is now the home of <sup>vestry -</sup> Mr. Jephthah Adams, for a much needed <sup>vestry -</sup> chapel.



This was used until 1852, when it was sold for a dwelling and occupied by Rev John Paine Mr Poud's successor, and the same year the chapel, afterward the Catholic Church was built.

Rev. Charles Beecher, the third colleague was settled in 1857, and became <sup>fully</sup> pastor after Mr Braman's death in 1858.

In 1864 the church divided, and the Memorial Church was formed, the organization worshipping in the chapel, until their church building - the gift of Mr George Peabody was ready for occupancy a few years later. Rev. D. D. Marsh was their pastor for twenty years.

Mr Beecher remained pastor of the old church, and <sup>while</sup> ~~but~~ on account of ill health <sup>he</sup> was obliged to give up active work in 1870. The pastoral relation continued for a number of years, and he several times resumed the duties for a few months at a time.

The old meeting house was used until after the settlement of Rev. Thomas Barber as a colleague with Mr Beecher - when



the present First Church was built and occupied in 1874 - and the old one torn down.

After forty years of separate <sup>existence</sup> ~~work~~ the union of the Memorial and First churches gives us a church, <sup>organization</sup> nearly 200 yrs old - which should make for righteousness in our little town.

It is not too soon to begin to think of and plan for a bicentennial celebration of its founding - May we all be there! -



In presenting this short survey of the  
history of the Church, I feel like apologizing  
for its fragmentary character.

This is made necessary by the large  
amount of interesting matter obtainable  
on the subject - and the difficulty of  
sifting and culling to make a connected  
whole which could be laid before you  
in the short time allotted to me.

So I ask your indulgence if in parts I  
give little but facts and dates - and if  
many of the phrases sound stiff and  
stilted - because I have quoted from the  
old Church and Parish records.