

CHAPTER IX.

ECCLESIASTICAL—CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AND CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY IN WAITSFIELD, 1796-1830.

On June 27, 1796, a Congregational Church was gathered in Waitsfield, the first church of any denomination to be organized within the present confines of Washington County. The religious life of this community developed with exceptional rapidity and strength. At the first meeting held for the organization of the town a committee was chosen to "Lay out a Meeting Hous Spoat and Other Public Yard," and at the second town meeting held on July 28, 1794, John Barnard, Benjamin Wait and William Joiner were chosen a committee to procure a preacher, and it was voted to "raise twelve pounds in wheat to pay for preaching."

It need occasion no surprise to find the State and Church so closely interwoven, for under the Act of October 18, 1787, a majority of the inhabitants of a town could organize for the support of the gospel and assess taxes for the purpose upon all legal voters unless an elaborate certificate of dissent were filed, and it was not until the passage of the Act of October 26, 1797, that voluntary associations for the support of the gospel were recognized. Thus it comes about that until the organization of a Congregational Society in 1800 the town records are the source of information concerning the material side of divine worship, and the Church as a distinct religious organization deals only with matters purely ecclesiastical.

Religious services upon the Sabbath were commenced as early as 1793, under the leadership of John Barnard, a deacon in the Shelburne Church, from which he came. It is certain that there was some preaching during the year 1794, furnished doubtless by itinerant missionaries, for at the March meeting in 1795 the town voted that the last year's tax be reduced so as to "no more than pay for what preaching they had the last year," and the tax for the ensuing year was reduced to 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ payable in wheat at 4s. per bushel.

It has been a subject of much speculation as to where the early church services were held, but a careful examination of

the records leads to the conclusion that the first were at General Wait's house or barn. A change was apparently made in August, 1795, as we find it recorded that, "it was moved and seconded to see if General Wait's be a place for holding meetings on Sunday—past in the negative." In the following March, however, it was voted "that the meetings on Sunday shall be held as nigh the centre as possible," and "voted and agreed that Benjamin Wait's barn be the place for holding of meetings on Sunday."

The place of meeting continued to be a matter of controversy. In 1797 it was fixed at William Palmer's house, and in September, 1797, at the request of Francis Dana, it was voted to return to General Wait's barn. In that year an attempt was made to join with the Northeast School District in building a combination meeting-house and school-house on the Common, but the district withdrew and the town later repudiated its contract with Salah Smith and refused to pay him for the frame which he had erected.

The opening record of the church organization reads:

"Waitsfield, 27th of June, 1796. This day a Church of Christ was embodied in this town by the Rev. Mr. Ebenezer Kingsbury, of Jericho, on the following confession of faith and covenant."

The Covenant is signed:

John Barnard	Bissell Phelps
William Joiner	Daniel Wilder
Ezekiel Hawley	Eli Skinner
Jared Skinner	Daniel Taylor
	Samuel Bayley

"The following united afterward:"

Jerusha Joiner	Abigail Rider
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John Barnard was moderator of the meeting, and Bissell Phelps was clerk.

No articles of practice were adopted, the church voting to "take the Bible for our rule." Indeed it was not until October 22, 1801, that the rules for procedure in discipline, necessary and much used in those days, were adopted.

During the whole period that we have been considering there was no settled pastor, and church services were conducted and the sacraments administered only by the itinerant preacher or the pastor of some neighboring church. The names of many

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of these men are now lost, but among them were Rev. Ebenezer Kingsbury, of the church in Jericho already referred to; Rev. Martin Tullar, of Royalton, a brother-in-law of William Joiner; Rev. Elijah Lyman, of Brookfield, and Rev. Jedediah Bushnell, a brother of Doud Bushnell, and who was for a time a missionary, and was later settled for many years over the church in Cornwall, Vt. In the winter of 1799-1800 he spent several weeks in Waitsfield, and through his successful preaching the membership of the church was doubled. Encouraged by this increase in numbers, the Church was led to make provision for the support of a settled pastor. Hence it was deemed advisable to form a society in accordance with the statute, under whose auspices the services of the Congregational Church might be conducted, and on September 27, 1800, the Congregational Society of the Town of Waitsfield was organized, and has since that date had charge of financial matters connected with Congregational worship in the town, strictly religious matters being still in the control of the Church and both organizations uniting in a call to a pastor.

The warning for the meeting referred to called upon the Inhabitants of Waitsfield to meet at the house of Ezra Wait on the date named and the society was organized by the election of the following officers:

Benjamin Wait, jr.,	Clerk.
Col. Elias Taylor,	Treasurer.
Jared Skinner	} Assessors.
Levi Wilder	
Samuel Bayley	
Phineas Rider,	
John Barnard	} Committee of the Society.
Salah Smith	
Simeon Stoddard	

The Act of October 18, 1787, was repealed by the legislature of 1797. The Act of October 26, 1797, to which occasional reference will hereafter be made, recognized and permitted voluntary associations of persons for the maintenance of social and public worship, but the freedom in the exercise of religious beliefs thus secured by the first section of the act was in large measure nullified by following sections, which provided that whenever any number, exceeding twenty-five, of the inhabitants of a town, being of a similar sect, should think themselves able to build a church, a meeting should be called by the town clerk,

at which the inhabitants of the town might organize themselves into a society for the support of the gospel, to be governed in all matters by a majority vote, except that in the determination of a site for a meeting-house, the hiring or settlement of a minister, and the levying of a tax for the support of services, an affirmative vote of two-thirds of those present was required, with further provision that there must be a minimum affirmative vote of 25. Furthermore, every legal voter was assumed to be of the religious opinion and hence subject to the taxes of the society, unless *before or at the time* of its organization he presented a certificate signed by a minister, deacon, elder, moderator or clerk of the sect or denomination to which he belonged showing him to actually be of a different religious opinion; and any person afterwards moving into a town was so bound unless he filed a similar certificate within a year, such certificates to be recorded on the town records.

This Act, it is apparent, gave great advantage to the first society within a town to organize under its provisions.

Few if any certificates of dissenters provided for in the Act of 1797 are found in the Waitsfield records, but these provisions of the statute provoked much opposition throughout the state, on the ground that they violated the Bill of Rights. Consequently the legislature of 1801 passed an amendment permitting any inhabitant to dissent by filing for record at the time of the meeting a declaration in following form:

"I do not agree in religious opinion with a majority of the inhabitants of this town."

There was a further provision that any person once a member of the dominant society could thereafter dissent upon paying up back taxes.

Funds necessary to conduct the affairs of the society were raised by a tax levied by the society assessors upon the taxable list of all members. The first assessment (1801) was at the rate of two cents, six and $\frac{1}{5}$ mills, on each dollar of a list amounting to \$6383.95. The sum so raised was sufficient to pay the salary of the minister, amounting to \$166.66, and leave a working balance of 59 cents in the treasury.

This method of raising funds continued for more than forty years, but the formation of other religious societies and the increasing annual budget rapidly increased the burden of taxation for those who remained, and in 1843, when Rev. Calvin

Selden became acting pastor, taxation was abandoned, and funds have since been raised by voluntary subscription.

The Rev. William Salisbury, a native of Braintree, Mass., (born April 6, 1775) and a graduate of Harvard College in the class of 1795, was preaching in the town at the formation of the Society, and on November 10, 1800, it was voted to hire him on "probation, for a time." On June 3, 1801, the Church asked Mr. Salisbury "to settle in this society in the work of the ministry," and on July 31, the Society concurred in this action by an almost unanimous vote. The following proposals were drafted and presented to Mr. Salisbury:

"That the Society give Mr. Salisbury Lott No. 112 Drawn to the Minister Right in Waitsfield on Condition of his Settling with us in the work of the Ministry, and likewise the sum of One Hundred and Sixty-six Dollars and Sixty-six Cents as a Sallary for the first year, And afterwards to Increase yearly as the Grand List of Said Society shall Increase, untill the sum ammount to Two Hundred and Sixty-six dollars and Sixty-six cents, which is to be his stated yearly Salary forever thereafter. And that his salary be paid One-half in Money and the other half in the following articles of Produce, viz: Wheat, Rye, Indian Corn, Flax, Butter, Cheese, Beef and Pork."

The candidate requested certain amendments, chief of which was that in lieu of one hundred dollars of his salary for the first year the Society clear him ten acres of land, but all these requests were refused, although a leave of absence for four Sabbaths a year was allowed "to visit his Friends."

The Council of Ordination convened at the house of James Heaton on October 6, 1801, and credentials of the candidate were presented from the Plymouth Association and from his pastor, Rev. Ezra Weld. Public services, at which the sermon was preached by Rev. Elijah Lyman of Brookfield, were held upon the Common, and were in charge of Salah Smith, Elias Taylor, Benjamin Wait, jr., James Heaton and Phineas Rider, who were chosen a committee to "see that suitable preparations are made for ordination, and to preserve order on that day."

A few days later articles of practice were adopted for the first time, and it seems probable that to an undue application of these may be ascribed the rapidly waning effectiveness of the pastor.

On December 28, 1801, deacons were elected by the Church, and John Barnard and Moses Fisk were chosen. From that

day down to the writing of these lines (exactly 107 years) there has never ceased to be a Deacon Fisk in this church, of lineal descent from its first deacon of the name.

From the earliest days Daniel Witherbee Wilder led the singing in the church, and gave the key with an ancient pitch-pipe still in existence. The first organized effort for singing came in February, 1803, when Mr. Wilder, with Jennison Jones and David Phelps, were chosen a committee "to direct in singing." The congregation had no books, and followed the leader who "lined" the psalm and pitched the tune for every line. Within a few years Mr. Wilder had "picked of" a tune book, and the members of the choir which he organized were allowed to copy this; then came John Burdick's bass viol, which was replaced after his death by one purchased in 1840 expressly for the church at a cost of \$25, and finally the church organ appeared, as an aid to vocalists. After Mr. Wilder's term Asaph Burdick was choir leader, and after 1829 there was a singing master. Among those who have held the position may be named Park Taylor, eldest son of Rev. Preston Taylor, Mr. Danielson, Ezra Osgood Joslin, N. L. Phillips, David Blakeley, James Stone, David M. Phelps, A. M. Batés, Richardson J. Gleason and Charles Henry Newcomb.

As already noted, the place of holding meetings was from the first a source of frequent controversy. The Society at its second meeting, on November 10, 1800, voted that the Common was the proper location for a meeting-house. A year later it was voted to hold the meetings in Shubel Burdick's house, and meetings were held either at his home or at the house of John Burdick until May, 1802, when it was decided to move them to the house of Ezra Jones (near the Common) for a year. In that year came the second unsuccessful attempt to build a meeting-house. On January 1 the Society chose Benjamin Wait, John Barnard, James Heaton, Samuel Bayley, Bissell Phelps, Moses Fisk and John Burdick as a committee to consider the matter, and on January 14 they reported in favor of the immediate construction of a building 54 x 46 feet in size, money therefor to be raised by selling the pews. This recommendation was adopted, and Benjamin Wait, Phineas Rider, John Barnard, Moses Fisk and Salah Smith were chosen to "obtain an accurate Draught (or plan) of said House." About a month later John Burdick, Salah Smith and Moses Fisk were

chosen a committee to sell the pew ground, and posted the following:

Notification.

Those gentlemen who wish to become proprietors in the Meeting House proposed to be built in this Town by purchasing pews in said House are desired to call on us at the Dwelling House of Mr. Ezra Wait in Waitsfield, on the 15th day of March Instant at Ten O'Clock in the forenoon, at which time and place we propose to open a vendue for the purpose of selling pews to those who please to become purchasers.

Waitsfield, March 1st, 1802.

Salah Smith
John Burdick } Committee of Sale.
Moses Fisk

Conditions of sale were in part announced as follows:

"It is our opinion that the Business cannot be prosecuted with success unless one-fourth part of the pay be made in Cash for the purpose of procuring Nails, Glass, and Rum for the raising, etc. We conclude that another fourth part may be paid in such Articles of Lumber as will be necessary for building, to be delivered on the place of Building at such time or times as shall hereafter be expressed—And as it appears probable that some articles necessary to be had and likewise Workmen, may be obtained for such pay as Neat Cattle and Wheat, we propose that one-fourth part be paid in Neat Cattle, and the Remaining fourth in Good Merchantable Wheat."

One-half of the cash payment was to be made by January 1, 1803, in order "that nails, glass, etc., may be procured and brought on by Sleighing," but remaining payments were apportioned over a period extending to January 1, 1807.

At the sale of pews conducted by Salah Smith as vendue master, a plan of a building 40 x 50 was exhibited, and pews were sold at prices ranging from \$111 to \$21. Thirty-two pews on the floor (there were 36) and twenty in the gallery, were sold at an aggregate of \$3872.

Benjamin Wait was the purchaser of no less than seven pews, at a cost of \$628. James Heaton, Shubel Burdick and Levi Wilder were also heavy purchasers.

The controversy as to location would not down, however, and the matter dragged. In December, 1803, the plans were modified to provide for a building 40 x 44, with square roof, posts 24 feet long, and a porch 16 feet square, the funds therefor to be raised by a tax on the polls and list of the Society, but this was reconsidered January 24, 1804.

On December 30, 1805, it was again voted to build a "House for Public Worship," but only after a controversy which led General Wait to forthwith register his formal dissent and withdrawal from the Society, an act that he did not retract until Mr. Chandler became pastor in 1810.

Early in 1806 a plan of building 40 x 54, with 24-foot posts was adopted, and on Christmas Day of that year it was voted that the proposed building be "forever under the control of the Congregational Society." Bissell Phelps, Moses Fisk, Aaron Minor, Jennison Jones, and Jared Skinner were chosen a building committee. Funds were to be raised if possible, by sale of pews, any deficiency to be raised by a tax on the pews, and funds were to be forthcoming in three annual payments, beginning October 1, 1807. A formal vote as to location was taken, and the Common chosen by a vote of 40 to 18. Two weeks later, on January 8, 1807, the town voted to permit the Society "to build a meeting-house on the spot of ground known by the name of Waitsfield Common."

In order that the necessary funds might become promptly available through a sale of the pews, a numbering committee was appointed, which reported as follows:

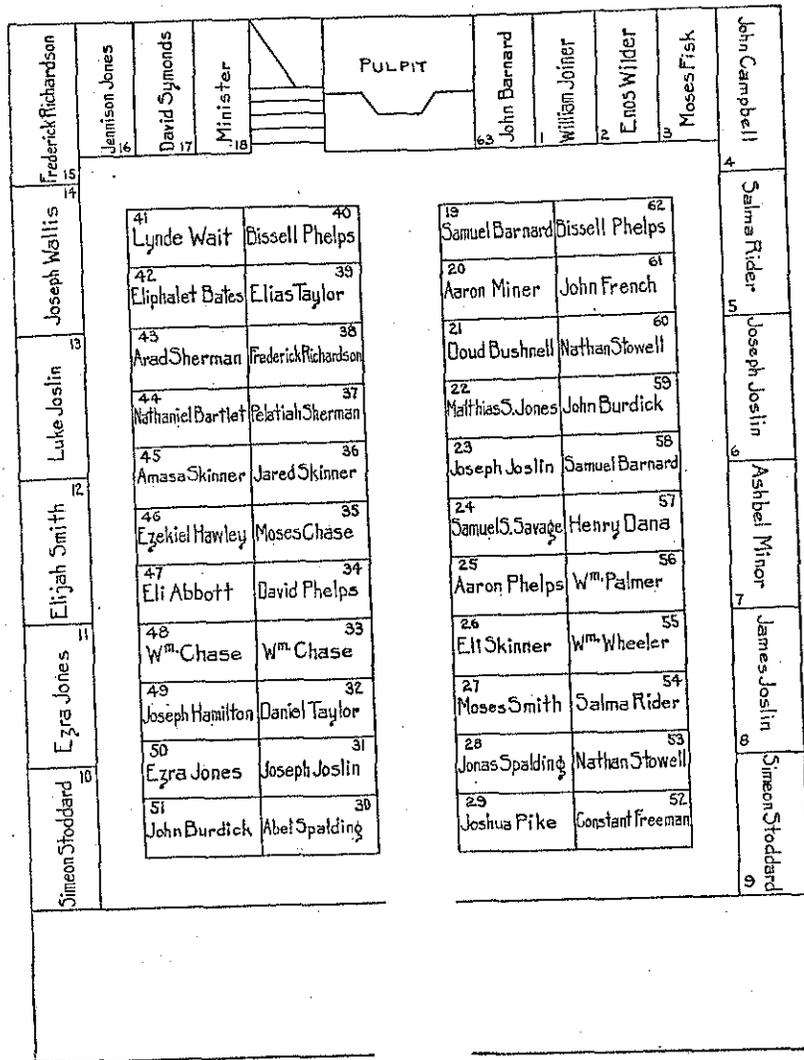
Pews Numbered.

This may certify that the Pews on the Plan of Waitsfield Meeting House are Numbered in the following Order, namely, beginning with No. 1, the second wall Pew east of the Pulpit, and running around with the Sun to the Pulpit, thence down on the east side of the broad Ally from the Pulpit to the Door, and up on the West side of the Broad Ally, thence down on the west range of the Body pews and up on the east range of the said Body pews, then the pew between No. 1 and the Pulpit, making sixty-three Pews on the lower floor.

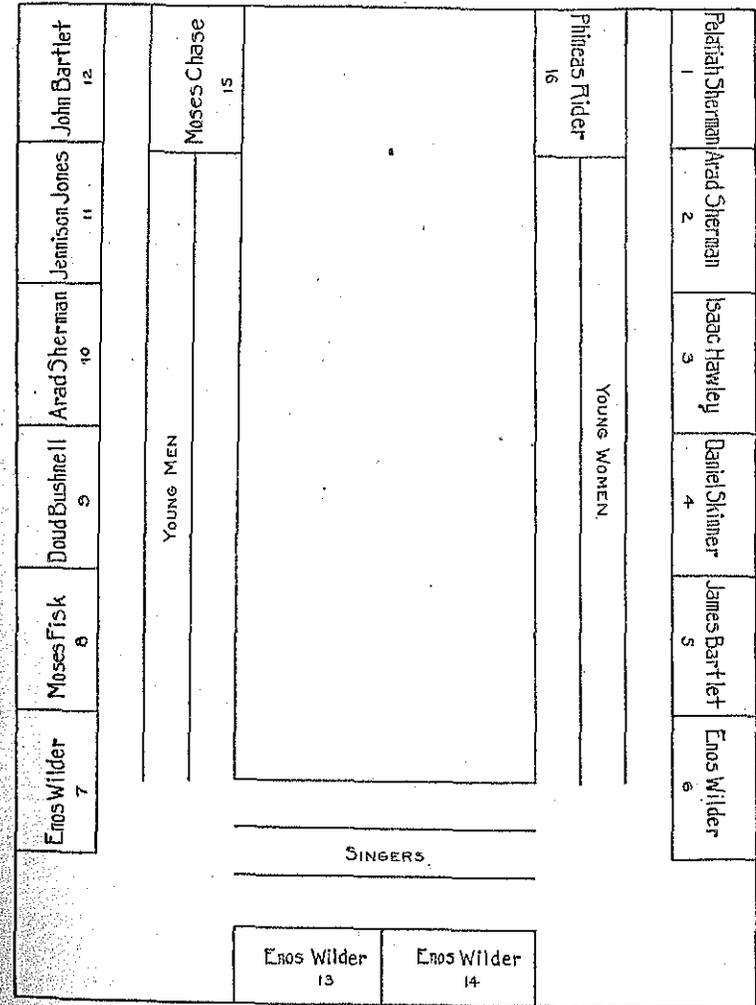
And the Gallery Pews beginning with No. 1 at the North-east Corner of the House, and running south to the stairs, thence on the west side from the stairs to the northwest Corner of the House, and No. 13 west and 14 East in the front of the Gallery, and the two Pews at the north end of the Seats, No. 15 on the west, and No. 16 on the east side, making sixteen Pews in the Gallery.

Waitsfield, July 15th, 1807.

Bissell Phelps }
Moses Fisk } Committee.
Aaron Minor }
Jared Skinner }
Jennison Jones }



FLOOR PLAN OF FIRST CONGREGATIONAL MEETING HOUSE.



GALLERY PLAN OF FIRST CONGREGATIONAL MEETING HOUSE

Vendues for the sale of pews were held on various dates during the year 1807, and prices ranged from \$63 down to \$15.25, the total amount realized from the sales being \$2447.61. Pew 18, next to the pulpit, was not sold, and by vote of September 18, 1809, was reserved forever for the use of the minister.*

The building was commenced in 1807, but the work progressed slowly, and not until December 21, 1809, was the edifice dedicated, with a sermon by Rev. Chester Wright, of Montpelier, the Church being at that time without a pastor of its own. Not until March 26, 1811, was the building committee, after showing a balance of \$13.25 and 70 lbs. white lead in their hands, settled with and released from their bond of \$5000 to expend the funds legally, although it is certain that religious and town meetings were held in the edifice as early as the spring of 1808. Unfortunately no picture of this meeting-house is extant except a drawing from memory by one whose early days were associated with it, but the original plan of the pews is on record and herein reproduced.

The exterior of this first House of God was plain and devoid of paint except for the numerals "1807" in funereal black over the door. There was no steeple, although in September, 1807, the society gave permission to certain pew owners to build one 14 feet square and 44 feet high "provided they make doors into it." The entrance was upon the southerly side, and, as one entered the lobby, stairs continued up on either hand into the gallery, where sat the young people, young men on the minister's right, young women on the left and singers in front. The pulpit, which stood at the rear end, was considerably elevated, and was reached by a flight of some 13 steps. Under the pulpit was the seat where the deacons sat at communion, or when the service was in their hands. Attached to the rail of this seat were table leaves which could be raised and braced to form the communion table. The pews were high and straight, with spindle-work around the top of all four sides.

The building was unheated, and our grandmothers kept their toes from freezing with the old-fashioned foot stoves filled with coals procured by the boys from neighboring firesides. Indeed, it was not until November, 1829, that any move was

*For names of original pew-holders in the First Congregational Meeting-house see plans of the first floor and gallery.

made to warm the house, subscriptions being solicited for the purpose in that year and for several years thereafter. On November 5, 1838, the society voted "to buy the pew of Elisha Benton Richardson for the purpose of erecting a stove," and "erected" it was, in a manner that afforded little comfort, by laying planks across the top of the pew and setting a long-legged stove on these.

Horse sheds were built on the westerly side between the meeting-house and the old cemetery, the town having elected Jennison Jones, John Burdick and Salah Smith as a committee to designate the site in September, 1807.

On October 24, 1807, the General Assembly of Vermont, in spite of opposition from the established societies, repealed all the provisions of the Act of October 26, 1797, and the amendments of 1801, except those of Section 1, which provided for the support of the gospel through voluntary associations. This compelled a reorganization of the first society, and on December 28, 1807, an agreement was signed for the formation of "Congregational Society in Waitsfield," with a preamble which indulged in these opening words:

"Whilst the hearts of the sincere lovers of the gospel of Salvation which bringeth glad tidings of great joy to all people are palpitating for the havoc made in this state of a considerable number of religious societies through legislative interference; still a source of consolation remains when we look over the pages of the Sacred Volume, and explore the traces and operations of the spirit of God, that lighteth like a spark on the conscience of men, and Kindleth into a flame of love."

To that agreement the following names were signed:

James Heaton	Nathan Stowell
Edmund Rice	Moses Smith
Thomas Green	J. Burdick
David Phelps	P. Sherman
Isaac Hawley	Jonas Holden
Daniel Taylor	Matthias S. Jones
Joseph Wait	Christopher Bartlett
Jira Wing	F. Richardson
John Campbell	Bissell Phelps
Levi Wilder	Elias Taylor
Ashbel Minor	Simeon Stoddard
Andrew B. Minor	Salah Smith
Samuel Anderson	Jennison Jones
James Bartlett	Daniel W. Wilder
William Joiner	John Barnard

Eli Abbott
Daniel Skinner
Jared Skinner
David Symonds
Joseph Wallis
Charles Skinner
William Chase
Luke Joslin
Nathaniel Bartlett
Alexander Phelps
William Palmer

Moses Fisk
Enos Wilder
Elijah Smith
Doud Bushnell
Aaron Minor
Samuel Barnard
Joseph Joslin
Salma Rider
James Joslin
Ezra Jones
James Heaton, jr.

Eli Skinner

The first officers of the new association were Ezra Jones, clerk; Alexander Phelps, treasurer; Elijah Smith, collector; Jennison Jones, John Burdick and Salah Smith, assessors; Jonas Holden, Bissell Phelps and John Barnard, Prudential committee.

This short-lived society was dissolved on May 8, 1809, and on the same day "The Congregational Society in Waitsfield" was organized with a constitution prepared by Rev. Mr. Salisbury, Bissell Phelps, Jared Skinner, Salah Smith and Dea. Moses Fisk, although Mr. Salisbury had been already dismissed by a council held on January 3, 1809, which elected Rev. James Hobart of Berlin standing moderator, in order that pastoral leadership might remain unbroken. This procedure was clearly an attempt to breath new life into the dry bones of a dying church. The disturbance incident to the location of the meeting-house, the irksomeness of the general tax for the support of the ministry, and the lack of harmony between the departing pastor and his flock had all contributed to a condition of things which led the Council to "sympathize" with the Church in its "present unhappy difficulties" and to express the wish: "May you yet see good days."

The officers of this, the third society, were Salah Smith, clerk; Eli Skinner, treasurer; John Campbell, collector; Aaron Phelps, Levi Wilder and Joseph Joslin, jr., assessors; Bissell Phelps, Moses Fisk and Aaron Minor, committee.

On May 31, 1809, Mr. Salisbury being about to take his departure, Dea. John Barnard was chosen moderator of the Church, and on June 8 a meeting to which all members of the Society and all "female inhabitants" (the first recorded meeting in which women participated) were invited to consider "the situation of the Town of Waitsfield in regard to its

prospects of Reinstating a preached gospel." The need of united action was clear and the committee of the Society was soon instructed to procure preaching for the summer by "some well recommended candidate." Rev. Amariah Chandler, fresh from college and theological studies, was employed.

From the beginning the wonderful influence of this strong man made itself manifest. Forthwith dissension gave place to united effort and lack of interest became eager enthusiasm. In August the committee was instructed to ask Mr. Chandler to remain for an indefinite period, and on October 16 the Church extended to him a unanimous call to become its pastor. Public notices were posted inviting all inhabitants of the town to attend a meeting of the Society on October 31, and express their views. General Wait and other old-time leaders renewed their allegiance. The Society united with the Church in its call, and voted to make the following proposition to Mr. Chandler:

"That we offer Mr. Chandler for a settlement the sum of Five Hundred Dollars, to be paid in three Annual payments, that is, Two Hundred Dollars at the expiration of one year, Two Hundred at the expiration of two years, and One Hundred at the expiration of three years from the time of his ordination. And that we offer him the sum of Two Hundred Dollars Salary for the first year, and to rise Ten Dollars each succeeding year for the Term of Ten Years, and there to Rest as a yearly Salary thereafter."

The offer was accepted, and a council called for the ordination to be held on February 6 and 7, 1810. John Burdick, Jennison Jones, Elias Taylor, Lewis Holden and Edmund Rice were the committee in charge, and instructed "to Keep order on that day." So important was the occasion deemed to be that its minutes were entered upon the town records as well as upon the books of the religious society.

Rev. Amariah Chandler's Credentials.

Waitsfield, February 6, 1810.

Pursuant to letters missive from the Congregational Church of Christ in Waitsfield, an Ecclesiastical Council convened at said Waitsfield on the 6th day of February, 1810, at the house of Gen. Benjamin Wait, for the purpose of affording their assistance in the ordination of Mr. Amariah Chandler to the pastoral care of said Church. Present from the Church in Brookfield, Rev. Elijah Lyman, Pastor, Brother Phinehas Kellogg, delegate; from the Church in Shelburne (Mass.) Brother Ezra Fisk, delegate; from the Church in Berlin Rev. James Hobart, Pastor, Brother

Levi Hills, delegate; from the Church in Williamstown Rev. Nathan Waldo, Pastor; from the Church in Braintree Rev. Ammi Nichols, Pastor, Deacon Samuel Bass, delegate; from the church in Montpelier Rev. Chester Wright, Pastor, Brother Amasa Brown, delegate.

The Rev. Elijah Lyman was chosen Moderator, and the Rev. Chester Wright Scribe. The Council then united in an address to the Throne of Grace, by the Moderator. The Rev. Jonathan Hovey, late Pastor of the Church in Waterbury, & the Rev. Jonathan Hovey, Jun., Pastor of the Church in Weybridge, being providentially present, were, by a vote of the Council, the Church and the Pastor elect concurring therein, invited to take a seat with the council. The council then proceeded to hear an account of the doings of the Church & Society, relative to their invitation to Mr. Chandler to settle with them in the ministry, the provision made for his temporal support, & of his acceptance of their proposals. Proper testimonials were also exhibited of the regular standing of Mr. Chandler in the Church of Christ, and also of his being duly licensed to preach the Gospel. An inquiry was then made of the Pastor Elect respecting his theological knowledge & experimental acquaintance with the Gospel of Christ. The Council being satisfied of the literary & religious qualifications of the Candidate, voted unanimously to proceed to ordination, at the Meeting-house tomorrow, at eleven o'clock A. M., and that the several parts be performed as follows (viz.) The Rev. Nathan Waldo make the introductory prayer; the Rev. Elijah Lyman, preach the sermon; The Rev. Jonathan Hovey make the consecrating prayer; The Rev. Messrs. Lyman, Hovey, Hobart & Nichols impose hands; The Rev. James Hobart give the charge; The Rev. Ammi Nichols give the right hand of fellowship; The Rev. Jonathan Hovey Jun. make the concluding prayer. The council then voted to adjourn to this place tomorrow at 8 o'clock, Feb. 7, 1810. Opened according to adjournment, and heard a sermon read by Mr. Chandler, the Pastor Elect. Voted that the above be adopted as the true minutes of the proceedings of this council.

Attest:

Chester Wright, Scribe.

Proceeded to the meeting-house agreeably to the vote of the Council, where the several parts were performed agreeably to the above arrangements, & the Pastor elect thus duly ordained Pastor of the Congregational Church & Society in Waitsfield.

Attest:

Chester Wright, Scribe.

Rec'd for record April 5th, 1810, & recorded April 19 1810.
By Edmund Rice,
Town Clerk.

Thus did this church enter upon a golden period of its existence.

Amariah Chandler was born in Deerfield, Mass., on October 27, 1782, the son of Moses and Persis (Harris) Chandler. His father was born in Lancaster, Mass., but moved early to Deerfield, where he ran a small store and was keeper of the ferry at Pine Hill. He also saw service during the last French War. Amariah was the youngest child, and in early life was rather delicate, but while a mere youth he became convinced from listening to stories of the hardship and suffering of the early settlers and the soldiers in the early wars, that to fit himself to become a soldier he must accustom himself to hardship and privation. To this end he dressed thinly, slept on the floor, in barns, or even on the ground, went barefooted until the ground was frozen, and indulged in hard manual labor, until all this became a fixed principle in his life. Thus from a puny child he became a large and robust man.

From an early age he had dedicated himself to the ministry, and for that reason declined an appointment to West Point. After fitting for college he sought the University of Vermont on foot, with all his worldly belongings tied in a handkerchief, influenced in his choice of a college, no doubt, by the fact that his oldest sister, Persis, the wife of Daniel Wilder, was a resident of Burlington. Entering as a junior in 1805 he graduated in 1807, and at once applied himself to theological studies under the guidance of Rev. Dr. Theophilus Packard of Shelburne, Mass., to which town his parents had removed while he was a child. In November, 1808, he was ordained as a Congregational clergyman.

When we consider how many of the active members of the Waitsfield church had come from Shelburne and vicinity it is not strange that they turned in their extremity to this promising young man, whom they had watched almost from boyhood, and asked him and his young wife to settle among them. From the beginning his was a sure hand upon the helm. A born leader, he was in truth the Shepherd of his flock, and wrought a noble work among them. Nothing more eloquently proclaims this fact than the peaceful routine of the records during his entire pastorate of twenty years when coupled with the fact that during this period the Church quadrupled in numbers.

The minister's small salary compelled him to eke out a living by the cultivation of a farm, a practice that he followed until he was more than eighty years of age, and during a portion of the time he taught school in the Northeast District, to which section he removed after the sale of his river farm in 1821. His habit of going barefooted clung to him through life, and gave rise to many amusing incidents far more embarrassing to others than to himself.

It is said that it was his custom to walk barefooted to church with his boots under his arm, until he came to a mountain stream near the meeting-house, where feet were washed and boots pulled on. In 1824 he preached the election sermon before the General Assembly of Vermont, and went to Montpelier on foot. Tradition has it that he presented himself at his hotel barefooted, and was made the butt of many jokes by men who were next day confounded by his able discourse.

On June 25, 1829, Mr. Chandler signified his desire to dissolve his connection with the Church, and gave the six months' notice required by the terms of his settlement, this action being dictated by the belief, which in later years he knew to be unfounded, that a change was advisable for both parties. On July 9, 1829, the Society "reluctantly" accepted his notice, and on February 3, 1830, he was dismissed.

After his removal from Waitsfield he supplied at Hardwick, Vt., for about two years, and on October 25, 1832, was settled as pastor of the First Church in Greenfield, Mass. Here he remained until his death, October 20, 1864, although after reaching the age of eighty he had an assistant. In 1846 his Alma Mater gave him the degree of Doctor of Divinity, and in 1854 he was the chaplain of her semi-centennial. In 1853 he was a member of the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention.

CHAPTER X.

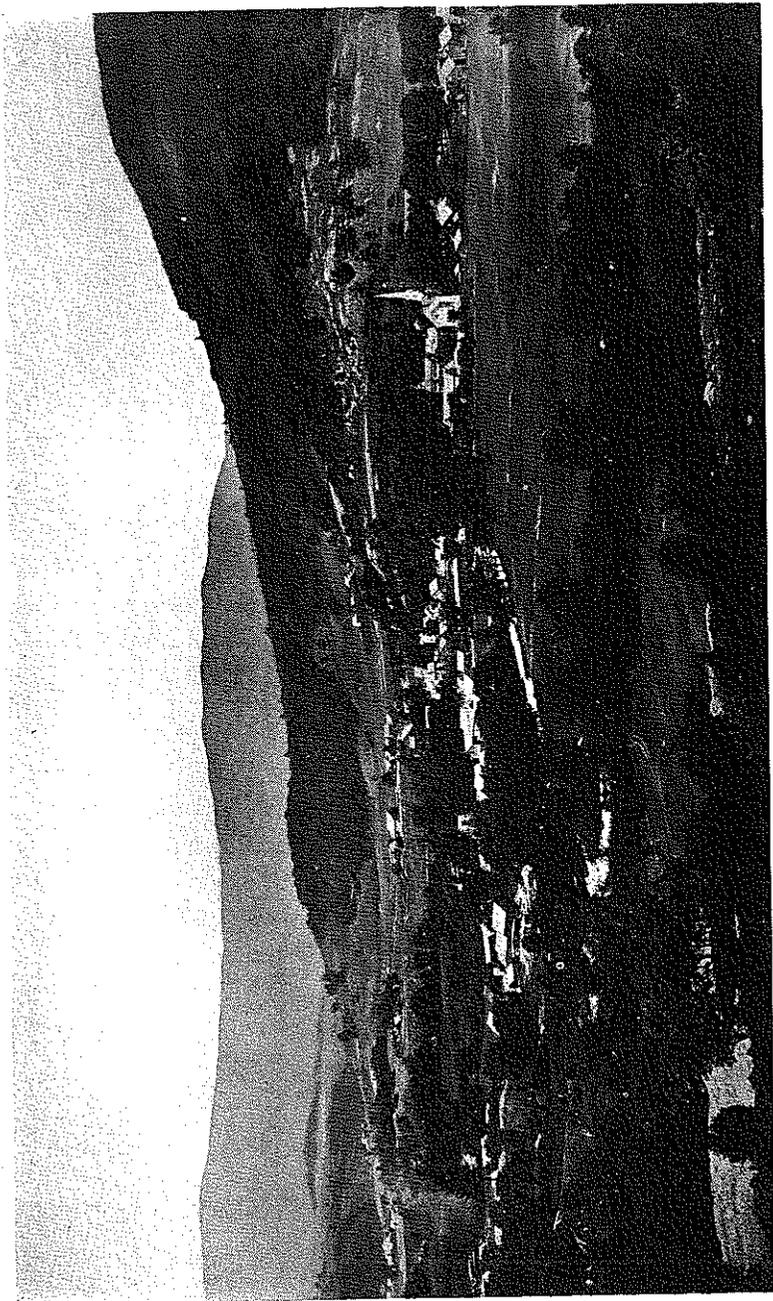
ECCLESIASTICAL—CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AND SOCIETY, 1830-1908.

For several years after the departure of Mr. Chandler the pastorate of this church fell to men whose stay was short, and who made no lasting impression either upon church or community. The growth of other denominations and the dissent, during the last years of Mr. Chandler's service, of nearly eighty members of the Society, due to hostility to taxation as a means of raising funds and to a growing interest in the liberal doctrines of Universalism, left the organization in a condition ill fitted to bear the loss of his guiding and strengthening hand.

These trials and added burdens served but to bring out the latent force and strength of character that had been developing for twenty years. There was a girding up of loins among the strong men and women left within the fold, and from this time we see a church turning, with increasing confidence, to the guidance of its lay members and relying in ever greater measure upon their strength. No pastor since Mr. Chandler has enjoyed the supreme headship that he enjoyed, not because of lack of ability, and not wholly because of the tendency of the modern church to place the pastor in the position of co-worker rather than dictator, but in large measure because of this necessary taking up of the burden during those earlier years of trial.

In the summer of 1830 the meeting-house was repaired and occasional preaching had during the remainder of the year. Among the supplies were Rev. John A. Hempstead and Rev. Mr. Howe, the latter from Unity, N. H.

In May, 1831, Rev. Guy C. Sampson was employed for one year as acting pastor, after a short term of preaching as a candidate. His stay was not prolonged, and in 1832-3 and part of 1834, Rev. Joseph Marsh was acting pastor. He was a native of Sharon, Vt., a graduate of Dartmouth College, 1824, and Andover, 1827.



WAITSFIELD VILLAGE LOOKING WEST TO LINCOLN MOUNTAIN.

HISTORY
OF THE
TOWN OF
WAITSFIELD, VERMONT

1782 - 1908

WITH FAMILY GENEALOGIES

BY
MATT BUSHNELL JONES

BOSTON, MASS.:
GEORGE E. LITTLEFIELD,
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1909.