

EXERCISES ATTENDING

— THE —

One Hundred and Seventy-Fifth Anniversary

OF THE ORGANIZATION

— OF THE —

Congregational Church

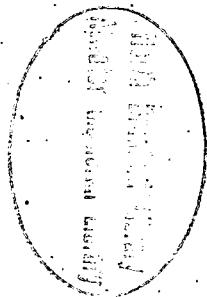
— IN —

NORTH BRANFORD, CONNECTICUT,

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1902.

Historical Sermon, Addresses and Letters.

1726



1902

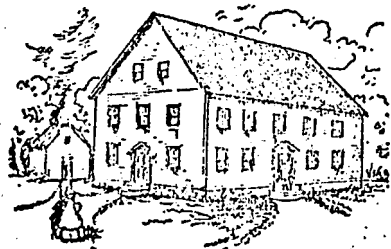
ANNIVERSARY OF THE
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

OF NORTH BRANFORD, CONN.

THE 175th anniversary exercises of the Congregational Church in North Branford were held in the church edifice on Wednesday, October 15, 1902. The day was a fine one, and a large number of people from the town and abroad filled the building. The exercises began at about eleven o'clock, a. m. with a voluntary by the organist, Mrs. A. U. Platt followed by an anthem finely rendered by a chorus choir made up of Mrs. E. B. Stone of North Branford and Mrs. C. M. Bergstresser of New York city, sopranos; Miss Mary Wheadon, Mrs. S. D. Bartlett, Miss May Countryman, altos; E. B. Stone, G. D. Ford, and C. W. Barker tenors; Edmund Fields, R. N. Ford, A. P. Dickinson basses. Rev. Charles Page, pastor of the church in Foxon and a member of the North Branford church, together with the Rev. D. N. Prentice, a former pastor of the church conducted the introductory services.

The Rev. Dr. Devitt, pastor of the mother church in Branford, brought its greetings, while Rev. E. J. Beach, pastor of the daughter church in Northford conveyed its good wishes in fitting words.

The historical sermon was preached by the pastor, Rev. F. Countryman. Interspersed in the morning program were anthems sung by the choir. A hymn composed by a native of North Branford, Rev. Roger Harrison, and much used in sacred services of bygone days was sung to a tune of his own composition. At noon a recess was taken, and all present sat down to a bountiful dinner prepared by the ladies. In the afternoon letters were read from



FIRST MEETING HOUSE.

PROGRAM

A. M.

- 10:30 Music.
 10:35 Reading Scripture and Prayer.
 10:45 Address, Rev. T. S. Devitt
 11:00 Music.
 11:05 Address, Rev. E. J. Beach
 11:20 Music.
 11:30 Historical Sermon, Rev. F. Countryman
 12:15 Music.
 12:30 Recess.

Dinner.

P. M.

- 2:00 Music.
 2:15 to 4:30 Short addresses by Rev. D. N. Prentice, Rev. S. F. Blomfield, Rev. Fosdick Harrison, Rev. W. R. Mulford and others, with reading of letters from D. F. Atwater, M. D., Rev. E. L. Clark, and others.

Recess.

- 7:30 Social hour with music and short addresses.



REV. F. COUNTRYMAN
 Pastor Congregational Church
 North Branford

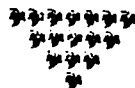
D. F. Atwater, M. D., of Springfield, Mass., son of a former pastor of this church, and from Rev. E. L. Clark, pastor in the years 1867—1877.

Addresses were made by Rev. Fosdick Harrison, pastor of a church in Palmer, Mass., and a descendant of the Rev. Fosdick Harrison a native of this place; by Rev. W. R. Mulford, rector of a church in Fanwood, N. J., and descendant of Deacon Barnabas Mulford, one of the early deacons of the church; by Rev. D. N. Prentice, a former pastor; by Rev. S. F. Blomfield, pastor of the church in Stony Creek; by Mrs. Weaver, daughter of the late G. M. Atwater, Esq., of Brightwood, Mass., and granddaughter of a former pastor; by Mrs. W. Irving Vinals of Washington, D. C., daughter of the late Rev. George I. Wood, pastor here from 1844 to 1850 and again from 1855 to 1859; by John S. Baldwin, Esq., of Worcester, Mass., son of the late Rev. John D. Baldwin, pastor of this church from 1838 to 1844; Attorney C. A. Harrison of Wallingford, Conn., a native of this place—and others.

In the evening short addresses were made by the Rev. S. F. Blomfield, and the Rev. W. R. Mulford.

Thus closed an eventful celebration in the annals of North Branford church history.

The church was finely decorated for the occasion, and on either side of the pulpit were the figures 1727-1902. C. A. Harrison, Esq., kindly opened his summer home, the lower rooms of which were filled with relics of the olden times.



HISTORICAL SERMON

By Rev. F. Countryman, Pastor

Psalm 14, 3:5 "I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works."

It is an interesting task to study the origin of a church which dates back into the eighteenth century, and to trace the Divine working in the church's establishment and continued history. Verily we may remember the days of old, and meditate upon the works of God in connection with the history of His church. It is a pleasant task to reconstruct the past, to summon up out of the long ago the deeds and achievements of those who dwelt in this old town, and to clothe again with flesh as it were those who helped organize and support this ancient church of Christ.

What type of people were represented by those who lived then in this village? They were pious people given to worship. They were thrifty people with comfortable homes. So far as we can ascertain their houses were substantially built. They grew to the soil and did not feel the impulse so common in these latter days to wander away from home and change their abode and location. They were a thinking people and evidently believed in high thinking and plain living.

It was the age when great theological truths were preached in the pulpit and discussed among the people. They had few books but what they had were read and studied. They came to have schools and schoolhouses in time but the curriculum or course of study viewed in the light of today was narrow. They, however, made the best possible use of the opportunities they had. The social life of the time in which they lived was rich, full and strong,

and yet filled with class distinctions. The clergy and the leading men of the community were separated from the other classes. And so there grew up in every community a class of people who were taught to reverence their elders and those in authority, and a hardy intelligent, independent, and thinking community grew in strength and character. Men were dogmatic and somewhat intolerant but they thought deeply, and could give a reason for the faith that was in them. Let us betake ourselves back to those early days and see once again what sort of a people it was that determined in due course of time to have here church privileges, build a meeting house and engage a minister. Godly people, they wanted to establish a center of religious worship like the Israelites of old where they could wait upon God and pour out their hearts to Him. From the time when the place was first settled in 1680, the community increased in numbers until the thought grew in their minds that the people ought to have a parish of their own independent of Branford whither over an old well beaten path the Northern farmers, as they were called, took their way with their wives to the old mother church. From about 1701 meetings were held here with occasional preaching, in school-houses or private dwellings. It was a difficult and unpleasant journey to Branford through the forests and swamps and exposed to the attacks of hostile Indians. The feeling grew greater until in 1717 an attempt was made by petition to the General Assembly to have parish lines definitely established for the people in the North part of the town. This petition appears to have been made in May 1717. A committee was appointed by the General Assembly to take the matter into consideration and see whether the Northern farmers could maintain and support a ministry. In October of the same year this committee reported that the farmers were too small in numbers for this purpose, and yet that "it was troublesome to go to Branford to worship. So permission was given them to maintain a ministry at their own charge "for four months in the year for the space of three years next coming". They were to pay to Branford only one third part as much as Branford people, and at the end of three years were to make further application. Certain bounds were made for the North Parish at that time although these were changed. Such names as "Rose's Meadow," "Rattlesnake Rocks," "Sawmill," "Long Hill" and "Cedar Swamp" oc-

cur as marking and limiting these bounds. Where all these places were located I am not able to state. The people not being altogether satisfied these bounds were afterwards somewhat changed. The North farmers began to have the services of a minister for a much longer time during each year, until in the autumn of 1722, a Parsonage lot was purchased, and October 8th, 200 acres were given by the Proprietors for parsonage lands near Great Hill. In 1724 May 12th, it was voted by the town to build a meeting house in the North Farms as the population of that part of the town had increased. This building was to be 45 by 35 feet. Later in 1725 there appears to have been some trouble between the North farmers and those in the South part of the town as to the building of the new house. A committee was finally appointed by the General Assembly to adjust matters if possible, and in October 1725 this body ordered that Branford help pay for the new meeting house voted in town meeting for the North farmers in 1724. So the parish in the North part of the town was separated from the South, and collectors were appointed in each section to collect the tax for the support of each minister and the people on the South side of the bounds established were to pay their tax for the support of the old and those on the North side to the support of the new minister. Before this time both ministers were supported by the whole town. The building of a new church at the outset does not seem to have been brought about without some strong opposition. A strong protest was made against it.

The question of building a meeting house having been settled at last, three distinct sites were proposed but finally it was determined to locate it on the knoll on the west side of the river at a place near Samuel Harrison's. The spot was a few feet south of the present meeting house. The edifice was not finished until 1732. An interesting statement regarding the building of the new church is that Rev. Samuel Russell of the old church went up from Branford and offered prayer at the erection of the frame of the new edifice. An accident occurred at that time which might have been very serious. A heavy upright beam fell from its position into the midst of the people. Fortunately no one was struck or injured by the falling timber. God thus seems to have watched over the church from its very beginning. The people now in 1725 had a church building in an unfinished condition, but a church in which to

meet and a minister to preach to them, and some sort of an organization. It does not appear what was the particular relation of the minister to the church, or what was exactly the status of the organization. Probably there were different clergymen preaching to the people from time to time, until just before Mr. Merriek's time some minister supplied them continuously. It is somewhat doubtful so far as I am able to ascertain whether the church was organized earlier than 1727. The first definite statement we have is the statement in the Colonial records of the General Assembly (1726—1735) which reads: upon the petition of the inhabitants of the North society in Branford this Assembly grants them liberty to embody themselves into church estate, and to call and settle an orthodox minister among them with the approbation of the neighboring churches.

We have now a definite and fixed date from which to reckon the legal organization of a church and ecclesiastical society in this place, for this act was passed in October 1727. We thus look back over our church history one hundred and seventy-five years, and even more when we think of the work put forth by the God-fearing men and women of old to establish and set up and maintain the worship of God in these borders. People of good old New England stock followed out the religious instincts of their natures and founded this church whose anniversary we celebrate today. All honor to their memory! What was the kind of building first erected in this parish as a meeting house? It was plain and unpretentious both within and without. It had doors on the East, West and South sides with circular steps made of stone leading up to the threshold. The windows were many and the panes of glass diamond shaped. It possessed little architectural beauty to captivate the public eye. It stood firm and solid, a fitting type of the Puritan character. Within, the floor was a step below the sills. The galleries were high and shut in. They extended around three sides of the church. The pulpit was also like most of the pulpits of the day, high and lofty. The minister was thus perched above his congregation and separated from them. A sounding board, a roof-shaped structure hung above the pulpit and in later years we are told it became the abode of bats who were never molested because of the difficulty of cleaning the accumulated filth and dust of the years. Occasionally a bat would get loose and become a

cause of discomfort to the congregation. Imagine the sensation of alarm occasioned by this event especially to the ladies. The pews were box like affairs. Those occupied by the deacons were near the pulpit. In the earliest days men and women did not sit together although this custom was afterwards altered as is evidenced by the statement of a vote on the church records. The minister in these olden times was a man of authority, power and influence. In many cases his word was law, and he walked among his people as verily a man of consequence. His office was highly revered and the utmost respect accorded him. The early records of the church up to 1769 are lost and so we are somewhat uncertain as to the date of Mr. Merriek's ordination over the church in this place as its first minister. Possibly he was ordained in 1726, but we have no proof of that fact so far as I know. He was evidently preaching to the people here in 1727. The date of his death on his tombstone is 1772 and in the inscription are the words, the forty-third year of his ministry. The natural inference from this statement would be that forty-three years covered his ministerial life from the time he was ordained till the time of his death. This would indicate his ordination in the year 1729 or 1730. However, this may be after the desultory preaching of the years previous to 1727 the Rev. Jonathan Merriek was the first regular minister. He came to the church in the vigor of young manhood, and remained among this people till his death in 1772, June 27. It was his only charge. Mr. Merriek was born in Springfield, Mass. August 13, 1700. He graduated from Yale College in 1725, and soon after having studied theology came to this place. He lived in a house framed at the expense of the town at the time a frame was made for the old church. The house was erected soon after.

It stood on the site of the house now owned and occupied by G. L. Ford, Esq. A large farm was connected therewith which Mr. Merriek conducted in connection with the work of the ministry. Mr. Merriek's active ministry ended in 1769 in consequence of a paralysis which prevented the exercise of ministerial duties. His last public act was to preside as moderator at a church meeting held February 23, 1769, to appoint a day for the ordination of the Rev. Samuel Eels his successor. His signature appears for the last time in the handwriting of an old and enfeebled man on the church records as the moderator of that meeting. He died June

27, 1772, aged 72 years and was laid to rest among the people he had so long served, in the old cemetery which in the year 1727 had been laid out about the old church according to the custom of those days. Forty-three years he lived in this place and his name remains unto this day. He was said to be a man of fine presence and of large stature. From his word there seemed to be no disposition to appeal. An anecdote is related of him which illustrates this. A Timothy Stone who afterwards became a minister taught school in this place. One of the pupils became refractory and was thereupon vigorously dealt with by the teacher. The father of the boy was indignant and removed him at once from the school. When this was communicated to Mr. Merriek he summoned the angry parent into his presence. The father immediately obeyed the summons as he dared not do otherwise, when the minister is said to have addressed him in the following words: "You teach rebellion in school. It shall not be so. I will have you know that I will put my foot on your neck. This rebellious spirit shall not be tolerated." The rebuke had the desired effect and the father meekly bowed to the minister's will. This anecdote not only shows Mr. Merriek's position in the community but as well the general reverence in which the clergy were held.

What a difference between the eighteenth century in New England in this respect and today. Mr. Merriek was a Fellow of Yale College from June 1763 to September 1769. In the theological divisions of the time he was identified with the "Old Light" party. Evidently he was a conservative. He left an estate valued at 3,365 pounds showing that he must have been a man of thrift and successful in the business of farming. He married March 28, 1731-2 Jerusha Minor of Stonington, Conn., who survived him with several children. She died July 23, 1777, in her 73d year. A descendant of Mr. Merriek in the seventh generation lives among us.

During the ministry of Mr. Merriek the people who resided in what is now Northford and who had been attending church and burying their dead here, in 1745 were set off by the General Assembly as a distinct society.

The first deacon of this church was Benjamin Barnes, a man of piety and poverty as we are told. He was one of the original inhabitants of the place. He died in 1740. Another deacon was Daniel Page, who lived near the summit of Sibbie's Hill, a loca-

tion not far from the present Center of North Branford. He was one of the original settlers coming here from Branford, and the ancestor of the prominent and influential family of that name the members of which have filled from generation to generation down to the present, important offices by the vote of their townsmen. Daniel Page died in 1766. Later Ithiel Russell and Barnabas Mulford were deacons. Deacon Mulford was a member of Colonial Assembly in 1762. He was married by Mr. Merriek to Hannah, daughter of Edward Petty, in 1740. Their terms of service extended from Mr. Merriek's period of ministry to that of Mr. Eel's. Deacon Russell's descendants have been helpful and prominent in the church ministering to its needs. He died March 25, 1772. Other deacons were Israel Baldwin some time before 1744, Ebenezer Russell in 1772, Aaron Baldwin 1778. Another Israel Baldwin 1798, David Russell in 1808. The mode of worship was evidently somewhat different from that of today. There was appointed an individual whose duty it was to read and tune the Psalm. Jonathan Butler, Jr., was first appointed to that office in 1732, and later Abiel Linsley and Abraham Whedon were chosen to that office.

There were no musical instruments to help the people in their service of praise and one can imagine how solemn and serious and how bare of all that brightens the worship of today were the services of that ancient time. The themes of the minister's sermons were evidently profoundly theological and Calvinistic in thought. But the people listened with interest to solemn and weighty preaching, sitting together in cold as in warm weather to hear sermons whose length would not be tolerated by an audience of this modern day. We wonder sometimes how people or minister kept warm in cold weather during these long Sabbath services. Perhaps they listened so attentively to the preacher as to ignore the chilly atmosphere of the house and when at noon they repaired to the Sabbath day houses near the church they absorbed heat enough perhaps from the wood fire near which they sat and ate their lunch, to last them during the afternoon. They must have been hardy men and women who were trained to endurance and did not easily yield to the difficulties and burdens of their lot.

It would be interesting if we knew the names of those who first belonged to the church and their number but the record was lost and we are unable to find them. Up to the year 1769 Mr.

Merrick as we have mentioned had been able to take care of his church with occasional help from other ministers, but in that year a stroke of paralysis incapacitated him for active service longer. His long and useful service was at an end and it became necessary to look about for a successor. That man was found in the Rev. Samuel Eels, the son of the Rev. Edward Eels of Middletown. He was born in that place January 13, 1745 and graduated from Yale College in 1765. He was ordained here March 29, 1769. The 8th of March according to a custom then prevalent had been observed as a day of fasting and prayer, in reference to the ordination. Two sermons were preached on that day, one by the Rev. Philemon Robbins of Branford, and the other by the Rev. Warham Williams of Northford. On the day of ordination Mr. Eels, the father of the new pastor preached the sermon. Mr. Eels had a settlement at the time of his ordination of 200 pounds beside materials for building a house and barn. This house is still standing and is occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Albert U. Platt's family. Mr. Eels entered upon his ministry under favorable auspices. He found a church of seventy-seven members whose names are given on the church records. Mr. Eels was a man of much ability, kindly and genial among his people and welcomed by them in their homes. He practiced to some extent as a physician. One would judge from the anecdotes related of him that he was a man of good common sense, a man who loved a joke and whose sympathies were easily moved toward the people of his parish. He was, too, a man of patriotic spirit. When news came in the early part of 1777, during the Revolutionary War that more troops were wanted from Connecticut to assist Washington near New York he was one of the most active in forming a company. The news came on Sunday. He gave out the intelligence from the pulpit, and called on all who were willing to answer the call for more men, to form on the Green before the meeting-house immediately after service. There was a ready response. At the conclusion of the service a company of 60 men was organized and Rev. Samuel Eels was chosen captain. It does not appear that their services were needed but the prompt response of these patriots to the appeal made is worth noting. Mr. Eels was a minister but he was also a man and a patriot. During Mr. Eels' ministry the church adopted the "Half-way Covenant" as it was called. Mr. Eels does not appear to have

been fully in sympathy with this covenant. This Half-way Covenant to quote the words of the Rev. George I. Wood in his excellent Historical Discourse was "a regulation by which individuals in the congregation who had arrived at adult years without the seal of baptism were to be baptized upon their professing the faith of the Gospel and being free from public scandal, without coming to full communion with the church; that is without participating in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper; and by which they were permitted to have baptism administered to their children". Other churches than this adopted the same covenant but it soon fell into disuse. In 1770 Ithiel Russell and William Whendon were appointed choristers. Five years later we have notice of a singing master and a singing school. Later in 1784 there was a body of singers in existence who were seated by vote in the front seats of the gallery. In 1792 there was a musical society in this place and a sum of money was appropriated from the treasury of the society to procure books for that society. In 1799 the singers were to receive 10 pounds a year "in case they sing." It was not till 1829 that the church had an organ so far as I am able to ascertain. We thus see how the musical portion of the church service advanced from the leading of the congregation by one appointed to the office to a body of singers occupying the gallery and directed by suitable choristers. It is worthy of note that in Mr. Eels' time a committee was appointed to dignify the pews, that is to determine the rank and dignity of the pews, so that class distinction might be properly observed and the dignitaries of the place receive their proper sittings. Mr. Eels ministered here for 39 years and died April 3, 1808 aged 63 years. He was buried near his predecessor in office. The number received into the church during his ministry was 104. In addition to his work here, Mr. Eels probably served for a little time as a missionary in what was then called the west, and went to the state of New York. He was appointed to this service by the General Association of Connecticut in 1793. These appointments were made to some extent from ministers who were serving our churches. These men thus appointed were allowed five dollars a week for their services and four dollars a week for supplying their pulpits in their absence. Mr. Eels left the church in good condition for his successor, the Rev. Charles Atwater. He was born in New Haven August 18, 1786, the son of a merchant,

Jeremiah T. Atwater. He graduated from Yale College in 1805, studied theology under the first President Dwight and was ordained here March 1st, 1809. The day set apart for fasting and prayer was February 22, 1809. Rev. Aaron Dutton of Guilford and Rev. T. P. Gillett were to preach the sermons. Rev. Mr. Atwater was to receive \$450 per annum. Rev. Samuel Mowin of New Haven preached the ordination sermon. While here Mr. Atwater lived in the house now used as a parsonage, and this house was built by him in 1809. Mr. Atwater was a man of commanding figure, portly and erect. His voice was loud and clear. One lady now deceased, who in her later years was speaking of him, said his voice was like the sound of a trumpet. He was a successful preacher and minister. In the year 1821 there was an extensive religious awakening. Forty-five were added to the church. Ninety-six were received into the church during the 16 years of his ministry. He died February 21, 1825, at the early age of 39. He was much beloved by his people. The funeral took place from the church on February 23. A large concourse of people gathered together. Neighboring pastors were present to take part in the solemn services. The sermon was preached by Mr. Gillett of Branford from Matthew 24:44. He was buried near his predecessors in office. Thus these first three pastors sleep side by side in this place. They held their official position during their life time, living and working and dying amid their people. They are the only ones of all the pastors whose remains were laid away near the old church they served so long and faithfully. A tablet has been placed in the church to the memory of Rev. Charles Atwater by his son, the late George M. Atwater, Esq., of Brightwood, Mass. Mrs. Atwater, the widow of Rev. Charles Atwater, and a woman of most attractive Christian character, married Mr. Abijah Fisher of New York city in 1827 and died October 13, 1879, in the 96th year of her age. Two sons of Rev. Mr. Atwater are still living, Dr. D. F. Atwater of Springfield, Mass., and James C. Atwater, Esq., of New York city. Of the revival in 1821 we have very interesting accounts in the diary of the late Dea. T. R. Palmer extracts from which have been given me. He says under the date March 23—"Whoever saw in this place such an attention paid to religion! Such numbers flocking to the church of Christ." April 8, 1821—He says—"Religion has produced its glorious effect in

some degree—About fifty have apparently become the subjects of grace. April 22—He says—Religion seems to be the predominant actuating principle of many and prayer meetings are held. The last evening there were three held in different parts of the society, notwithstanding the weather being bad. May 11—He says—The alteration in the society is great and such an one as all the twenty years of my life never witnessed and indeed such a one as never before took place". This condition continued until the autumn when twenty young people were united with the church making forty-five in all. The church at this time he says consisted of one hundred-fifteen members. I give also the following interesting extracts from the diary—Under the date September 3 1821 he says—"this evening being set apart for prayer I attend. The wind already blowing strong. The wind, however, increased till about half-past eight when such a violent gust came it seemed as if all would go with it. The windows of the meeting house many of them were blown out, the door burst open, the lights were immediately put out and so awful and terrifying a moment I never experienced. We, however, secured the door and thought it our duty to repair to our dwellings. The wind continued till about twelve with increasing rapidity. What carried the greater terror and alarm was a light in the west. It, however, proved to be Deacon Russell's barn with its contents on fire. The wind gradually died away but not without leaving the marks of a destructive hurricane. The oldest person never experienced so destructive a storm of wind." This is an account of the famous September gale of 1821. I give it not only for its connection with the revival year in this place, but also because it is an interesting description of a remarkable event. In the year 1822, March 1, Deacons Russell and Baldwin resigned and on August 25, of that year, Daniel Wheadon and Sydney Alden were inducted in to the office of Deacon. November 1, 1822, communion cups were purchased. Mr. Atwater's ministry was a fruitful one, and the church was built up and strengthened.

Now came a time when different ministers were heard but no regular pastor engaged. The people heard several with satisfaction but were unable to secure their services. In 1826 the number of people in North Branford village was 525 constituting about 100 families. This is an interesting fact. But there was

no one to minister continuously in the pastoral office to these people, and this state of things lasted until the year 1828. June 9 of that year Judson A. Root was called to settle with them in the Gospel ministry (as the phrase was) on a salary of \$400 annually. At first he would not accept the call but after a second call and an interview with the committee of the church he consented to come and October 15, 1828, he was ordained pastor of the church. For a little over three years the pulpit had been supplied from Sabbath to Sabbath and now once again they had the services of a regular pastor. The Rev. Mr. Merwin of New Haven preached the ordination sermon from Ephesians 4:11-12. The ordination services were very interesting. At first Mr. Root occupied the house now owned by Deacon S. D. Bartlett back of the church, but soon built the house now owned by Elizur Footo, Esq., where he resided during his stay here. Mr. Root preached at his coming in the old church but it had become unfitted much longer for use. It had been repaired from time to time, but it seemed now as if a new structure was needed. Through the influence of Mr. Root the matter was agitated. At a Society meeting held February 8, 1830, \$2,000 were subscribed toward a new meeting house. The amount needed was \$3,500. February 24, 1830, at a Society meeting a committee reported \$2,295 subscribed and it was voted to build a new house and to commence its erection upon the subscription of \$2,500. The new house was to be fifty feet long, thirty-six feet wide and twenty-two feet high with steeple. It was to be located at or near the place where the old house stood. There was very little opposition to the building of a new church and on March 7, 1830, the people began cutting timber and making preparations to build. Then May 25, 1830, the east part of the old meeting house was turned into a joiner's shop the seats being taken up. May 26 the digging commenced for a basement and the statement is made that no spirits were brought on to the grounds. August 11, 1830, (Wednesday) the people commenced at eight o'clock to raise the meeting house (according to diary of Deacon T. R. Palmer) after singing and prayer by Mr. Root. Services on the foundation commenced with the tune "Italian Hymn." Prayer was offered and "Old Hundred" sung. On the 12th and 13 of August the work of raising the frame was continued. It was finished on the 14th after four and one-half days successive labor. The people then

sung "Oh! give thanks" Mr. Root offered prayer, and the tune "Dismission" was sung. "During these days of danger" (I quote from Deacon Palmer's diary) "no accident has happened. The business has gone on regular and without noise and tumult. No ardent spirits brought on or furnished on the occasion. Much harmony and good feeling exists at the present time." The account of the raising of the frame is extremely interesting as showing how this work had its religious side and was regarded as in some sort a religious work. The people built the house for the Lord. November 6, 1830, six months after the carpenters began raising the frame the new house was enclosed. Mr. Volney Pierco was the contractor. December 18 of the same year it was plastered. January 12, 1831, an organ was placed in the church purchased by a company of ten individuals at a cost of \$120 with the expectation that the Society would then take it. Mr. Russell Clark was the organist. February 27, 1831, the people meet in the old church for the last time. February 28 the old building was pulled down. The timbers were found to be very rotten. When the rubbish was cleaned away a stump was found almost perfect after remaining under the floor for upwards of a century. The material of the old building was sold for about \$82. March 13, 1831, the people met in the new basement for the first time and on April 28, 1831, the new meeting house was dedicated. The sermon was preached by Professor Fitch of Yale College. The day was quite stormy and very few were present. The people were now provided with a new meeting house and necessary appointments. Interesting religious services were held for four days beginning May 18, 1831. The meetings were well attended. The people gathered together at five o'clock in the morning to begin the day's service with a prayer meeting. Meetings were held later at 10:30 o'clock, also in the afternoon and in the evening. There was much religious interest manifest and the people crowded the church.

Mr. Root continued with the people about six years and was dismissed at his own request in 1834 probably on October 15. Fifty-eight were received into the church during his pastorate.

The year 1831 was marked by the formation of the town of North Branford which together with Northford was set off from Branford as a town. This fact is worth recording.

The church, after Mr. Root's dismissal, found his successor in the Rev. Henry B. Camp who was ordained July 30, 1835. He graduated at Yale in 1831. His stay was short. He was threatened with consumption and felt himself obliged to retire from the active work of the ministry. Accordingly he was dismissed October 9, 1836, after a pastorate of a little over one year. He took up the work of teaching in Hartford and died there February 16, 1880, aged seventy. After his dismissal different preachers were heard. Calls were given to a Rev. William Bushnell and later to Rev. Rollin Stone but both declined the calls made to them. It was not until January 17, 1838 that the Rev. John D. Baldwin was installed as pastor of the church. He was a man of ability and did efficient service for the church. He studied theology at Yale and came here from North Woodstock, Connecticut, where he was ordained to the ministry. Up to this time the ministers had lived in houses owned by themselves but now it was proposed to purchase a convenient house and lot for the use of the pastor. The proposal was to raise the sum of \$1,200 by subscription "by dividing said sum into forty-eight shares of \$25 each to be expended by said subscribers or by their committee for the above purpose and when so expended to be used for the above specified object." All transfers of stock were to be determined by a majority of two-thirds of the stockholders present at a legally warned meeting each share being entitled to one vote, the property being held as "tenants in common." It was understood that the present pastor, Rev. John D. Baldwin, should have a right to purchase said property in part or whole at first cost or on such other terms as he and said subscribers should agree. It does not appear that Mr. Baldwin ever bought the place although his name is on the list of subscribers. He took two shares. March 30, 1838, the Parsonage property consisting of two acres of land and the buildings thereon was deeded to Samuel F. Russell, Albert Harrison, and Luther Childsey, committee of the Parsonage Association by Jasper Monroe and Betsy Munroe. The same property was deeded by the Parsonage Association to the first Congregational Society of North Branford, June 16, 1846. Thus in that year the minister had a convenient house in which to live and the edifice then purchased and now occupied as a Parsonage has been the home of the pastors of this church ever since. Mr. Baldwin remained here six years and was

dismissed at his own request July 3, 1844. He subsequently served a church in North Killingly (as the place was then called, now East Putnam.) He afterwards embarked in newspaper work and ultimately became Editor of the "Worcester Spy." He was also Member of Congress from Massachusetts from 1863-69. He died at his home in Worcester, Mass., July 8, 1883, aged seventy-three years. His widow is still living, and two sons. Mr. Baldwin was also an author. Among his books are a History of Ancient America and a book of poems. It was in the year 1838 during Mr. Baldwin's pastorate that Thomas Plant was chosen deacon in place of Deacon David Russell who resigned.

The church was not long without a minister after Mr Baldwin left them. The Rev. George I. Wood came here as pulpit supply December 1844. He was a graduate of Yale College in the year 1833. He was a relation of the third pastor of the church Rev. Charles Atwater. He was pastor of several churches before he came here and of several others after his dismissal. He was the author of the admirable historical discourse regarding the church here from which many of the facts of this sermon are taken. He died in Washington, D. C., at the home of his daughter, Mrs. W. Irving Vinal, in 1890 aged eighty-five. He has a son, Captain Oliver Ellsworth Wood, connected with the Japanese Embassy. During Mr. Wood's pastorate Deacon Thomas Plant resigned his office and Samuel F. Russell and Luther Childsey were chosen to serve as deacons. During Mr. Wood's pastorate the confession of faith of the church was amended according to the statement on the records so as to "recognize the Divinity of Christ, and the necessity of regeneration by the Holy spirit." Mr. Wood preached his farewell sermon June 23, 1850, and the church was again without a pastor. One was soon found in the Rev. Whitman Peck, who came here March 4, 1851. Like his predecessor he was not installed. He graduated at Yale College in 1838. He was here a little over four years leaving his charge June 24, 1855. He died in 1894. The Rev. George I. Wood again supplied the church at the earnest desire of the people. He remained with them until 1859 when the Rev. William Curtis received a call to settle in the Gospel ministry. He accepted the call and was installed as pastor, December 22, 1859. During his pastorate the parsonage was thoroughly remodeled through his efforts. He was an inde-

fatigable worker and a strong and vigorous preacher. He like the others who had preceded him in the pastoral office was a graduate of Yale College. He graduated in 1840. He resigned the pastorate and was dismissed October 2, 1867. He afterwards served other churches and later took up his residence in this place which he represented in 1882 in the Legislature. He resided here till his death June 7, 1888, aged seventy-six. His widow died here November 2, 1900 aged eighty-seven. Two sons are living. He was followed by the Rev. Edson L. Clark who graduated from Yale College in 1853 in one of Yale's most famous classes. Mr. Clark came here in 1867 and remained ten years. He was a successful pastor and preacher. His pastorate was a pleasant one and he was much beloved by the people. He was a man of literary ability. Among his books is "Fundamental Questions" a book discussing important theological topics. He also wrote a history of Turkey. During his stay here over fifty united with the church. A pulpit recess was added to the church edifice in 1870 or 71 and a new pulpit was given by Mrs. Thomas Plant. A chest to hold the communion service was bought in 1874 at a cost of \$12.50. Mr. Clark was much interested in all town affairs, and school matters and did much to serve their interests. He resigned the pastoral office in 1877 much to the regret of the people. He served afterwards other churches, but is now living in retirement from all active service at Dalton, Mass., with his most estimable wife. In 1876 he preached an historical discourse to which I am much indebted for facts used in this sermon. Following him came the Rev. J. W. Beach who remained with the church but a short time. He came in 1877 and served the church a little over a year when he was obliged to go away for his health. Hoping for his recovery the church was supplied by various ministers until 1880 when the Rev. D. N. Proutice was called to the church. Mr. Beach afterwards became a teacher in Windsor Locks and Norfolk, Conn. He was a graduate of Yale in 1864. He was a man of scholarly attainments and his departure was deeply regretted. He died February 21, 1887 aged forty-four. Mrs. Beach, his widow, is living in Now Haven.

Mr. Proutice was a graduate of Yale in the class of 1872. He served the church for two years from 1880 to 1882. His sermons were much enjoyed by the people with whom he labored. He re-

sides in Greenfield Hill, Conn., without charge. December 3, 1882, the present incumbent entered upon his term of service with this church. His is the third oldest pastorate which this church has had. It will be twenty years this coming December since the present minister began his work here. During that period of service ninety have been received into the church, mostly from the young people. This number of members received is two more than the total membership of the church when the present pastor came. The membership now is one hundred and two. In 1884, October 23 a Christian Endeavor Society was organized, the first one so far as known in this vicinity and only three years after the beginning of the Christian Endeavor movement in this country. The church building has been twice renovated. January 16, 1887, our new and pleasant chapel located near the church was dedicated. The cost of this chapel was nearly \$1,700 most of which was contributed by Mrs. George Rose and Mrs. Thomas Plant. And so we have reached the 175th year of church history in this village of North Branford. During all this period, longer than the period of the existence of the United States, the church has had thirteen pastors, and every one of them received a degree from Yale College or University as it is now. All are graduates of that institution which is a fact worth noting. In the first ninety-eight years of the church's history from 1727 to 1825 the pastorate was filled by three clergymen. In the last seventy-seven years, from 1825 to 1902 ten pastors served the church. No country church, I may safely say has had in the past a more excellent succession of religious leaders. They have been without exception men of culture and ability and one was a fellow of Yale College and others have written books. The deacons of these more modern days have been T. R. Palmer, 1870, from whose diary I have received much help, Charles Page, 1870 now a clergyman in active service and no longer a deacon, also senator from the Sixth District; G. O. Linsley, 1883, and S. D. Bartlett 1900. The ministers raised up in this place are David Rose, a graduate of Yale College 1760, died 1799. Roger Harrison, Yale College 1791, died 1853, author of the hymn tune "Weymouth" sung here today—Fosdick Harrison honored with a degree from Yale in 1815—Lovi Rose and Charles Page now among us and pastor of the church in Foxon.

I wish I had time to set forth the virtues and services of the

old families many of whose descendants are still among us, of the Russells descendants of the Rev. Samuel Russell minister at Branford in 1687, deacons and helpers in the church, of whom Erastus Russell and Eunice, his wife, left a fund to the church for the maintenance of the Gospel; also of Miss Martha Russell a talented woman who has written books of fiction, poetry, etc.; of the Roses, Captain Jonathan Rose, member of the constitutional convention of 1818, of Col. George Rose, state senator in 1858, representative from the town at different times, both men of weight and influence and means, and others of that name worthy and eminent; of the Pages who gave freely their services for church and community; of the Harrisons, and Linsleys, of Russell Clark and others. If I should begin I should hardly know where to stop. I would like to speak also of those who at the present day are worthily taking the place of those who have been so eminent here. This place should be proud of its past, and should try to wisely improve the inheritance and hand it down unimpaired to those who are to come after.

It now remains for me to sketch the history of our Sunday-school which deserves a place by itself, an account of which I get from a paper written by T. R. Palmer. In the year 1820, May 14, in the twelfth year of Mr. Atwater's ministry, after the subject had been laid before the congregation by him, the children and youth gathered together in the meeting house at the intermission for Sunday-school instruction. Previous to that time religious instruction had been confined to the teaching of the Assembly's Catechism and the Lord's Prayer in the public schools on Saturday of each week. When the schools were not in session the children sometimes gathered in the meeting house and were catechized by the minister or dominie as he was called. The children and youth on the 24th day of May came together and sat in those old pews which it has been said have been likened to sheep pens so high that a twelve-year-old boy could not look over them. There was no special Sunday-school organization as we know it today. The school, if you can call it so, opened with prayer by one of the deacons. The lessons were chapters or parts of chapters of the New Testament, and Psalms such as teachers and scholars chose to learn. Verses were committed to memory and recited to the teachers, who made such explanations and comments as they

thought best. The school continued through the warm season beginning perhaps in April and closing in October. The school continued in this condition till 1827 when a Rev. Mr. Smith, who was temporarily supplying the pulpit and was a great friend of the Sunday-school reorganized the school, forming a Sunday-school Society with a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and Librarian with a board of five Directors and five Directresses. These officers were appointed at each Annual meeting and constituted a board of managers. They selected the superintendents and teachers. All who joined the Sunday-school Society paid twelve and one half cents which was used to buy library books. When the Sunday-school closed in October those who could present a certificate of good character had the privilege of drawing books from the library during the winter months. The first President was David Russell, and the first Superintendent was Deacon Whendon. The people seemed to take great interest in the Sunday-school. They began to use question books about this time. About one hundred and three between the ages of four and eighteen comprised the Sunday-school. In 1854 or 56 when the Rev. W. Peck was pastor, the school was again reorganized when it would seem that officers were chosen by the church. At present they are chosen by the school. About the time of Mr. Peck's pastorate the school held its sessions during the year. Among the superintendents have been S. F. Russell, J. Munro, Deacon T. R. Palmer, Charles Page, G. H. Munger, Edward Isbell, G. L. Ford, G. C. Linsley, Isaac Linsley, H. E. Cole. At present the pastor of the church holds that office. The school was probably one of the earliest to be organized in the United States.

Church and Sunday-school have gone on doing their work well till the year 1902. God hath blessed both, and as we look back over the long years of the church and Sunday-school let us remember the days of old. Let us meditate on the works of God. To Him be the Glory Forever!

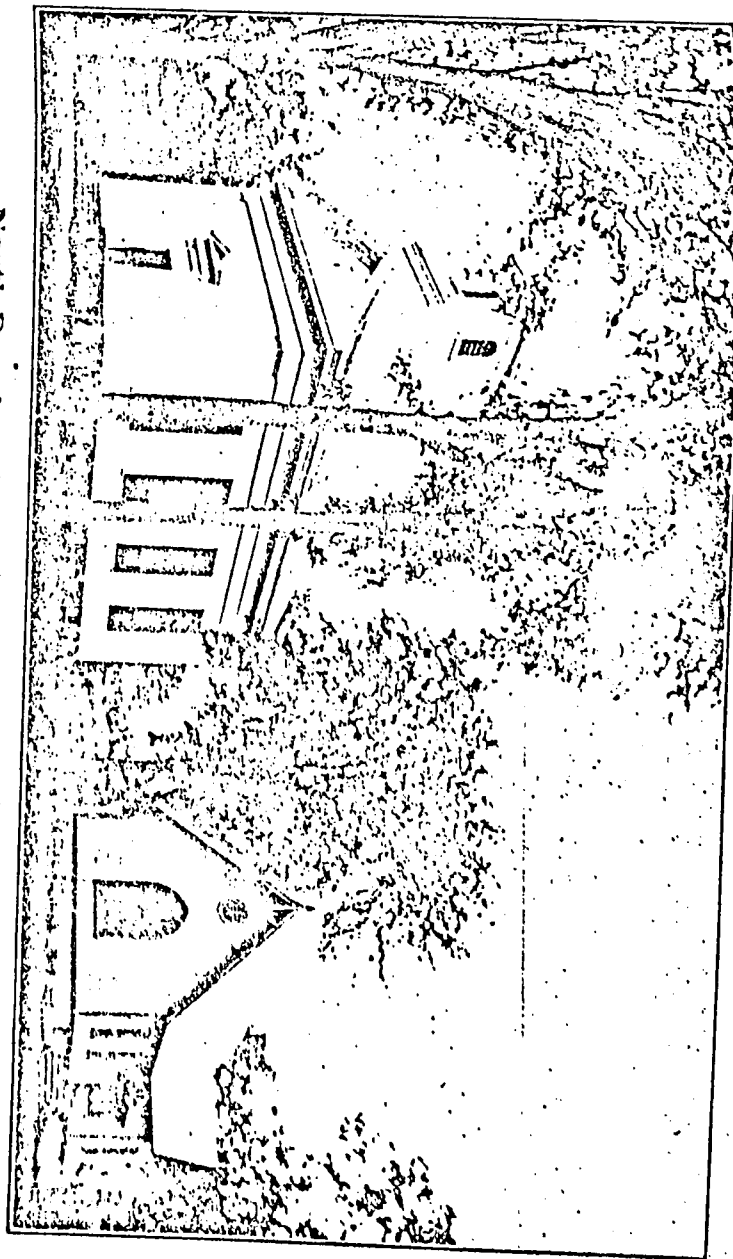


ADDRESS OF GREETING

By Rev. T. S. Devitt, D. D., Pastor of the
Congregational Church, Branford

I Bring you the greetings of the old mother church in Branford —Your mother is 258 years old but she sends you word, in language not altogether classic, that "She's just as young as she used to be." I bring you the greetings of the oldest church in the New Haven East Consociation, and incidentally, as its Moderator, the greetings of that Consociation now 193 years of ago. I bring you the greetings of a church than which there are but ten older in the state of Connecticut. Rev. Samuel Russell, one of my distinguished predecessors in the pastoral office at Branford, was here and made the prayer at the framing of your first meeting house and it is fitting that I should stand here now in the name of the old church. We come here with our younger daughter, the church in Stony Creek, the child of our old ago, and with your daughter and to our granddaughter, the church in Northford, to congratulate you upon a century and three-quarters of noble history. We are proud of you. We are glad of your vigorous life today. Some of our rural churches appear to be suffering a decline in religion; in reality it is merely a decline of population in the vicinage, and so the vigor and thrift and power of this church in these times is all the more noteworthy. Great changes have taken place in the thought and customs of the people during your ecclesiastical lifetime, some of which are a great gain and some are questionable. Formerly distances were measured from the

North Branford Congregational Church and Chapel



church; now they are counted from the tavern. Once the political state was made up in the Congregational, which was the State church; now it is fixed in the saloon. Then the chief religious men were a power in politics but the saloon vote and not the church vote is the great force to be reckoned with in these times. Yet this is not altogether so and we have yet many great religious and moral leaders prominent in the politics of our country. An illustration in point is on this platform in the person of Rev. Charles Page of Foxon, a member of this church; the Republican nominee for senator from the Sixth District of Connecticut. Because of his valient service as chairman of the Committee on Temperance in the last House of Representatives, the saloon men are said to be after his scalp but in the name of social righteousness I ask you at the coming election in November to see that he takes his seat as senator by a safe majority. (He was elected by a large majority.)

I am very glad in these times that the affairs of the church are not in the hands of the town. When we have to fight so hard in town meeting for good roads and a decent appropriation for public schools, I wonder what would become of a proposed appropriation for a minister's salary. Brother Countryman and I would need to give up in despair if our bread and butter was contingent upon the action of a town meeting.

I am proud of the position I occupy. I am not by heredity but by election, chosen into a long line of distinguished apostolic succession. Great men have gone before me in the ministry in Branford, and I have not time to note the merits of each. At the Bi-Centennial of Yale University last year, I was glad to see played on the stage and hear recounted the story of that historic translation in the study of the home of Rev. Samuel Russell when in 1700 he with ten other ministers of this state, in prophecy and in hope, laid some books on the table each saying: "I give these books for the founding of a college in this colony". Thus the old church and its minister are linked into the educational life of New England, America, and the world.

After Mr. Russell came Philemon Robbins into the pastorate. Mr. Robbins was an earnest promoter of the "Great Revival" in New England, a lover of peace but a lover of liberty as he loved life and more than he loved peace. When the Shore Line

towns were closed against the preaching of the great evangelist, George Whitfield, he was permitted to preach in Branford by the vote of the Society taken August 18, 1744, the vote being 26 yeas to 6 nays. All honor to the church and town and to its heroic broad-minded minister for their liberal position prophetic of the days in which we live. This was in the midst of seven stormy years for Philemon Robbins. In those days no regular minister could by law preach within the parish of another clergyman without his consent. To do so was to forfeit the right to his salary. Pastor Robbins received an invitation from a little Baptist flock in Wallingford to preach for them, and seeing no moral or gospel reason for not doing so, he accepted the invitation for Jan. 6, "1742—on Jan. 5" he was warned by two duly signed letters from the Congregational Church in Wallingford not to preach for the Baptists there as their minister would not consent to it. Seeing no reason for changing his mind Mr. Robbins preached twice for the Baptists in the Wallingford parish. Charges were immediately preferred against him "for preaching in a disorderly manner in the First Society of Wallingford without the consent of the Rev. Mr. Whittlesey, and contrary to the act of the Guilford Council, contrary to the act of the Consociation, and contrary to the desire of two neighboring ministers, and to a great number of the church members of Wallingford." Mr. Robbins replied in part that he "know no rule in the word of God or the Saybrook Platform, which obliged him to comply with their desires, nor could he see any reason in their desire." Nevertheless the charges were sustained, and he was disfellowshipped by his brethren. In all this trial, persecution and suffering—council following council in vain attempt to adjust life and form—he it said to the eternal credit of the Branford church that it stood by its minister by prayer and sympathy and money and vote until after seven years of ecclesiastical ostracism he was restored, without a change of views, to the fellowship, and love, and confidence of his brethren in the ministry. My heart swells with joy as I think of the consecrated pews that held up the hands of the pulpit until the victory was secured. As our fathers stood loyal to the ministry seeking to find "still more light breaking forth from God's Holy Word" so the church of Branford today stands behind its minister in fullest liberty of prophecy. It gives an intelligent hearing to every message and

what more can any minister ask? I have spoken only of pastors Russell and Robbins. "Time would fail me to tell of " Atwater and Huntington, who had the same wife; of Gillett with his crowning pastorate of 58 years, who was often in this church to help you; of Miller, Baldwin and Hill, the latter now in the Sandwich Islands in missionary service; of Osborne, Bake, and Bickford; and to tell of the seventeenth century quarter, Sherman, Pierson (founder of Newark, N. J.) Bowers and Mather.

As we come down the line we find not one soiled name in all the list. "Other men have labored and we have entered into their labors." "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."



GREETING

From Northford Congregational Church

By Rev. Elmer J. Beach

IT is my pleasure to bring greeting from the daughter of 150 years, to the daughter of 175 years. The church at Northford greets you in the bonds of Christian love and fellowship in joining in a service memorial of the men and women of the days gone by, who have bequeathed to their posterity the fruitage of Godliness, and Christian deeds. We would help you to remember what has been blessed in your history and so this anniversary shall be in accord with the word "That the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance," and prove that the memory of the just is blessed and that God's will and the execution in His Providence is the planning and developing of His Kingdom in the world through the church of Jesus Christ.

We greet you not as a prodigal who has wasted his substance in riotous living, coming home to his aged parent, but as a daughter returning for a day with her children, to say peace be unto thee and to inspire you with the belief in the expansive power of that heaven in the kingdom your fathers prayed for and lived in their generation and whose sepulchres are with us, even to this day; a heaven that has ever been working and expansive. A new wine for new bottles, and as Elijah in the olden days gave leave to the young prophets to enlarge their dwelling place, so did the North Branford Church listen to the young and enterprising men who said "Behold now the place where we dwell with thee is to

straight for us, let us go we pray thee unto Jordan and take thence every man a beam and let us make us a place there where we may dwell" and they answered, "Go ye," and if the first encampment of these sons of the prophets was not at the Ancient Jordan, it was near some never failing springs of pure and sparkling waters. In words of another historian "In the pursuit of a larger success in industry and with something of that roving, adventurous spirit which has ever characterized the people of New England towns and which has rapidly peopled the broad West, they were accustomed to leave their homes in the opening spring with their provisions and implements of husbandry for a sort of back-woods-life through the summer months occupying "clearings," at the base of your mountain range, from which they gathered ample crops, returning again by the wood's path with the approach of winter to enjoy the fruits of their summer's absence in the bosom of their families." Perhaps it would not be out of place to give you a list of these sons of your prophets to verify the truth that they are in the line of your ancestry of the North Branford Church. Capt. Aaron Cooke, Dea. Samuel Harrington, Samuel Barnes, John Baldwin, Josiah Rogers, Joseph Linsley, Isaac Foote, Stephen Todd, Abel Munson, Abraham Bartholomew, Peter Tylor, Timothy Rose, Daniel Maltby, John Taintor and Joseph Elwell.

For a number of years while clearing and building and making homes in this North-land, it would seem that these growing families were united with North Branford in church privileges and during these years we must remember that these fathers and their children with them, started out early every Sabbath morning for a six or seven miles journey to join with those "who keep holy day" at the village on the other side of Totoket, when the saddle, the pillion and the ox-cart were the only conveniences for going to church. Surely we must say that in "ye olden days" the services of the sanctuary were held in high esteem and the preachers were men of God who could hold an audience two hours a. m. and two hours p. m. and still they would long for more, a mighty power for good.

But after eleven years of this weekly pilgrimage to North Branford, an independent Society was formed and this daughter of Zion was housed in a large, open, cold barn in comparison with our present church edifice, no heating only from a foot-stove, but let

any man even the skeptic and infidel, sit down and study the records of the births and baptisms, the revivals and church admissions, the Christian gifts to missions and say that God has not blessed and made this daughter fruitful and a blessing to the world. If they were all living today she could greet you as a daughter not equalled in any other church in the state in her number of liberally educated men and women. From forty to fifty of them have been graduated at Yale, some twenty-five have held diplomas from medical schools, from fifteen to thirty have entered the ministerial profession, such reverend and worthy names as Rogers, Tyler, Maltby, Rose, Houdley, Whitney, Page, Linsley not forgetting to mention Albert Barnes the great commentator of the Bible, also Eli Smith, missionary to Syria, who translated the Bible into the Syrian language. A goodly number of her sons, who have served their day in the different fields of professional labor; and over forty men representing the patriotism of Northford who served their country in the cause of liberty. If they were all present today the Northford daughter of 150 years could greet the daughter of 175 years with the honest exultation of the Roman mother, who pointed to her sons as they returned from the public schools, saying, "These are my jewels." Thus as we greet you with this record and roll of honor, we are impressed with the thought that we have had a past, a history not unworthy of our ancestors. Shall we have a future so blessed in fruits, this is a problem for us, and our children to work out; under God the places that know us no more in the flesh, shall feel the heaven of our virtues, our prayers in future ages.

It is for the present members of these churches to honor these memories for all they were, for they labored and we enter into their labors. Shall some unknown chronicler a hundred years from today recall the twentieth century and find it bright and flaming with honored names and noble deeds, and sacrifices, among our translated members? Thus we hope and pray for greater things in the future history of these daughters of Israel.

Oh for Godly parents, who like Noah are alarmed to build an ark to save the family when there are no signs of storm in the sky, no east wind or sun-dog in the west and sons, to man the life boats to save the wreck of a lost world like Abraham to give their sons and daughters to the Lord, Jacobs and Eljahs and the Syro-

phenician woman to honor his faithfulness as the hearer of importunate prayer for many a Moses to choose the afflictions of God's people and to stamp with vanity the pleasure seeker, the gambler or the glories of Egypt, young Davids to fell the giant and cut off the head of king alcohol, stiff-kneed Shadrach Meshach and Abed-nego to defy the proud pontiff of Bel and the golden money god of to-day, Daniels to decipher the handwritings on the walls rising up between monopolies and labor unions, Josephs to organize a gospel trust to feed the starving millions, with bread that cometh down from Heaven. A hundred years hence it shall then be the greeting as now in the language of the prophet, "Lift up thine eyes round about and behold all these gather themselves together and come to thee." "As I live saith the Lord thou shalt surely clothe thee with them as with an ornament and gird thyself with them like a bride." "The children of thy bereavement shall yet say in thy ears the place is too straight for us, give place that I may dwell; and kings shall be thy nursing fathers and their queens thy nursing mothers."

As John in his epistle saluted an honorable matron so the older of Northford to the elect lady and her children of North Branford "whom I love in the truth and not I only but also all they who have known the truth for the truths sake which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and in us and shall be with us forever, grace be with you, mercy and peace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of the Father in truth and love. And now I beseech thee lady that we love one another. When we call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in our grandmother Lois and our mother Eunice."



GREETINGS

From Stony Creek Congregational Church

By Rev. S. F. Blomfield

Mr. Blomfield spoke in part as follows:—

IT is a matter of great pleasure that the "Baby Church" in Stony Creek can bring greetings to the sister of whom she is so proud. To all these pleasant words of greeting to which we have listened, to all these earnest words of hope and prayer, we utter a fervent amen. We fully enter into this jubilee and most sincerely congratulate you. May the coming years be crowned with signal blessings!

This is surely a great hour in the history of this splendid church. It is a wonderful blessing to be able to look back upon 175 years of useful and blessed past. Golden is your heritage. Priceless your privileges. What memories cluster about this old meeting house! Faces which we loved long since and have lost awhile look down upon us who to-day run the race and bear the toil. Hands that once wielded earth's heavy toils now beckon to us through the sacred shadows of this lovely autumn afternoon. Surely in this house we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses. Glorious indeed is the privilege of worshipping in this house. Here young man and maid pledged their troth and loving hearts went out together to life's battle. Here consecrated parents dedicated little precious loved ones to His service. Here you brought the sacred dead, and beneath the dark veil many a widow has found

her tears turned to comfort as the man of God spoke the sweet simple word of hope and light and immortality. Here where earth had proven empty and void, when the deeps were engulfing your souls, here, here you came and found that one sure Rock of Ages. Here at the Cross you dropped your burden, and bore a song away. Here, perhaps in that very corner, he could mark the spot in the dark, some young man first met his Lord face to face and knew his sins forgiven. Here strong men and women, I see them now, faces furrowed with care, hands hardened with toil, eyes limpid with tears and longing prayers, here they met and as they prayed, the spirit descended and lifted them up and they sat together in the Heavens. Oh beloved, there is no spot quite so dear, quite so precious to your hearts as this old meeting house on the Green!

Never forget her. Some of you will soon pass to the church above, ere you go, remember generously the church below. Endow her well. May she never want any good thing you can give her. So much has she done for you. Make the portals of this house, beautiful with all that good taste and consecrated love can afford. By symbolic memorial, in window, table or furnishing, by soul endowed music, and grateful prayer and service, make this none other than the very house of God, none other than the very gate of Heaven.

The hoary headed sires tell us that these galleries are not filled as of yore; that these seats are well nigh empty to what they used to be in those good old days. But banish forever the thought that the days of usefulness for these country churches are over.

A new race are taking your farms; yet these expect to become American citizens. They need the pre-eminently American Church. They hunger for the gospel, and their lives are starved without it. There are little children of your own families, yea there are strong men and women who need this church. Make the old meeting house glorious because filled with these—the first fruits of your Home Missionary labor. Then indeed shall these old walls be resplendent again as in the lightning—the Shokina cloud shall unfold this house as before, but vaster shall be its glory.

The ideal which dear genial Dr. Holmes has before put many an aspiring heart, I bring to you today.

"Build thee more stately mansions, Oh my soul!

As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last!
Shut thee from Heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving their outgrown shell by life's unresisting sea."



ADDRESS

By Rev. William R. Mulford of Fanwood, N. J.

Address of Rev. William R. Mulford of Fanwood, N. J., descendant of the fifth generation of Deacon Barnabas Mulford, one of the early deacons of the North Branford Church.

IN the development of the taste for the study of American Colonial History, which has at last become general throughout a large part of this country, there is cause for congratulation to all who take pleasure in the story of the past as well as to the comparatively few faithful local historians and antiquarians who have labored so long in the midst of such apathy as seems to have prevailed to so great an extent.

Yet how thrilling and romantic are the annals of our past and what valuable subject matter do they afford for the consideration of the philosopher, the theologian, the statesman and the political economist. That this remark is not extravagant we think is amply proved by the frequent boast of Americans, sometimes carried to a degree which becomes rude and offensive, that this is the most wonderful country on the face of the globe.

Now those who think, know very well that you cannot have effects without causes to produce them and, in the face of this universally accepted truth, it is, to say the least, marvelous that the necessity of becoming acquainted with the history of the causes which lie back of this wonderful civilization by which we are surrounded has occurred to so few.

Among the American Colonies founded by that wonderful peo-

ple who have done so much to dethrone tyranny and to rid the Christian Church of superstition and error, to thrust aside "the tradition of the elders" by which a corrupted Mediaeval priesthood had made the Word of God of none effect, was the Colony of New Haven.

That the Puritans had faults, that there were good and bad among them we do not deny. But we venture to believe that as history is studied in a more philosophic spirit and in the growth of true liberty, as prejudice and bigotry are cast aside, the Puritans will be still more admired and the great good which they achieved for the English race more thoroughly realized. It is too often forgotten that there were more parties or schools than one among the Puritans as there have been in other great movements. Then there is a distinction to be made between the Puritans and the Pilgrims of Plymouth and it has been claimed that the Puritans gradually came under the liberal and milder influences of the Pilgrims. There has always been a trend toward liberty and tolerance, anyway, and we are bold enough to say that we do not think any more noble characters could be found at that day among the English people than John Milton, Young Sir Harry Vane, the Rev. Roger Williams and the Rev. John Eliot, each being a product of Puritanism. Let us be fair enough to judge any party as well as any individual by the standard of the times and not expect the growth and expansion of nearly two centuries in the Puritans whom we may accuse of intolerance living in the American Colonies in 1690 or of narrowness in North Branford in 1727.

It is a delightful exercise for the imagination to picture in our minds our beloved Connecticut as it existed in all its fair unsullied natural beauty that April day in 1638 when the first colonists sailed into the harbor of New Haven. How vast her forests, how pure her lakes and rivers with the sapphire waters of Long Island Sound laving her Southern shore and, rising in the dim distance beyond those waters, the dim hills of that beautiful isle of the sea which stands out against the mighty breakers of the boisterous Atlantic. In our mind's eye we can see these colonists in their steeples crowned hats and broad white collars and sad colored clothing as they reverently gather in the shade of the Elm to worship the God of their fathers and for the imagination moves quickly—we can see them later on as their little settlement be-

gins to take outward form and shape. The different characters seem to pass before us the dignified Theophilus Eaton, Esquire, the brave Rev. John Davenport, the pastor of the people, with his lofty ideal and hope of a new theocracy. Then the individuals and circumstances begin to crowd thick and fast upon us and we think of the great faith of those simple brave Christian hearts and of the wonderful answers which they claim came in reply to the prayer of faith. We think of the courage and fortitude of those who sailed away in that unseaworthy "Phantom Ship," of Master Lamberton and stout hearted Gregson and doughty Captain Turner, the undaunted soldier of fortune, who after his campaigns in the Netherlands had served the Puritan colonies well in council and in field.

By these colonists Branford was purchased in December 1638 and, though in 1644 the tract was sold to William Swain for the benefit of those in Wethersfield who might desire to move here, yet New Haven influences must have been felt for it was the larger colony. The family names of those who were identified with the founding of New Haven are inscribed on the monuments in your burial ground and written on the town records and, perhaps, they are still to be met within the village. After the migration of the Rev. Mr. Pierson and his people to New Jersey, however, we find a gradual accession of population from various quarters. My ancestor, Deacon Barnabas Mulford, came from old East Hampton on Long Island apparently at about the same time as Edward Petty, his father-in-law. As the Branford record quaintly reads under the date April 30, 1740:—"Then was Barnabas Mulford married to Hannah Petty both of Branford pr. ye Rev. Jonath Merick minister." Edward Petty represented Branford in the Colonial Assembly in 1752 and 1753 and Barnabas Mulford in 1762. The latter was a great grandson of William Mulford who was at Southampton in 1644 and afterwards one of the earlier settlers of East Hampton, 1648-9. When Charles II annexed Eastern Long Island to the Colony of New York he did not succeed in breaking the real connection between the homogeneous people who dwelt on both sides of the Sound, the old intimacy continued and names from the insular New England settlements may be found at Branford as at other places in Connecticut. Then there is the Russell family, founded in this town by the Rev. Samuel Russell, son of

the pastor of Hadley in whose home the regicides, Whalley and Goffe found a secluded abiding place so long. Then, of course, it is a distinguished honor that Yale College should have been really started at Branford in the parsonage of the Rev. Samuel Russell—but I will not proceed with further details for I am only here to congratulate you and to honor the memory of our ancestors who established this parish and were identified with the same in years gone by. Suffice it to say that North Branford was the outgrowth of old Branford. Our ancestors had very good taste to make a settlement in the midst of this fair scene. As I think of my first visit to this village which was made quite unexpectedly some years ago, the beauty of your surrounding scenery as it looked that charming autumn afternoon, very much like this, stands out in all distinctness before me.

We honor the old parish and we will cherish the history of its founders and their example for, as Morton Dexter has said of the Pilgrims at the end of their story which he has written so well, we may say of the best of the Puritans who were after all Pilgrims and travelers in those troublous times:—

"The Pilgrims long ago rested from their labors and entered into their reward. But their works still follow them. The multitude of their descendants in the flesh does well to honor their memory and the far greater and ever increasing host of their spiritual children never will cease to reverence them. But even reverence will be empty unless accompanied by imitation. Both the need and the opportunity of the spirit of the Pilgrims still continue among us."



LETTERS

Read at the One Hundred and Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Church

Letter of Rev. E. L. Clark, Former Pastor

Dalton, Mass., Oct. 7, 1902.

Dear Bro. Countryman,

I was glad to receive your letter and wish it were possible for me to be with you on this most interesting occasion. As this is not possible I very gladly comply with your invitation to send some words of greeting and kind remembrance to you and the church.

The one hundred and seventy-fifth birthday of the North Branford Congregational Church is and must be an occasion of the deepest interest to every one who has ever loved as I did the church and the town. The first time I ever saw North Branford which was on the morning of my first Sabbath with the church, I conceived a strong liking for the place and this soon grew into strong affection after it became my home. I began my work under somewhat trying circumstances but the clouds soon cleared away and for ten years I remained the pastor of a united happy and prosperous church. I found the church in an excellent state of spiritual life and activity and the very beginning of my ministry was marked by a season of deep and powerful religious interest. This state of spiritual vigor and prosperity I am happy to believe has continued from that day to this.

North Branford has been from the beginning a strong, prosperous and comparatively wealthy community. The early develop-

ment of both church and town was very rapid. At the end of the first fifty years one hundred and twenty-five years ago, I think both were as strong as they have been at any time since. From the beginning the church has been blessed with a long succession of exceptionally able ministers. Not to speak of the long and honorable record of the present pastorate, from the days of Pastor Merrick to the present time the pulpit of this church has rarely failed to be filled by a man of unusual ability, high character and commanding influence. The work of such a ministry has always been manifest in the constant well being of the church and the town.

And now in conclusion, my dear companion joins me in an expression of our heartiest congratulation for your past and your present, and our prayers and good wishes for your future. Our activities are past, our remaining days are few and as we quietly sit and patiently wait until our change shall come the great comfort of our declining years is in watching the growth of harvests in so many fields from seed which we have been permitted to sow.

And now wishing you grace, mercy and peace from Jesus Christ our Lord and every blessing of both the upper and the nether springs upon your whole church and family life. I am, in the everlasting bonds of Christian fellowship and love,

Your former pastor,

E. L. Clark.

Letter of D. F. Atwater, M. D., Springfield, Mass

Letter of D. F. Atwater, M. D., of Springfield, Mass., son of the Rev. Charles Atwater, third pastor of the church.

Rev. F. Countryman,

North Branford, Conn.,

My Dear Sir:—

It would give me peculiar pleasure to accept your kind invitation and be present at the 175th anniversary of your church, but the state of my health will not permit.

Were I with you, I fail to see how I could, as you suggest, greet you on your arrival at the 175th mile stone of your earthly

pilgrimage, as I have not quite yet, and probably shall not, reach that point myself. But whether present or absent, I can extend to you my heartiest congratulations that you can look back to so many years of active service for our blessed Lord and Master in the past, as you assume new courage and strength for the future.

I congratulate you upon having arrived at a serene old age,—so to speak, as we count time—although the church of the over living God will never come to its declining years, and also congratulate you, that beneath the "Blessed tie that binds" you together, are suggestions of Christian love and friendship that can never grow old or fade away.

Leaving North Branford at ten years of age, I do not remember anything I heard in the old meeting house, (so called,) but as my reverend father was the pastor and came of good Puritanical stock, I have no doubt the people were fed with good digestible spiritual food. But I do recall attending divine service there. The pews were square and the seats without cushions, of which fact I still have tender recollections.

The building itself, externally, was plainness personified—as plain as the preaching inside, and entirely devoid of ornament of any kind. Straight lines and square corners were everywhere visible, and having no chimney, it bore quite as much resemblance to a barn as a house of worship. At this time, (1825) the church services were of course the great event of the week. All the families, and all of the families, went to meeting Sunday morning, and stayed all day, the women in the winter, carrying their foot stoves, (as we shall soon be doing, if the coal strike continues,) and in summer their sprigs of fennel, gathered in the garden on the way. All of the respectable men of the town were regular attendants, whether members of the church or not. Protracted three days meetings and revivals had their influence upon the community. There was a strong intellectual element in the theology and preaching, at the same time, emotion had its place in religious experiences. Man's standing in the sight of God was dwelt upon more than the reproducing and incorporating in his conduct and daily life, the spirit and life of Christ. I can but think that we have a more rational idea of the Christian life. As was truly said at Northfield:—

"God does not love us because we are good; but to make us so.

As He does not set His love on us because of our deserts, so He does not turn it away from us because of our sins. He hates our sins, but He loves ourselves with a love that sin can neither wear out, nor turn away."

A characteristic of the New England mind in those days was the control of life by principle or motive, rather than inclination. If a thing was to be done, it must be done without regard to feeling, and no moral anesthetic must be used. To such an extent was this carried, that it is said that when a man was on his death bed, to relieve faintness, a bottle of camphor was held to his nostrils. But if dying was the thing to be done the good man wanted no temporizing, and he refused it, saying, "No, No, I shall never die so."

The old meeting house stood where the present church stands and when the new one was erected, I used to look with fear and trembling, at the weather vane, which was an angel blowing a trumpet, suggestive, as I supposed then, of the sounding of the last trump, but more probably signifying the proclamation of "Glad tidings of great joy."

Near by, stood the red school house, with its school ma'am, stone fire place, slab seats and rosy cheeked boys and girls. I prize very highly a copy of the New England Primer, (now lying before me as I write,) on the fly leaf of which is written with red and black ink:—"The property of David Atwater, Dec. 15, 1826." Below is the face of an angel, but I do not see any family resemblance. The Rev. Charles Atwater was settled for life as pastor of this church in 1809. Of his descendants there are now living two children, four grandchildren, and four great grandchildren. He was I should say about six feet in height, with large frame, dark eyes and complexion, heavy eyebrows, round face, strong voice and a slow measured gait. He had an earnest manner that commanded attention, and his sermons, as I judge from one that I have, were not brilliant but methodical, biblical, earnest and impressive, always closing with an improvement or reflection.

That the delivery of a sermon in those days was no trifling matter and that the preacher warmed up as he progressed, is illustrated by the following incident. "Are you the son of Priest — of North Branford," said an old Branford fisherman to a visitor a few years ago? Being answered in the affirmative, he replied,

"I have often heard him preach and one hot summer day, he became so much interested in his subject that he removed his coat and finished in his shirt sleeves. Probably many of his congregation had already set him the example.

Exchanges with the neighboring ministers, Mr. Dutton of Guilford, Noyes of Northford, Gillett of Branford and Wetmore of North Guilford were quite common in summer, never, however going or coming on the Sabbath day, unless in case of sickness in the family. I seem to have been unusually fortunate in the selection of both my parents; (I do not mean our first parents, Adam and Eve, or the parents which the evolutionist gives us, as I am not especially proud of either.) It is not wise to inquire too minutely into our remote ancestry under any circumstances. I may be pardoned for saying a word here about the minister's wife and paying tribute to my dear mother, for she was a very active, sympathetic and helpful and by no means silent member of the ministerial household. She had dark hair, black eyes, regular features, clear complexion and a smile which was a benediction in itself. These added to her lovely character and natural endowments, made her a favorite far and near. Frail and delicate in appearance, she possessed courage and endurance which carried her serenely through trials and perplexities which would have severely taxed the strength of one more robust and vigorous. Although naturally reserved, she was faithful to the utmost in the discharge of all her religious duties, and after the death of my father always conducted family prayers herself, whether strangers were present or not. I can see her now in that upper chamber, (the study,) with a few mothers in Israel, met to seek the Divine blessing upon their own and other households. Her petitions and supplications were always accompanied with thanksgiving, for she was always thankful whatever happened, having for the stay of her soul her trust in Christ. I often look back to the early years of my life spent in North Branford. The memory of its little river and hills—of my school days, of the boys and girls who grew up and some of whom went out to other places, of the "general training" days when the "troopers" (as we called them,) came to town, of Capt. Jonathan Rose, so courtly and gracious and cordial in his manner, of Capt. Harrison, who at regular intervals, personally conducted on horseback, a drove of fat cattle to the New York market, and last,

but not least, the wild strawberries gathered on the top of the hill in the rear of the parsonage, not alone, but with two little girls, one of them Mary Parker,—why I should remember her name and not the others, I leave you to guess—whom I then considered, and I have no doubt they were, sweeter than the berries we gathered, or the red clover we trampled down.

But that was very long ago!

"Now were not wishes all in vain,

I tell you what my wish could be;

I'd wish to be a boy again,

Back with the friends I used to know,

For I was, oh! so happy then,

But that was very long ago."

Seriously, however, the church in North Branford is and always has been, dear to my heart, and in closing I wish you God-speed.

May the God of our fathers and our father's fathers continue to guide and bless you and grant that you may be the means of bringing many souls into His kingdom, and that we may all so live, that when we pass away, the light of our past lives, shining along the pathway of those we leave behind, shall lead others to follow Christ. And to Him be all the praise.

David F. Atwater.

Springfield, Mass.,

October 10th, 1902.

