

**American Antiquarian Society  
Manuscript Collections**

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**NAME OF COLLECTION:**

First Unitarian Church (Worcester, Mass.), Records, 1783-1963  
“W”  
“W”  
“W”

**LOCATION(S):**

Mss. boxes  
Octavo vols.  
Folio vol.s.

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**SIZE OF COLLECTION:**

eighteen manuscript boxes; twenty-seven octavo volumes; twelve folio volumes

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**SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON COLLECTION:**

For a history of the Church, see Charles Nutt, *History of Worcester and Its People* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1919), vol. 2, pp. 883-885.

There is a typescript volume in General Genealogies under “First,” titled *Index of Birth, Marriage, and Death Records of the 1<sup>st</sup> Unitarian Church of Worcester* (Worcester WPA, 1936).

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**SOURCE OF COLLECTION:**

Deposit of First Unitarian Church (Worcester, Mass.)

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**COLLECTION DESCRIPTION:**

In 1785 a segment of the membership of the First Congregational Church in Worcester, Massachusetts, broke from that church due to a dispute over the selection of Rev. Dr. Aaron Bancroft (1755-1839) as minister. The new church was incorporated in 1787 as the Second Congregational Church, or Second Parish, in Worcester under the ministry of Rev. Bancroft. Later, it became known as the First Unitarian Church. The original meetinghouse, built in 1791, was destroyed by fire in 1849 and rebuilt in 1851. A second rebuilding occurred in 1939 following a hurricane.

The records of the First Unitarian Church span the period 1783 to 1963 and include much information concerning the church's founding, incorporation, financial history, and the ministries of Bancroft, Alonzo Hill (1800-1871), Austin Samuel Garver (1847-1918), and Edwin Mitchell Slocombe (1881-1947). The records also contain information derived from newsclippings concerning more recent ministries and church events. The manuscript boxes

include warrants calling for parish meetings, minutes of meetings, membership records, detailed reports of various church committees, bonds, commissions, land and pew deeds, pew plans, and extensive specifications for the rebuilding of the church. There are tax collectors' and assessors' records, treasurers' accounts, printed church programs and articles of government, Sunday School registers, subscription lists for the purchase of specific church items, and many receipts, bills, and sundry accounts.

Church correspondence includes letters from the ministers to the assessors concerning salaries or resignations, letters of condolence from the membership upon the death of a minister, and invitations to installations. The collection also contains the "Specifications of the Causes of Complaint: First Parish of Lunenburg, [Mass.] vs. Rev. Ebenezer Hubbard (-1858)," which was heard before an Ecclesiastical Council in 1828.

The octavo and folio volumes are largely financial records, such as valuation lists, officers' accounts, pew plans and rentals, Sunday School records, and records of memberships, marriages, and deaths. There are also biographical records of parish members kept by various ministers, and the last sermons (bound originals) delivered by Bancroft and Hill. Parishioners whose names frequently appear on subscription lists, land deeds, or bequests are Isaiah Thomas (1749-1831), Edward Dillingham Bangs (1790-1838), and Stephen Salisbury II (1798-1884).

See Contents List.

29 March 1978  
revised 8 March 2007

**American Antiquarian Society**  
**MANUSCRIPTS DEPARTMENT**

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- Octavo Volume 1: Records of Marriages and Deaths, 1785-1839  
--includes marriages performed by Rev. Aaron Bancroft, 1786-1839; records of deaths and causes, 1785-1839
- Octavo Volume 2: Records of Marriages, 1828-1919  
--most performed by Rev. Alonzo Hill
- Octavo Volume 3: Records of Members of the Second Parish, 1827-1832  
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- Octavo Volume 5: List of Members of the Second Parish, 1840-1841
- Octavo Volume 6: Records of Members, 1851-1919  
--with occasional record of death
- Octavo Volume 7: Records of Parish Calls, 1827, Kept by Rev. Alonzo Hill  
--with biographical and/or genealogical notations concerning specific members
- Octavo Volume 8: Records of Officers and Members, 1842-1847  
--with marginal remarks
- Octavo Volume 9: Death Records, 1836-1919, Kept mainly by Rev. Alonzo Hill  
--with age of deceased, names of relatives, cause of death, and assessments of their character
- Octavo Volume 10: Records of Committees on Church Fairs, 1923-1928  
--including lists of members on sub-committees, and amounts earned
- Octavo Volume 11: Sunday School Superintendent's Record Book, 1868-1871  
--includes class registers, minutes of committee meetings, names of contributors
- Octavo Volume 12: Sunday School Superintendent's Record Book, 1879-1880
- Octavo Volume 13: Records of Assessors' Meetings, 1874-1891  
--with minutes of meetings
- Octavo Volume 14: Records of Assessors' Meetings, 1891-1914  
--includes election results and various committee reports
- Octavo Volume 15: Records of the Sale of Pews, 1829-1832  
--with names of purchasers, price appraised, and price paid
- Octavo Volume 16: Parish Tax Records, 1856-1857  
--includes real, personal, poll, and pew taxes
- Octavo Volume 17: Parish Tax Records, 1861-1866
- Octavo Volume 18: Parish Pew Taxes, 1871-1879

- Octavo Volume 19: Parish Pew Taxes, 1880-1890
- Octavo Volume 20: 37 Notebooks: Records of Parish Taxes and Valuations, 1807-1831  
--includes poll, real, personal, income, and pew taxes
- Octavo Volume 21: Parish Treasurer's Accounts, 1801-1831  
--with amount and descriptions of income and expenditures
- Octavo Volume 22: Parish Treasurer's Accounts, 1828-1899  
--with amounts of contributions and cost of church maintenance)
- Octavo Volume 23: Parish Treasurer's Accounts and Reports, 1829-1874  
--with descriptions of income and expenditures, and enumeration of contributions to various charitable societies
- Octavo Volume 24: Parish Treasurer's Accounts, 1830-1831
- Octavo Volume 25: Parish Treasurer's Accounts, 1847-1892  
--includes records of contributions, parish costs, donations to missions, and costs of building new church
- Octavo Volume 26: Last Sermon by Dr. Aaron Bancroft, 27 January 1839 (bound original)
- Octavo Volume 27: Last Sermon by Dr. Alonzo Hill, 1 October 1865 (bound original)
- Folio Volume 1: Second Parish Church Records, 1785-1909  
--includes copy of covenant of 1785 with signatures of original members; new covenant with signatures, 1898; minutes of church meetings, 1786-1850; baptismal records, 1785-1850
- Folio Volume 2: Second Parish Records, vol. 1, 1789-1821  
--includes warrants of parish meetings, minutes of meetings, lists of pew grants, treasurer's accounts
- Folio Volume 3: Second Parish Records, vol. 2, 1822-1846  
--with pew plans and copies of pew deeds
- Folio Volume 4: Second Parish Records, vol. 3, 1847-1850
- Folio Volume 5: Second Parish Records, vol. 4, c.1851-1885
- Folio Volume 6: Second Parish Valuation and Property Taxes, 1833-1834 (in Chart Form)
- Folio Volume 7: Second Parish Valuation Lists and Assessments, vol. 1, 1834-1839  
--with lists of poll, real, and personal taxes, true value and reduced value
- Folio Volume 8: Second Parish Valuation Lists and Assessments, vol. 2, 1840-1853
- Folio Volume 9: Second Parish Sunday School Records, 1887-1913

--includes minutes of committee meetings, officers' reports and School correspondence

- Folio Volume 10: Second Parish Records, 1785-1913  
--with lists of important dates in church's history, copy of covenant, records of church meetings and other business, and records of baptisms
- Folio Volume 11: Second Parish Pew Rentals, vol. 1, 1894-1902  
--includes owners' names, portions owned, and value of pew
- Folio Volume 12: Second Parish Pew Rentals, vol. 2, 1903-1912