

**American Antiquarian Society
Manuscript Collections**

NAME OF COLLECTION:

First Church (Worcester, Mass.), Records, 1724-1920

LOCATION(S):

Mss. boxes "F"
Octavo vols. "F"
Folio vols. "F"
Oversize mss. boxes "F"

SIZE OF COLLECTION:

three manuscript boxes; sixty-six octavo volumes; fifteen folio volumes; one oversize folder (3 items)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON COLLECTION:

For information concerning the Old South Church, see William Lincoln and Charles Hersey, *History of Worcester, Massachusetts* (Worcester: Charles Hersey, 1862) pp. 141-163; 318-319.

SOURCE OF COLLECTION:

The Old South Band of Hope records were the gift of Samuel E. Staples, 1877. The remainder of the collection was the gifts of the Trustees of the Old South Church, 1954, and of the Trustees of the First Congregational Church, 1978.

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION:

The First Church of Worcester, Mass., was organized in 1716. The first meetinghouse was erected in 1719, and the Rev. Andrew Gardner (1691-1773) was installed as the first minister. After 1854, it was more commonly referred to as the Old South Church, though never incorporated with that name. The church was incorporated as the First Church, Old South in 1908 and was called that until 1965 when it merged with the Tatnuck Congregational Church to form the First Congregational Church in Worcester.

Among its early pastors were Rev. Isaac Burr (1697-1751) and Rev. Thaddeus Maccarty (1721-1784). After the death of Rev. Maccarty in 1784, the church split due to the opposition of some church members to the election of Rev. Aaron Bancroft (1755-1839). The members who did not oppose the election of Bancroft formed the First Church, Second Parish of Worcester, Mass. (now known as the First Unitarian Church).

In 1790, Rev. Samuel Austin (1760-1830) was installed as pastor of the First Church. After his election as president of the University of Vermont in 1815, he remained pastor of the First Church in name only until 1818. Rev. Charles Augustus Goodrich (1790-1862) was called in 1815 to assist Rev. Austin and was installed as pastor in 1818. His election caused another split in the church in 1820. Rev. Goodrich

was dismissed in 1820 and was succeeded by Rev. Aretius Hull (1788-1826). Rev. Rodney Augustus Miller (1798-1876) was installed in 1827. He asked for and was granted his dismissal in 1844 after greatly increasing church membership. Other pastors included Rev. George Phillips Smith (1814-1852), 1845-1852; Rev. Horace James (1818-1875), 1853-1863; and Rev. Royal B. Stratton (1826-1875), 1867-1872.

The records of the First Church span the period 1724 to 1920, but concentrate on the ministries of Rev. Austin and Rev. Goodrich, 1790 to 1820. The records include warrants of meetings; minutes of meetings (church, committee, ecclesiastical council); reports (committee, officers, assessors); baptisms, marriages, and deaths; lists of church admissions, members, and members who have transferred from other churches; letters of recommendations for people seeking membership; complaints and confessions; pew deeds and valuations, tax assessments, a seating chart, and oaths of parish tax collectors; and business records (receipts, bills, accounts). There are also records of the Church Singers.

The collection also contains correspondence, including record books of communication between First Church and the First Church of Christ in Millbury, Mass., as well as letters of members requesting dismissal. There is correspondence to the Ecclesiastical Council concerning the dismissals of Rev. Burr, Rev. Austin, and Rev. Goodrich.

There is much in the collection regarding the controversy of the dismissal of Daniel Waldo (1763-1845) and other church members. There are legal notes, c. 1886, of Franklin Pierce Rice (1852-1919) regarding the trial for damages in removal of the church building from the Worcester Common. There are notes and drafts for a history, c. 1821, of the events leading to the dismissal of Rev. Goodrich.

The collection also contains records of the Old South Church Ladies' Foreign Missionary Association, the Old South Band of Hope, and the Tabernacle Congregational Church.

See Contents List.

**American Antiquarian Society
MANUSCRIPTS DEPARTMENT**

FIRST CHURCH (WORCESTER, MASS.), RECORDS, 1724-1920
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	2	Church Record Book, 1746-1784 --kept by Rev. Maccarty, with a record of church activities, 1746-1764; lists of church admissions, 1746-1784; baptisms, 1747-1761; members who had transferred from other churches, 1747-1753; and a copy of the church covenant, 1746
	3	Church Record Book, 1815-1816 --with minutes of church meetings and an 1816 list of church members
	4	Church Record Book, 1821-1822 --concerning the controversy of the dismissal of Daniel Waldo and other church members; included with copies of committee reports and minutes of church meetings
	5	Record Book, 1823-1824 --of communications between the First Church and the First Church of Christ in Millbury, Mass.
	6	Record Book, 1815-1820 --of sermons preached in the First Church, including the name of the minister, the date, biblical quotations, and occasional comments
	7	Record Book, 1844 --of the events leading to Rev. Miller's dismissal; with committee reports, petitions, and correspondence
	8	Record Book, 1845-1851 --of marriages; listing the couples' names, ages, residences, occupations, and parents' names
	9	Record Book, 1845-1847; 1848-c.1850 --of deaths; listing the deceased's name, age, and date and cause of death
	10	Church Correspondence, 1730-1732; 1787-1817 --especially concerning finances and correspondence between Rev. Goodrich and Daniel Waldo concerning Waldo's dismissal
	11	Church Correspondence, 1818-1820; 1901-1920 --including letters of members requesting dismissal and correspondence concerning the dismissal of Rev. Goodrich
BOX	FOLDER	CONTENTS
1		Records Books and Correspondence, 1745-1920 (cont.)

	12	Letters of Recommendation, 1793-1819 --of people seeking membership in the Old South Church
2		Church Records, 1724-1886
	1	Minutes of Parish Meetings, 1724; 1787-1823 --concerning finances; the choice of parish officers; the dismissal of Rev. Austin, 1818; the installation of Rev. Goodrich, 1815; and his dismissal, 1820, along with the dismissal of Daniel Waldo and other church members
	2	Committee Reports, undated; 1775-1824 --including reports on church repairs and finances; the dismissal of Rev. Austin, 1818; the dismissal of Rev. Goodrich, 1820, and the controversy about the dismissal of Daniel Waldo and other church members
	3	Ecclesiastical Council Records, 1745; 1790-1820 --especially concerning the dismissals of Rev. Burr, 1745; Rev. Austin, 1818; and Rev. Goodrich, 1820
	4	Ecclesiastical Council Correspondence, 1818-1820 --concerning the dismissal of Rev. Goodrich
	5	Complaints, undated; 1796-1820 --against church members for sinning
	6	Confessions, undated; 1813-1819 --of church members for sinning
	7	Miscellaneous Church Records, 1776; 1816-1826; c.1886 --including pew deeds; membership certificates; marriage intention certificates; church covenant, 1776; records of the settlement of Rev. Goodrich, 1816; legal notes of Franklin Pierce Rice re: the trial of damages in removal of the church building from the Worcester Common, c.1886
3		Church Records, 1786-1901
	1	Warrants, 1787-1804 --to call parish meetings
	2	Warrants, 1805-1820; 1851; 1895-1901 --to call parish meetings
	3	Oaths, 1794-1820 --of parish tax collectors
	4	Records of the Church Singers, 1805-1828 --mostly concerning finances
	5-7	Receipts, Bills, and Accounts, undated; 1786-1843
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3		Church Records, 1786-1901 (cont.)
	8-9	Notes and Drafts, c.1821

--of a history of the events leading to the dismissal of Rev. Goodrich

**OCTAVO
VOLUME**

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Tax Record Books, 1788; 1790-1802; 1804-1817

--with lists of parish members; property valuations; polls; and the amount of tax due
(two copies per year)

1-2	1788
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58 Church Record Book, 1816-1820

--with minutes of parish meetings; copies of correspondence; petitions; and records of admissions and baptisms

59 Church Record Book, 1821-1826

--with membership list, 1826; lists of baptisms, 1821-1825; marriages, 1821-1824; admissions, 1821-1824; and funerals, 1821-1826

60 Church Record Book, 1834-1849

--with list of members, 1834; and new parishioners, 1834-1849

61 Treasurer's Account Book, 1862-1877

--listing income and expenditures

**OCTAVO
VOLUME**

CONTENTS

62 Ladies Foreign Missionary Association, Record Book, 1824-1850

--with minutes of annual meetings and accounts of money collected by members

- 63 Ladies Foreign Missionary Association, Record Book, 1851-1859
--with minutes of annual meetings and accounts of money collected by members
- 64 Ladies Foreign Missionary Association, Record Books, 1860-1871
--with minutes of annual meetings and accounts of money collected by members
- 65 Old South Band of Hope, Record Book, 1857-1862
--including the constitution, list of members; and minutes of meetings (which consisted of singing and recitations)
- 66 Old South Band of Hope, Membership Book, 1860
--with its pledge

**FOLIO
VOLUME**

CONTENTS

- 1 Church Record Book, 1787-1830
--with minutes of meetings; records of tax assessments; a seating chart; and pew valuations, 1828
- 2 Church Account Book, 1788-1831
--with a record of parish finances
- 3-6 Church Record Books, 1820-1900
--with membership lists; baptismal and death records; warrants for meetings; reports and minutes of committee and parish meetings
- 7 Parish Record Book, 1872-1897
--with reports of committees, church officers, and the parish treasurer; minutes of annual meetings, especially those concerned with finances
- 8-9 Parish Record Books, 1831-1871
--containing warrants to call meetings
- 10 Membership Book, 1850-1898
--with an 1850 parish membership list arranged alphabetically with additions to 1898
- 11-12 Parish Tax Books, 1818-1851
--listing parishioners, descriptions and valuations of real personal property, and the amount of tax due
- 13 Pew Tax Records, 1856-1871
--listing the pew number, the owner, and the tax on each pew

**FOLIO
VOLUME**

CONTENTS

- 14 Tabernacle Congregational Church Record Book, 1874-1880
--with the Articles of Association; list of members; rules; minutes of meetings; newspaper clippings; and correspondence interfiled in the volume
- 15 Parish Record Book, 1898-1908
--with minutes of annual and special meetings; reports of officers, assessors, and committees (some with loose notes)

**OVERSIZE
FOLDER**

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Treasurer's Accounts, 1794; 1796; 1806