

CHAPTER VI.

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY—MEETING-HOUSE.

THE Masonian grant or charter required that a good, convenient meeting-house be built within six years from the date of the charter, and made provision for that purpose by a gift of three hundred acres of land. No meeting-house appears to have been built when the town was organized. The next year after, on the 26th day of April, the matter of building a meeting-house was brought before the town. The town voted "to build one on the common, near the senter this and the ensuing year."

Voted, s^d house is to be forty feet wide, Fifty-five in Lenth. Posts twenty seven feet in Lenth. Roger Gilmore, William Turner Alex^r Mc-Neil a Committee to see the same affected, the above Committee to Vendue s^d house to the last bider.

At a meeting in July following, the town

Voted "to Reconsider their vote in Building a meeting-house also their vote in Chose of Committee, then Voted s^d meetinghouse Sixty feet in Lenth, Forty five wide, the Posts twenty seven feet in Lenth also Voted to have a Porch at each end of s^d hous.

Voted Mr. Roger Gilmore Mr. Will^m Turner, Mr. Mathew Wallace be a Committee to see the work affected in Building s^d house.

Voted that the Com^{ee} shall Expose s^d house to sail at Public Vendue by the first wednesday of Sept next, also Voted that the Great timber of s^d house be hewed by the first day of Decem^r next, also voted Fifteen Pounds L. M. towards building s^d house, to be Paid by the first day of December Next, also Voted that s^d house shall be Raised by the Middle of June

Next at the towns Cost. Voted sixty Pounds to be Paid by the middle of June next towards building s^d house. Also Voted that the whole cost shall be Paid by the first of June in the year 1776 as the afors'd house shall be Finished. That the Fraim be well under Pined with good stone and lime, and the outside all well Completed, and Collored like Rindge meting-house, and lower floor lead Duple, and Pulpit like that in Rindge meting house all the above work completed by the middle of June 1776."

At the next annual meeting, March 30, 1775, the town

Voted to Sell Lot No. 4 in the 6th Range, No. 12 and 20 in the first Range to Pay some of the Cost in Building the meeting house, and chose William Smiley, John Gilmore Roger Gilmore a Com^{ee} to make sail of the aforsaid Lots, also voted to sell the aforsaid Lots at Publick Vendue, to the highest Bidder, also Voted to sell the Pew Ground in the meeting-house in s^d town, to pay the first cost in Building the meeting-house at Public Vendue. Voted the building Com^{ee} Provide all things necessary to rase s^d meetinghouse at the town cost.

In December of the same year the town

Voted to sell Lot No 14 R 2 for the Benefit of a school in s^d town. Voted to Hire the mony the afors^d Lot shall be sold for, to Pay in Part the Charges in Building the meetinghouse and pay the use of s^d money anuly to support a school in s^d town.

It would seem from the following vote that the committee chosen to sell the public lands had failed to do it.

" Voted to Dismiss the Com^{ee} chosen to sell the Public land, and choose Capt Jona. Stanley Mr Roger Gilmore Mr W^m Turner a Com^{ee} to sell all the Publick Land Voted to be sold, at Private or Public sale as they think proper."

In 1776 there is no record of anything being done in relation to the meeting-house. In 1777 the town voted " to finish the meeting-house this year." In 1778, April 2,—

" Voted to build the Body Seats. Chose Simeon Stickney, Joseph Bats & Daniel Emery a Com^{ee} to Effect the same."

Apr. 20, Voted thirty Pounds to Build the Body Seats. also chosen Sam^l Adams & Jonathan Stanley to lay out the meet-

inghouse ground. Voted to have 12 pews on the South End of the two squares of the meetinghouse Ground.

Nov. 26, Voted to finish the meetinghouse this year and next. Chose Eleazer Spofford, Joseph Bates, Phineas Spaulding and John Cutter a Com^{ee} to effect the same.

Voted to Finish the Pews and sell them.

In 1779, Jan. 14, the town

Voted to sell the Pews to the hiest Bidder that belongs to the town, Except them that do not belong to the Society, or that have been against paying anything towards building the house.

Voted that the purchaser of the Pews shall pay one third part of the price down, another third in six months and the remainder when the Pew is finished.

Chose William Smiley Vendue Master.

Voted. that the Vendue of the Pews begin on Thursday the 21 of Jan. inst at nine of the Clock before noon and the Vendue Master deliver up what money he gits to the Committee.

Voted to finish the Pews with Banisters, and to have one Pew less on the wall on the West side of the Pulpit.

Voted that if any man Neglects to pay the first payment, his vote shall afterwards be taken no notice of, but the pew exposed to sale again, and if any man pay the first and second payments and Neglect to pay the third, he shall forfeit all he has paid, and his Pew exposed to sale again.

Voted eleven Pews to be on the south side of the gallery on the wall on the south side of the house and seven on each Gallery on the wall of the two ends of the house and two on each corner of the front Gallery.

Voted to hang the seats with hinges.

May 22, 1779. Notice is hereby given to the inhabitants of Jaffrey that the sale of the Pews that remain unsold, likewise the sale of all such Pews as the former Purchasers thereof who have not fulfilled the articles of sale for the pews in the meetinghouse, will be on Wednesday the ninth day of June next, at two of the clock in the afternoon at the meetinghouse.

W^m Smiley, Vendue Master.

In 1780, Mar. 30, Art. 3 of the warrant,—

To see if the town will make any allowance to Capt. Henry Coffeen for the Barrel of Rum that he paid for, which was expended at the Raising of the meetinghouse.

Voted that the Selectmen settle with Capt. Coffeen in behalf of the town.

PEW-OWNERS, 1780.

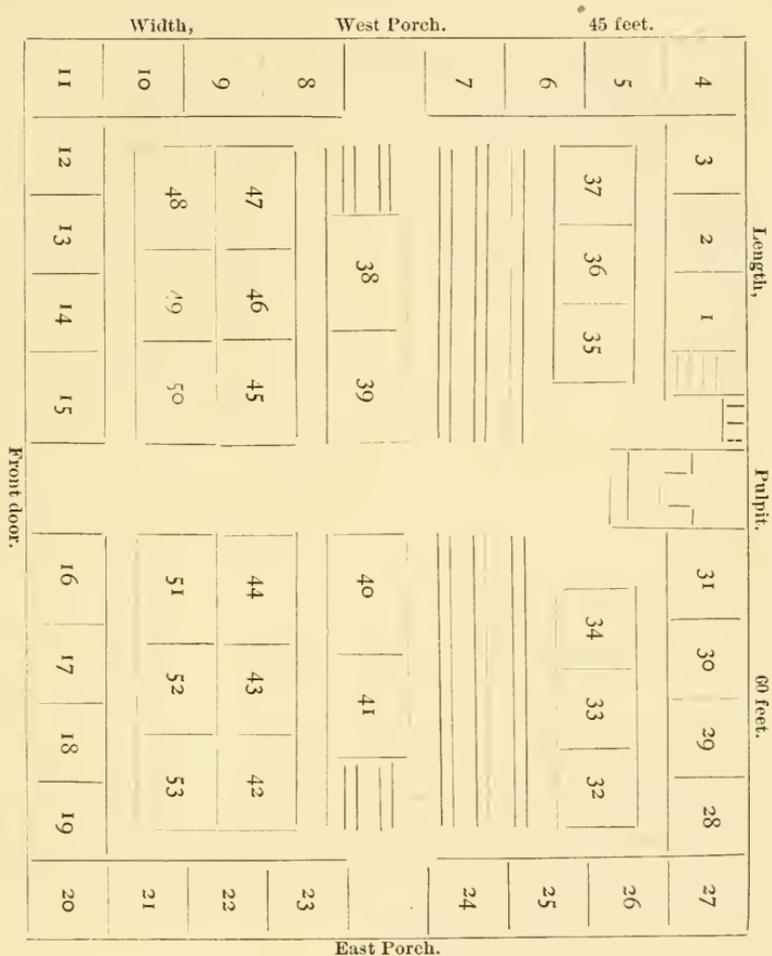
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|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Roger Gilmore, Esq., | 28. Lt. James Stevens, |
| 2. Capt. Joseph Cutter, | 29. Capt. James Gage, |
| 3. Ig ⁿ Joseph Wilder, | 30. Benj ⁿ Nutting, |
| 4. Doct. A. Howe, | 31. Simon Warren, |
| 5. Joseph Brooks, | 32. Oliver Proctor, |
| 6. Capt. Benj ⁿ Spaulding, | 33. Eleazer Spofford, |
| 7. Lt. Moses Worcester, | 34. John Briant, |
| 8. Oliver Bailey, | 35. Rev. Laban Ainsworth, |
| 9. Phineas Spaulding, | 36. Abel Parker, Esq., |
| 10. Phin ^s Spaulding, | 37. Dr. A. Howe, |
| 11. Capt. Jos. Perkins, | 38. Lt. Sam ^l Buss, |
| 12. John Davidson, | 39. Eleazer Spofford, |
| 13. Jos. Thorndike, Esq., | 40. Nathan Hall, |
| 14. Capt. Jona ⁿ Stanley, | 41. Benj ⁿ Dole, |
| 15. Lt. Joseph Bates, | 42. John Kent, |
| 16. Eg ⁿ Alexander Milliken, | 43. Lt. Jacob Pierce, |
| 17. Thorndike and Page, | 44. Wid ^w Lois Stanley, |
| 18. Lt. William Turner, | 45. Joseph Turner, |
| 19. John Gilmore, | 46. Samuel Pierce, |
| 20. Isaac Bailey, | 47. Capt. Sam ^l Adams, |
| 21. Capt. Daniel Emery, | 48. Ebn ^r Stratton. |
| 22. Dea. Daniel Emery, | 49. Eg ⁿ Francis Wright. |
| 23. Thomas Mower, | 50. Peter Jones, |
| 24. Robert Harkness, | 51. Dea. William Smiley, |
| 25. Lt. John Harper, | 52. Nehemiah Green, |
| 26. Capt. Samuel Adams, | 53. Oliver Hale. |
| 27. Eleazer Spofford, | |

PEWS IN THE GALLERY.

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| 1. Lt. Jereme Underwood, | 14. Doct. A. Howe, |
| 2. Ebn ^r Thompson, | 15. Collins Hathorn, |
| 3. Abram Ross, | 16. Josiah Belknap, |
| 4. Charles Davidson, | 17. Nehemiah Green, |
| 5. Doct. A. Howe, | 18. Samuel Stanley, |
| 6. Daniel Priest, | 19. Daniel Priest, |
| 7. Jona. Priest, | 20. John Buckley, |
| 8. Kendal Pierson, | 21. Sam ^l Adams, |
| 9. Capt. Joseph Perkins, | 22. Isaac Bailey, |
| 10. Lt Sam ^l Buss, | 23. Abijah Carter. |
| 11. Benj. Whitmore, | 24. William Emery, |
| 12. Eleazer Spofford, | 25. Lt. Thomas Adams. |
| 13. David Cutter, | |

Recorded August 30, 1791.

by Ado^h Howe, Town Clerk.



After the sale of the pews followed the payment for the same. We have no record of the price of pews sold at public vendue, and can only judge of their value by the record of the sale of a pew,—No. 16, Dunlap to Pope,—for ten pounds (\$33.34); one, Arthur Taylor to Spofford, No. 39, and one, Jonathan Taylor to Robert Harkness, No. 24, for ten pounds each; two pews, Adams to Thorndike and Page, one on the lower floor, No. 26, and one in the gallery, No. 2, for fifteen pounds,—probably ten pounds for the

lower pew, and five for the one in the gallery. That there were some delinquent payers for pews bought at the vendue appears by a vote of the town, Sept. 17, 1789, "that the Com^{ee} appointed to Finish the meeting-house, post those pews that are unpaid for, for sale the first monday of Oct. next, unless paid for before." As we have no record to the contrary, it seems quite likely that payment was duly made.

In 1781, a committee of three, viz., William Pope, Dr. A. Howe, and Nehemiah Greene, was chosen "to recon with the building committee." In 1784 another committee, viz., Daniel Emery, John Gilmore, and James Gowing, was chosen for the same purpose, and quite likely met with the same result. In 1787, Sept. 3, the town

Voted not to Except the finishing of the inside of the meetinghouse.

Voted to refer the settlement with Mr. Adams to the old Com^{ee} chosen for that purpose.

No settlement being made, in 1789, Dec. 21, the town again

Voted not to Except of the meetinghouse as it is now finished, and also Voted, to choose a Com^{ee} to settle with Capt. Adams if they can agree, and if not, to have power to Refer the matter to Referees. Chose Esq. Parker, Dea. Spofford and Capt. Spaulding for said Committee. Voted that if Capt. Adams will not settle nor Refer the said matter that the said Com^{ee} have power to prosecnte his bonds to final Judgment and Execution.

In 1792, August 27, the town

Voted to have a box put to the meetinghouse with a glass door for the purpose of putting the town Notifications into.

In 1796, August 29, the town voted two hundred dollars in part towards underpinning and repairing the meetinghouse. A committee of three,—Dr. A. Howe, John Coughran, and Dea. E. Spofford,—had been appointed at a previous meeting to ascertain what repairs were necessary; among which a good underpinning of hewn stone, fifteen inches thick, and that the house be painted with a light

stone color, was recommended by the committee and accepted by the town. A committee of three,—Dr. A. Howe, Jereme Underwood, and Roger Gilmore,—was chosen to repair the house.

In 1798, March 6, the town voted to paint the meeting-house, and raised one hundred and sixty-seven dollars and sixty-seven cents for that purpose. The house was painted probably for the first time, as we have no record of any money having been previously voted for that purpose. The meeting-house was raised in 1775 and finished in 1799, a period of twenty-four years. It was built after the style of the day, with square pews; a gallery on three sides of the house, supported in front by fluted pillars; a pulpit, built after the English style, high and dignified in appearance, reached by two flights of stairs, with a pew in front for the elders, and a slip for the deacons; over the pulpit was a sounding-board of huge dimensions, suspended from the timbers above. The house was entered by two porches, one at each end of the house, and a front door. In the gallery was a tier of pews next to the walls of the house, twenty-five in number, in front of which on a lower platform opposite the pulpit were seats for the choir, and also free seats on the east and west sides, which were usually occupied by the younger portion of the congregation.

The pews in the lower part of the house were divided into body and wall pews. The wall pews were raised one step higher than the body pews. They were all about five feet square, with a seat on two sides, and room for a chair in the centre, usually occupied by some elderly lady belonging to the family. The seats were hung on hinges, for the purpose of raising them during prayers, making the standing position less tiresome during their continuance. The only evil growing out of their use was the discordant noise occasioned by their fall at the close.

In front of the pulpit, looking to the front door, the aisle was wider than the others; hence it was called the broad

aisle. The pews on this aisle were considered more valuable than the others. Near the pulpit, in front of the body pews, were free seats, usually occupied by poor and aged people. These were the first seats built in the house, and for a time were occupied by the congregation. The increase of population, however, created a want of more pews, and consequently the seats were removed and pews built in their places. The proceeds from the sale of the pews were used in the purchase of a bell in 1823. Cost of the bell in Boston, \$440.30.

No provision was made for warming the house till about 1818 or 1820, when a stove was placed in the broad aisle, in front of the pulpit, and the heat carried by a funnel attached to the front of the galleries around the house. Previous to this no fire was used in the house except in foot-stoves carried by old ladies. At intermission, or noon-time, in winter, the female portion of the congregation retired to some neighboring house, where provision was made for their warmth by a good fire, from which they filled their foot-stoves for afternoon service. The men and boys went to the hotel, or tavern, as it was then called, and spent their noon-time in drinking flip and warming up for the afternoon service. The boys, if not allowed to drink, had the benefit of a good fire, which they carefully improved while the fathers were drinking.

From this time (1800) but little appears on the town records relating to the meeting-house till after the passing of the toleration act in 1819. Previous to the passage of this act the minister was settled and supported by the town. Every person, irrespective of his religious belief, was taxed for that purpose. After its passage each individual was taxed as before, but had the privilege of appropriating it for the support of the minister of any religious denomination. This condition of things gave rise to a question relating to the occupation of the meeting-house. This question was settled by a vote of the town, April 20, 1822, "to allow each

and every religious denomination in Jaffrey to have the use of s^d house on sabbath days in proportion to the valuation of their property." The town also voted "to repair s^d house, and chose Dea. David Gilmore, W^m. Hodge, Dr. A. Howe, W^m Dutton & Sam^l Patrick a Com^{ee} to examine the house, and report." May 6, 1822, the committee made the following report: "That in their opinion the s^d house is worth repairing. That it will be necessary to strip the clapboards from the body of the house, and new clapboard, trim and paint the same." The report was accepted, and the sum of three hundred dollars raised to defray the expense in part of repairing the meeting-house, and the selectmen were authorized to contract for the repairs and superintend the same.

The town also voted "that individuals may have liberty to put up a belfry at the west end of the meeting-house and hang a bell in the same, provided, it does not enhance the expense of repairing said house." The belfry was built by subscription, and in 1823 the town furnished a bell.

At the same meeting the town voted "that each and every religious society in Jaffrey report to the selectmen the names of all those belonging to their society who pay taxes in Jaffrey." Also, voted "that each society of Christians in Jaffrey may claim their right to the s^d house, agreeable to the vote of the town, as soon as it shall have been repaired."

In 1823, at the annual meeting, the following was presented:

These Certify that we the subscribers are of the Baptist denomination and mean to support the Gospel Ministry in that order and request the Town Clerk of Jaffrey to record our several names on the town book as belonging to that denomination as we wish not to be taxed for the support of the Rev. Laban Ainsworth.

Abel Parker
Alpheas Crosby
Benj Haywood Jr
Eldad Prescott
Simeon Blanchard

Nathan Hunt
Benjⁿ Prescott.
Joseph Joslin
Thomas French
Paul Hunt

Thomas French Jr.
Daniel Emory
Azeal Gowing
Berzilla Stickney
Moses Stickney

The Universalists having now the whole possession of the house, found it too large for their convenience, and in 1844 built one for themselves at East Jaffrey.

From this time the old meeting-house was no longer used by the town for religious worship, but only for town purposes, till 1870, when the town voted to raise the sum of \$1,000 to defray the expense of finishing a hall for the purpose of holding town-meetings, and a room for a high school, provided individuals would subscribe a sum sufficient to complete the same. The sum was raised and the house altered, and one term of the high school taught therein each year.

In November, 1872, the town, by their vote, accepted the sum of \$944, the gift of John Conant, Esq., as a basis of a perpetual fund for the purpose of keeping the house in good repair. In case of failure or neglect on the part of the town to keep in good repair the said house, the said fund shall be given to District No. 7 for the same purpose.