

First Parish (Unitarian) Church Collection
Bulk dates: 1720 - 1960
Pamphlet Collection, PC - 17

1 box (5 linear inches)

Historical Sketch: Built in 1718 (as a result of the separation and incorporation of the North Precinct of Plymouth into the parish of Kingston), the first church building in Kingston resembled a barn or chapel more than a church, though according to one historical sketch, the church building was still more imposing than that of in Plymouth (the parish of Kingston was the fifth parish to break away from Plymouth and construct its own church building.) The first minister to preach in the parish was the Reverend Joseph Stacey in 1720. Reverend Stacey was the town pastor until his death in 1741.

In 1742, the Reverend Thaddeus McCarty, a Liberal, known for his temper, replaced Stacey. A controversy arose when McCarty invited the controversial Reverend George Whitfield to preach. When Whitfield arrived to preach, parishioners literally locked Whitfield and McCarty out of the church, insulting and inflaming McCarty (who quickly resigned.)

In 1746, Reverend William Rand became the third minister for the Town of Kingston and preached until his death in 1779. During Rand's occupancy, the church building was enlarged, a steeple and bell added, and the building was used for storage of arms, ammunition, etc... during the Revolutionary War. Following Rand, the Reverend Zephaniah Willis served Kingston for close to 67 years.

In 1789 the church building (also known as the meetinghouse, as town meetings were held in there) was rebuilt, larger, though on the same location. Money was raised by the sale of pews and in the end the 'second' meetinghouse was four times larger than the first. After the completion of the second meetinghouse in 1798, a surplus of funds was voted to be used to establish an accumulating fund, of which the interest would pay the salary of the minister. After this concept was voted on and approved, a number of parishioners protested and asked for a recall of the act. The recall was denied by legislation, and ill feelings emerged. In 1804 thirty families withdrew from the parish and established the Baptist Church. The First Church gradually lost its place in town business (as a meetinghouse) as a town house was built in 1840

Scope and Content: This Collection contains information that explores the history and development of the First Parish Church into the Unitarian Church of Kingston. Key folders in this Collection include historical sketches (1:12), early records of the Church (1:1), and excerpts from the diary of local resident Hannah Adams, which specifically focus on the daily operations and on goings in the Parish (1:17).

Kingston Public Library: Local History Room
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October 6, 2003

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Box and Folder List:

Box	Folder	Item
1	1	Records of the First Church of Kingston, 1720 – 1830
	2	Meeting House account book, 1851
	3	Reports, special meeting announcements, conference announcements, 1851 – 1960
	4	Newsletter: <i>The Spire</i> , 1958 (Vol.13, No. 37)
	5	Plans depicting design of Meeting House, 1718 – 1798
	6	Pews, sale of; history of.
	7	Repair of Unitarian Church
	8	Old Burying Ground: 1930 plat
	9	Land issues
	10	Services, 1901 – 1918
	11	Anniversaries, 1917 – 1967
	12	Historical sketches of the First Parish Unitarian Church
	13	Installations and ordinations
	14	Memorials (obituaries) of influential members
	15	Sermons
	16	Women's Federation
	17	Excerpts from the diary of Hannah Brewster specifically relating to the First Parish (Unitarian) Church
	18	Beal House
	19	Clock fund

Acquisition: Numerous donors gave the materials in this Collection retrospectively.

Access: Unrestricted.

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Processor: Volunteer Dorothy Garfield processed this Collection and Archivist Carrie Elliott created the finding aid for this Collection.