

**AN HISTORICAL DISCOURSE,
DELIVERED AT WARE, 1851; BEING
COMMEMORATIVE OF THE
FORMATION OF THE FIRST
CHURCH IN WARE, MAY 9TH, 1751**

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COMMEMORATIVE OF THE FORMATION OF
THE FIRST CHURCH IN WARE,

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BY DAVID N. COBURN,
PASTOR.

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

No apology is due for publishing a discourse of this kind. But the reader may be led to expect more completeness of details than is here found, embracing civil as well as ecclesiastical items. In giving the history of the first church in Ware, more notice would have been taken of the town's general history, in the body of the discourse, had not the author been anticipated. About four years since, Hon. William Hyde, in an address at the opening of the new Town Hall, gave, as is believed, a very accurate, as well as full account of Ware as a town. To that published address I acknowledge myself indebted for facts and hints, as also to a manuscript thanksgiving sermon by Rev. A. B. Reed, preached in 1830.

The following facts, pertaining to the early settlement of Ware, are extracted from Mr. Hyde's address.—“The town, as incorporated, contains a tract lying mostly between Ware river and Swift river, being about six and a half miles long, east and west, by four and a half north and south. It is the south-east corner town of Hampshire County.” It was located and settled in four different tracts.—“The Read manor, (or the manor of Peace,) was the first located in 1713.” The Hollingsworth grant, taking in the tract now occupied by the village (Ware village,) and the water power, 1715. The Elbow tract was laid out in 1732; and the Marsh and Clements grant in 1733.” “Upon the second or village tract, I suppose,” says Mr. Hyde, “the first settlements in the town were made. Capt. Jabez Olmstead came here from Brookfield probably in 1729 and built mills upon the falls. Jacob Cummings came here very soon after, from Killingly, Ct., and was one of the most influential men in the establishment of a church and society. What is now the south-east corner of the town, was first settled by Isaac Magoon. Judah Marsh came from Hatfield or Hadley about 1730, and settled near Marsh's mills.

The town seems to have taken its name from the river passing through

it, which bears the same name, from its source to its junction with the Chicopee, of which it is the middle and the longest branch. It abounded with fish, all being a famous place for taking salmon. Weirs or Wears were constructed to aid in taking them, and hence the name of Wear river, which was afterwards spelled Ware. It is not so sweet as the Indian name *Nenameseck*, the meaning of which I am not able to give.

"The town does not appear to have been settled very rapidly. The soil was poor, and we cannot appreciate the hardships the early settlers encountered. In 1742, when by the aid of Mr. Reed, they petitioned to be incorporated as a town, it seems there were but thirty-three families here."

These few extracts may suffice as a brief introduction to the following discourse; the more complete details being contained in Mr. Hyde's address, to which the reader is referred.

DISCOURSE.

PSALM 48: 12, 13.

WALK ABOUT ZION, GO ROUND ABOUT HER; TELL THE TOWERS THERE-
OF. MARK YE WELL HER BULWARKS, CONSIDER HER PALACES,
THAT YE MAY TELL IT TO THE GENERATIONS FOLLOWING.

RECORDS of facts never come to be duly estimated until long after these facts have transpired. What appears trivial at the time, becomes at length the data of most important conclusions. It is wonderful how much depends often on little circumstances. The more prominent events of history secure to themselves a perpetuity, while the little qualifying adjuncts, on which the complete satisfaction of investigators depends, are liable to be neglected and forgotten. Not only is this true of very ancient annals, but of those comparatively recent. In our country, in towns and parishes whose existence dates back only four or five generations how many things are irrecoverably gone for want of a little care and particularity in the public records. The first church in Ware has been in existence only a century, yet the common embarrassment meets us at the outset of an investigation of its history. We have what purports to be an account of its origin and progress, but still an account defective in some points specially interesting to be known. The very first records of this church have in all probability perished, as we infer from the extracts taken from them. How much more interesting and satisfactory it would be to us to have the origin of this church under

the hand of its first pastor, than to take it at second hand. With confidence in the transcriber, we know not how much he omitted as irrelevant in his judgment, which might now prove of the utmost value to us. But what notice we have of the foundation of this church, we have on the authority of Rev. Ezra Thayer, the second pastor of the church. In the most concise terms he gives the time of the church's formation and of the settlement of the first minister; also the time of the dismissal of Mr. Rawson, together with a list of church members at the time of his (Mr. R's) dismissal. I quote from Mr. Thayer's account.—“The above account was extracted from the Church Records left at Ware River, by the Rev. Grindal Rawson, per Ezra Thayer.” The dates and facts to which this refers are important, and which follow:—

“May 9th, 1751. A Church was gathered at Ware-River Pariah, and Grindal Rawson ordained Pastor of it.”

June 19th, 1754. The Pastoral Relation of the Rev. Mr. Grindal Rawson to the Church in Ware-River parish was dissolved.”

“Here follows,” (says Mr. Thayer) “a list of all the members that belonged to the Church in Ware-River Parish, from ye first foundation of to June 19, 1759;” enumerating forty-two names, besides the pastor's; twenty-one males and twenty-one females. In a side note Mr. Thayer says; “Some of these were dismissed and recommended from other churches, and others were never members before admitted by us.” Thus, while we have this brief detail of facts, important to us in estimating the numerical strength of this little band who laid the foundations, we are yet left without a precise knowledge of the actual founders, and are wholly ignorant of the number of accessions to the church during its first pastorate. Probably nine-tenths of the number were original members; at least we may infer analog-

* See Appendix A.

ically, that the original church in Ware consisted of somewhere from thirty to forty members. We have these two facts pertaining to the early history of this church, that the formation of the church and the ordination of Mr. Rawson were contemporaneous events: taking place May 9th, 1751, O. S., one hundred years being completed May 20th, 1851, N. S. In form the church then took its rise. The germ however, was in existence some years previous; for as early as 1742, Ware was constituted a precinct at the desire of the inhabitants, that they might have the institutions and the preaching of the gospel. Accordingly at the first legal meeting of the inhabitants, called by a warrant from Wm. Pynchon, a justice of the peace at Springfield, and held on the third Tuesday of March 1742, it was voted "to raise forty pound old tenor for to hire preaching with." Nothing effectual seems to have been done about it till the next year: for in a warrant issued for a precinct meeting and dated 28th April, 1743, the following articles were to be acted on: "1st. To choose a moderator for said meeting and then to choose a minister for the time that has been agreed upon already; and to choose a man or men to provide ministers, and to agree with him or any other besides that shall be thought fit on said day." At the meeting, held in pursuance of this warrant May 5th, 1743, it was voted "To hire Mr Dickeson for to preach among us until the forty pounds we granted is spent." At a subsequent precinct meeting held Oct. 24th, 1743 to see about building a meeting-house and raising money for preaching, it was "voted not to build a meeting-house at present: voted to raise fifty shillings, old tenor, to pay Mr. Miles for one sabbath day's preaching last spring." At a precinct meeting held the next year, March 13th, 1744, among other things to provide preaching, it was "voted to raise sixty pound of the old tenor to hire preaching with at Ware River precinct: voted to hire Mr. Miles to preach out the sixty pounds (until) it is spent; and we voted if it doth suit Mr. Miles to be here two sabbath days and then miss one, and so till the money is spent." From the next war-

rant for a precinct meeting it appears that, owing to Mr. Miles' refusal, the foregoing was not fully carried out. The freeholders and others were warned to meet on the 6th July, 1744, "to consider and make choice of some minister of the gospel to preach out the remainder of the money that is still behind, of that which was granted for that service: for the Rev. Mr. Miles refuses to tarry any longer with us." At this meeting it was "voted for to hire Rev. Mr. Rawson, for to preach out half of the remainder of the money we granted to hire preaching with in March last past: voted for to hire the Rev. Mr. How for to preach out the other half: voted, that if either of the gentlemen, that we voted for, fails of coming, the other is to preach out the whole of the money." At the next meeting, as recorded, the people "voted to raise twenty pounds money, old tenor, for preaching; Isaac Magoon chosen to provide a minister at his own cost."

Thus far the early settlers of Ware seem to have done what they could to secure occasional preaching; but from this time forward made it a leading object to obtain the services of a settled pastor. Hence, in a warrant for a meeting to be held July 6th, 1745, among other interests to be looked after, they were "to see if we can make choice of some person to settle among us as a gospel minister: to see what proper encouragement we can give him, if we should agree to give one a call to that work: to grant such sum or sums of money as shall be thought proper to support the gospel among us." The result was, that at the meeting it was "voted to raise thirty pounds, old tenor, for preaching this year: voted, that Mr. Cary should preach out the same if he could." Subsequently, still stronger measures were contemplated for the attainment of this desirable end; for in November of the same year, 1745, the 25th day of the month, another legal meeting was called, "to see if we can agree to settle the gospel of Christ in this place: to see if we can make choice of Mr. Cary or some other minister of the gospel to settle with us in this place: to see what encouragement we can give to one chosen to this work: to choose a committee to discourse with