

**HISTORICAL SERMON DELIVERED
AT WARE FIRST PARISH ON
THANKSGIVING DAY, DEC. 2D,
1830; PP. 6-21 (NOT COMPLETED)**

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Historical Sermon Delivered at Ware First Parish on Thanksgiving Day, Dec. 2d, 1830; pp. 6-21
(Not completed) by Augustus B. Reed

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AUGUSTUS B. REED

**HISTORICAL SERMON DELIVERED
AT WARE FIRST PARISH ON
THANKSGIVING DAY, DEC. 2D,
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HISTORICAL SERMON

Delivered at Ware First Parish,

ON

Thanksgiving Day, Dec. 2d, 1830,

By AUGUSTUS B. REED,

**Pastor of the First Congregational Church
in Ware, Mass.,**

AND NOW FIRST PRINTED.

1889.

ing the district and inquiring into the circumstances of the case, the committee reported as their opinion that the petitioners were not sufficient to be incorporated as a town, but were further of opinion that the inhabitants of the territory described ought to be freed from all taxes to any other place or town, during the pleasure of the General Court, so that they might be able to provide preaching among themselves. This report was read in court and accepted, on the 4th of December following, "whereupon it was ordered that the lands within the limits described and the inhabitants therein be erected into a precinct, and that the said inhabitants have the powers and privileges which other precincts do, or by law ought to enjoy, that they be and are hereby obliged to maintain the public worship of God among them, in the support of a learned and orthodox minister."

This Act received the concurrence of the House of Representatives, and was consented to by the Governor on the 7th of the same month, so that the district then became a regularly incorporated precinct. The first precinct meeting was held on the 15th of March, 1743. The object was to choose the necessary precinct officers, to raise money to defray the expenses of their incorporation and to support the preaching of the gospel. For this last purpose they raised forty pounds. Thus, we have the satisfaction of knowing that the first settlers of this town made it their first object to establish and maintain

religious order. Jacob Cummings was the first moderator and he, in connection with Edward Ayres and Joseph Simons, constituted the first precinct committee. On the 28th of the next month a warrant for a meeting was issued in which the precinct was denominated Ware River Precinct, a name by which it was afterwards known until it was incorporated into a town. At this meeting it was voted to hire a Mr. Dickenson to preach until the money granted should be expended. In March, 1744, the sum of sixty pounds was raised for the support of the gospel, and in the course of that year three different persons were employed in this place. The names of these gentlemen were Mills, Rawson and Howe. In the year 1745 Mr. Henry Carey was employed to preach to the inhabitants of the precinct. In November they gave him an invitation to settle with them as their minister, but he declined accepting it. After several unsuccessful attempts in preceding years, the precinct proceeded, in 1750, to erect a house of worship of God, which they placed a few rods south of the centre of the town.

The house then erected was thirty-five feet by twenty-five feet, with fifteen feet posts. It was used until the year 1800, when this commodious house in which we now worship was erected and dedicated to God. In November, 1750, the precinct invited Mr. Grindal Rawson to settle with them as their minister. He accepted their invitation and was ordained on the

9th of May, 1751. The council called on this occasion gathered and organized the church on the day of the ordination. Of how many members the church originally consisted is not known. It must, however, have been but small as it appears that the whole number of members which had been admitted at the time of Mr. Rawson's dismissal, which took place January 19th, 1754, was only 43. Some of them became members by profession and some by letter of recommendation from other churches. Rev. Mr. Rawson, the first pastor of this church, it is supposed, was a native of Hadlyme, Conn. But little is known of him in this place. Traditional accounts represent him as a man of little seriousness, comeliness or refinement. The only relic of his labors I have seen is his answer to the call of the precinct. This, on the whole, manifests a very undue concern about worldly things, and yet some expressions in it seem to intimate that his sentiments were evangelical. For a time (several years) after his dismissal very little interest was taken in the institutions of the gospel. The house of God laid waste; the ways of Zion mourned; the people were as sheep scattered upon the mountains, while vice and irreligion prevailed among them. They continued in this destitute state about four years. The great Head of the church then awakened them to feel their need of a spiritual guide. In the Autumn of 1758 the church and precinct called Mr. Ezra Thayer to become their pastor and minister in the

Lord. He accepted their call and was ordained on the 10th of January, 1759. It appears that until this time the church had been destitute of a confession of faith. The ordaining council, therefore, very properly presented one which was unanimously adopted by the church and pastor elect. What sentiments were contained in this confession I am unable to state. Although the prospects of the church were brightened by the settlement of a pastor, there was still in it a lamentable degree of laxity. The half-way covenant was soon adopted, and thus the church became amalgamated with the world. In the course of the Rev. Mr. Thayer's ministry, which continued about sixteen years, seventy-nine members were received as members of the church, in full communion. Four was the greatest number received at any one time. The Rev. Mr. Thayer was a native of Mendon and was graduated at Harvard College in 1756. He is said to have been a man of placid, accommodating turn and to have possessed, in a high degree, the affections and confidence of his people. He died, February 11th, 1775, aged 43. After his death the inhabitants of the town, to manifest their affectionate regard for their deceased pastor, paid the expenses of his funeral and erected the monument that marks the place where his ashes slumber. Early in the year 1762 the precinct was incorporated into a town. The first town meeting was holden on the 9th of March, at which Samuel Sherman, William Brakenridge and John Davis were chosen selectmen.

SCHOOLS.

At a meeting held on the 11th of the same month, the town was divided into four school districts, and twelve pounds were raised for the support of schools. This money was equally divided between the districts and the people of each district were required to expend their proportion within the limits of the year, on penalty of forfeiting their claim. From that time a small sum was raised annually for the support of schools, and houses, soon after, were erected for their accommodation. There are now ten districts, and, for several years past, seven hundred and twenty-five dollars have been raised annually to promote the interests of education. In the village two public schools are taught through the year. There is besides these an infant school. In the center district a school is kept about nine months in the year. Between six and seven hundred children are instructed in the several schools in the Winter seasons. In 1780 the town gave Mr. Winslow Packard an invitation to settle there in the ministry, which he did not accept. It was renewed the following year but was a second time rejected. In 1785 an unsuccessful attempt was made to settle Mr. Jeremiah Hallock. While that man of God was preaching in this place an interesting revival of religion was enjoyed. A few sentences from his diary will at once give some idea of his devotedness and the extent of this

work. On the first Sabbath that he spent in Ware, he thus writes : "Oct. 17th, Sabbath. Spent some time in meditation and prayer this morning. The people were very attentive. O, may I never forget the mercies of the Lord. Had a very full and attentive conference this evening. Had freedom in discourse, and so had others. Some appearance of an awakening. O, may it come on ! O, may it come on ! Nov. 7th : A remarkable meeting this evening. Some suppose there were three hundred persons present ; was enabled to preach with freedom to the most affected auditory I ever saw. Feb. 1st : Visited my pleasant grove and took my farewell of Ware. I have been there twelve Sabbaths. When I came the young people were light and gay. But it has pleased God to awaken them, so that their frolics are turned into conferences, and to God's name be all the glory. There are about twelve hopeful converts." This was the first season of refreshing from the Lord enjoyed in this place. About this time and probably as a consequence of the eminently pious influence of Mr. Hallock, the town voted to adopt Doct. Watts' Psalms and Hymns, to be sung in the public congregation. In the Summer of the same year Mr. Benjamin Judd was invited to settle here as a minister of the Cross. He accepted the invitation and was ordained on the 12th of October. The people were not united in calling Mr. Judd to settle with them. Unhappily, difficulties soon arose between the dissenting