

**HISTORY AND MANUAL OF  
THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL  
CHURCH, CONCORD, NEW  
HAMPSHIRE, 1730-1907**

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History and Manual of the First Congregational Church, Concord, New Hampshire, 1730-1907  
by John Calvin Thorne

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**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,**

Concord, N. H.

(Corner of Main and Washington Streets.)

Corner-stone laid July 25, 1874.

Consecrated March 1, 1876.

HISTORY AND MANUAL  
OF THE  
First Congregational Church  
CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
1730-1907

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*"One generation shall praise thy works to another,  
and shall declare thy mighty acts."*

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PRESENTED TO THE CHURCH  
BY  
JOHN CALVIN THORNE

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1907



**THE LOG MEETING HOUSE OF 1726--1751.**

( Located at what is now the northwest corner of Main and Chapel Streets.)

Site marked by granite tablet.

**History of the First Congregational Church,  
Concord, New Hampshire.**

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THE LORD OUR GOD BE WITH US AS HE WAS WITH OUR  
FATHERS (I KINGS 8:57).

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The First Congregational Church in Concord known also as "The First Church of Christ," was organized November 18, 1730.

At the session of the "General Court of the Province of Massachusetts Bay," assembled at Boston in May, 1721, a petition was presented for a tract of land "situated on the river Merrymake at the lower end of Penny-Cook," to contain about eight miles square. This petition was not allowed until the beginning of the year 1725, when the government of Massachusetts appropriated land for the "Plantation of Penny-Cook," now Concord.

At a meeting of the "intended settlers," held in Andover, Mass., February 8, 1726, it was voted "That a block house twenty-five feet in breadth, by forty feet in length, be built at Penny-Cook for the security of the settlers." This log house was located at what is now the northwest corner of Main and Chapel Streets, and served for some quarter of a century as a meeting-house, schoolhouse, garrison and town hall. This site is now marked by a granite tablet appropriately inscribed. It was completed early in the year 1727, and was probably the first permanent building erected in town. In the fall of this year, the first family, that of Captain Ebenezer Eastman, moved into the place from Haverhill, Mass.

15 Oct 11



On March 6, 1727, a committee was "empowered to agree with a minister to preach at Penny-Cook the year ensuing, to begin the service from the fifteenth of May next. The said committee are directed to act with all prudence and not to assure the gentleman more than after the rate of £100 per annum for his service."

Rev. Enoch Coffin, one of the original proprietors in the town, was engaged as the first preacher, and his formal labors were to begin precisely one year after the date of the first religious service held in central New Hampshire, and at which he officiated. For the original journal of the first surveyors of the Plantation of Penny-Cook says, "May 15, 1726. Sunday. Mr. Enoch Coffin, our chaplain, performed divine service both parts of the day. Fair and cool." He attended to his duties for some two years, for again consulting the records we read, that at a meeting of the proprietors held at Bradford, Mass., March 12, 1729, it was voted: "That the sum of four pounds be allowed and paid unto the heirs of the Reverend Enoch Coffin, deceased, for his preaching and performing divine service at Penny-Cook, in full discharge." He was Concord's first preacher, but not her first settled minister.

Rev. Mr. Coffin was born in Newbury, Mass., February 7, 1696. His father was Hon. Nathaniel Coffin of that town, deacon of the first church and clerk of the township, also representative to the General Court for three years, 1719-21, councillor of the province in 1730, and special justice of the court of common pleas for Essex County in 1734. He had eight children. Enoch was a graduate of Harvard College in 1714, and died August 7, 1728, at the early age of thirty-two years. We cherish his memory as one of the religious pioneers of his time, and Concord owes him honor and reverence for his faith and works within her borders.\*

\*See sketch of his life in Granite Monthly of January, 1902, by John C. Thorne.

Rev. Bezaleel Toppan was also "employed to preach and perform divine service," until October, 1730, when it was resolved to establish a permanent ministry. On October 14, 1730, Rev. Timothy Walker was "called to be minister of the town of Penny-Cook."

A council met November 18, 1730, and organized here a church of nine members, and the Rev. Timothy Walker was ordained and installed its pastor. The sermon was by Rev. John Barnard, of Andover, Mass.; text, Prov. 9:1-3; the charge to the pastor, by Rev. Samuel Phillips, also of Andover; and the right hand of fellowship, by Rev. John Brown, of Haverhill, Mass. Thus and then, this "Church of Christ," often so called in the early days, was established. This title has a new significance to-day, when we are seeking to make denominational lines less apparent and Christ's Church stronger. The church was orthodox and stable in its faith, and during the long ministry of Mr. Walker—fifty-two years—it was united and prosperous, and this condition has characterized its life during its history of the past one hundred and seventy-seven years. Strong in the confidence and affection of the people, Mr. Walker always and actively opposed anything which threatened division in the church or the town.

It is impossible to measure accurately the growth of the church during this period, owing to incompleteness of the records. No regular record is found after 1736, and the names of those who "owned the covenant" are gathered only in part, and these from entries made in his diary. While the names of only ninety-five who united with the church are known, many more than this must have become members, for at the installation of his successor, though but few of those whose names were recorded were alive, there were one hundred and twenty members. The growth of the church must, therefore, have been rapid for those days, and its prosperity, stability and influence in the town and throughout the state are proof of a faithful ministry.

Rev. Timothy Walker, A. M., was a native of Woburn, Mass., and a graduate of Harvard College, in the class of 1725. His salary, at settlement, was £100, to increase forty shillings per annum till it reached £120; also use of parsonage. He died suddenly on Sabbath morning, September 1, 1782, aged 77 years, deeply mourned by the people he had so faithfully served and led, and between whom and himself the mutual attachment had remained strong to the last.

The deep impress of this early ministry has never been effaced, and the influence of Mr. Walker, to a large degree, decided the moral tone and habits of the town. For more than half a century he directed the thought, and was the religious teacher of the early settlers; and his clear convictions, his bold utterances, and his firm adherence to practical principles, made him a wise leader. He served the town as well as the church. His wise counsel and prompt and judicious action in relation to every matter of public interest were of great benefit to the people, and gave him a wide and acknowledged influence. Three times he visited England, as agent for the town, to confirm its endangered rights, and was enabled by his personal influence and wisdom to make secure forever the claims and privileges of the settlers. His influence will be acknowledged, and his name remembered with gratitude by future generations.\*

\*See Bouton's History of Concord, p. 556-563, also Centennial Discourse, pp. 13-31, etc.