

**EARLY CHURCH RECORDS OF GROTON,
MASSACHUSETTS, 1761-1830:
CONTAINING A LIST OF ADMISSIONS
TO THE CHURCH, WITH LISTS OF
MARRIAGES AND BAPTISMS; AND
VARIOUS OTHER MEMORANDA, PP. 2-194**

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Early Church Records of Groton, Massachusetts, 1761-1830: Containing a List of Admissions to the Church, with Lists of Marriages and Baptisms; And Various Other Memoranda, pp. 2-194 by Samuel A. Green

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SAMUEL A. GREEN

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EARLY CHURCH RECORDS

OF

GROTON, MASSACHUSETTS.

1761—1830.

Containing a List of Admissions to the Church,

WITH

LISTS OF MARRIAGES AND BAPTISMS; AND
VARIOUS OTHER MEMORANDA.

WITH NOTES AND AN INTRODUCTION

BY

Abbott

SAMUEL A. GREEN, M.D.

GROTON:

1896.

evening after a heated session of the parish in the vestry of the meeting-house, when the candles were blown out, and the members broke up in confusion. An unsuccessful search was begun at once for the books, but was gradually abandoned, and the loss soon forgotten in the main.

Another record-book, earlier than either of these volumes, disappeared at the same time, but that one was recovered by me many years ago, and has since been printed in this Historical Series, comprising Number X. of the first volume. It is now known that these three record-books were carried off from the meeting by an officer of the church, who concealed them at the time under his cloak. The act was done with the approval and connivance of those who sympathized with him in his ecclesiastical relations. This officer kept them in his possession as long as he lived, and after his death, which occurred nearly fifty years ago, they passed into the hands of other persons living in widely separated places, from whom I have since obtained them. The earlier volume was found in the possession of a family of Groton origin, then living in Plymouth County, and the two later volumes had passed beyond the limits of the Commonwealth. It may be proper to add that this church officer was a man of the strictest integrity in all respects, who undoubtedly thought that he was acting for the best under the existing circumstances. So high was his reputation among the neighbors for honor and honesty, I am sure that he never questioned his own course in the matter. It is now supposed that these three volumes were the only books taken away when the parish meeting broke up. The earliest one, already mentioned as having been printed in the first volume of the Historical Series, begins with the pastorate of the Reverend Dudley Bradstreet, who was ordained on November 27, 1706, and ends with June 22, 1760, though the records are very incomplete during the last thirty years of this period.

The first of the two volumes, here printed, begins on June 1, 1761,—two days before the ordination of the Reverend Samuel Dana,—and ends in January, 1798; and the other begins on April 28, 1799, and ends on February 2, 1830,

though the entries during the latter part of this period are both scarce and scanty. It is supposed that some of the later ones were made while the book was in hiding. The various records under the several subjects are scattered about through the two books in many places, but in the printed copy all such entries are brought together under their proper headings. It has been thought best to arrange the subjects in the following order :—

Record of the Meetings,
Admitted to the Church,
Owning the Covenant,
Dismissed to other Churches,
Marriages,
Baptisms,
Various other Memoranda.

The first of these volumes is bound in vellum, and on the front cover are indistinct traces of the words "Church Book, Groton, 1761," written in three lines. Inside of the book the price is marked as two shillings and eight pence. "Pretium 2/8." The other volume is bound in sheepskin, and in the right upper corner of the front cover is the inscription "Groton, Jan. 1798 from 1797" in two lines, and near the middle of the cover "Church Book Vol. II.," also in two lines. Why this book should have been marked "Vol. II.," when there were two earlier volumes in existence, I am unable to say. Perhaps it was done through an oversight on the part of the minister who at that time acted as parish clerk, and kept the records. The earliest volume (1706-1760) may not have been counted as a part of the set, as it is so badly mutilated.

In early days it was the custom of the churches of Massachusetts to make a rigid examination of all candidates both for Admission to Membership and for Owning the Covenant; and many questions then were asked, which at the present time would be deemed highly impertinent and obtrusive. Such questions related to the personal habits of the applicants, about which there was no evidence beyond their own

statement or confession. In these records there are many similar instances, which apparently excited no particular comment at the time. They are found by implication in the words "Confessed Fornication,"—or their abbreviated form, "Con. For." or "C. F.,"—appended to the names of many persons who were duly enrolled as members. There are one hundred and fifty-four such instances, but in this printed copy these entries have been omitted, as they reflect a custom which to-day would not be tolerated under any circumstances either in religious or secular circles. The last instance of a public confession is found in 1795; and a few years later, on January 7, 1803, by a vote of the church the practice was abolished.

For the convenience of persons who may wish to compare the printed copy with the original manuscript volumes, I have indicated by broad-faced figures within brackets—in all cases where the record is not continuous—the number of the volume, and the pages, on which the beginning of such extracts is found, as well as the end of the extracts.

EARLY CHURCH RECORDS.

At a Church meeting in Groton June 1st 1761

The following Covenant was laid before the Church: Consented to: and Voted to be recorded

Groton Chh Covenant

WE, who through the exceeding Riches of the Grace and Patience of God do yet Continue Members of this Church, being sensible of our great unworthiness to be owned as the Lords Covenant People: also acknowledging our great Inabilities to keep Covenant with God, or to perform any spiritual Duties unless the Lord Jesus enable us thereunto by his Spirit dwelling in us; and being awfully Sensible that it is a Dreadful thing for sinful dust and Ashes personally and much more socially to transact with the Infinitely glorious Majesty of Heaven and Earth; DO in humble Confidence

of his Gracious Assistance and Acceptance thro' Christ, Each one of us for ourselves declare our belief of the sacred scripture as the word of God, and perfect Rule of faith and Obedience; resolving by his Grace to Conform to them.

WE adhere to the Faith and order of the Gospel as exhibited in these Churches in their Confession of Faith and Platform of Church Discipline; for the substance of them.

WE give up ourselves in an everlasting Covenant to the Lord Jehovah, who is the Father, Son & Holy Spirit, as to our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, to love, Obey and serve him forever.

WE own and submit to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Head of his Body the Church receiving and relying upon him as the great high Priest Prophet and King of our Salvation.

WE give ourselves each to other by the Will of God: Engaging by his Help to Carry it towards one another as fellow members in Church society; to watch over one another in Brotherly Love, and to walk together in a Due subjection to and attendance upon the Orders & Ordinances appointed by Christ and enjoined his Churches in the Gospel.

WE thankfully Acknowledge that our Posterity are included in the Gospel Covenant, and accordingly promise to bring them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord, and to own them in their Covenant Relation according to the Rules of Gods word.

WE promise to preserve Communion with the Churches of Christ walking together in the Faith and order of the Gospel, by giving and Receiving mutual Counsel and Assistance in all Cases wherein it shall be needful.

And now we repair to the Blood of the great Sacrifice for the Pardon of all our sins, depending Entirely upon our Lord Jesus Christ for acceptance with God, and for his Good Spirit to Enable us to keep his holy Covenant, praying that we may adorn the Doctrines of God our Saviour in all things and avoid even the very Appearance of Evil. Earnestly Praying that the Lord would take Delight to dwell among us, that Heavens Blessing may be upon us and that his glorious kingdom may be advanced by us.

Now to God the Father, Son & Holy Ghost be ascribed Endless Praises. Amen.

JAMES STONE *Moderator*

Consented to

p: SAM^l: DANA *Pastor Elect*

At the Meeting last mentioned The Church Voted also With Regard to admission of Members to full Communion That the making a Relation (as it is commonly call'd) shall not be a Term of Communion but that any Person (if in a Judgment of Charity Qualifyd) shall be admitted to this Privilege upon his Assenting in Publick to some such Articles of faith as these following (still allowing Liberty to any who choose it to make a Relation.)

You Believe that there is one God in three Persons: Father Son and Holy Ghost

You Believe y^e the Sacred Scriptures are the word of God; and a perfect Rule for our Faith and Practice

You Believe that Man is a fallen Creature and cannot be Justifyd by the Deeds of the Law.

You believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God and Saviour of Men: and that he will bestow salvation on those who repent of their sins believe in his Name and Live according to the Precepts of his Gospel

You believe the Resurrection of the Body; a future Judgment and state of Rewards & Punishments

You Believe that Baptism is an Institution of Christ and that the Lords Supper is also a sacrament by which his Church in this World should Commemorate his Dying Love to which Church you believe it is your Duty to Join yourself

The Church then Voted with regard to Baptizing Children of Parents newly Married

That those Parents who have not a Child till seven Yearly months after Marriage are subjects of our Christian Charity, and (if in a Judgment of Charity otherways Qualifyd) shall have the Privilege of Baptism for their Infants, without being Questioned as to their Honesty The Church still reserving to themselves Liberty to admit Children that are born within Less time after Marriage, where they see Reason for it.

JAMES STONE *Moderator*

Consented to P^r SAM^l DANA *Pastor Elect.*

The Church then Passd the following Vote Viz

That a Church Meeting be Called at the request of ten of the Members of said Church

JAMES STONE *Moderator*

To which I then a Brother, and Pastor Elect, refused to Consent
SAM^l DANA *P. E.*

June y^e 3^d Being Ordination Day a Number of the Church then together Voted to reconsider the Vote last Mentioned with regard to calling Church Meetings

JAMES STONE *Moderator*

N B. The Moderator Declared to the Ordination Council that the Vote was reconsidered

SAM^l DANA *P E*

The Votes before Mentioned are all that the Moderator desired to Record in this Book as having been passd by the Church in the time of their Vacancy

SAM^l DANA *Pastor*

1761

Samuel Dana in Officium Pastorale apud Grotonenses inauguratus fuit Die Junii 3^o 1761

June 26. At a Church Meeting held at the Meeting House The Brethren & Sisters of the Church. Present, Consented to the Cov^t in the beginning of this Book which they manifested, the Brethren by holding up their Hand, The sisters by standing up.

It was then Voted that the names of the Members of the Church should be Entred in this Book.

List of The Members of the Church of C: in Groton

Sam ^l Dana Pastor.		
# Daniel Farnsworth	} Deac ^{rs}	# Will ^m Green
# Joseph Farwell		# Josiah Sawtel
# James Stone		# Daniel Shed
# Shebuel Hobart		# John Woods
# Samuel Barran		# Amos Lawrence
# Ephraim Sawtel		# Jonas Farnsworth
# Joseph Gillson		# Phinehas Wait
# Daniel Nutting		# Elisha Rockwood
# Ebenezer Farnsworth		# Israel Hobart
# John Stone		# Jeremiah Hobart
# Abraham Mores		# Jonathan Pierce
# Joseph Stone		# Nehemiah Trowbridge
# Sam ^l Tarbell		# Jason Williams
# Benj ^t Parker		# Eben ^t Patch
# William Lawrence		# Nath ^l Parker
# Aaron Farnsworth		# Jonathan Farwell