

**HISTORICAL DISCOURSE
DELIVERED AT THE CENTENNIAL
CELEBRATION OF THE
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN
WARNER, N. H.; APRIL 5, 1871**

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Historical Discourse Delivered at the Centennial Celebration of the Congregational Church in Warner, N. H.; April 5, 1871 by James H. Fitts

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JAMES H. FITTS

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CELEBRATION OF THE
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN
WARNER, N. H.; APRIL 5, 1871**



Very truly yours,
Jas. H. Little.

HISTORICAL DISCOURSE
DELIVERED AT THE
CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY
OF THE
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,
CANDIA, N. H.,

APRIL 5, 1871,

By JAMES H. FITTS.

EXETER, N. H.
The News-Letter Press.
1903.

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Lawrence S. Mayo ✓

NOTE.

JAMES HILL FITTS, son of John and Abigail (Lane) Fitts, was born in Candia, New Hampshire, March 3, 1829. He was educated in the public schools of Candia, at Pembroke Academy, and at the Normal Institutes of Merrimack, N. H., and Lancaster, Mass. He taught in the public schools of New Hampshire, Maine and Massachusetts. He graduated at Bangor Seminary in 1858, and took further studies at Andover. He was ordained as an evangelist, November 2, 1859.

For twenty-two years he was a pastor in Massachusetts—at Boxboro, 1858-1862; West Boylston, 1862-1870; Topsfield, 1871-1880; and for twenty years in his native state, not far from his early home, at South Newmarket, afterwards Newfields, 1880 till his sudden death, Nov. 22, 1900.

The loss of the parish records of the Congregational Society at Candia by the burning of the dwelling house of Mr. John D. Colby, parish clerk, Nov. 22, 1902, leaves this address as the only source of much of the written history of said parish. This fact has led to the printing of this address in full.

MRS. JAMES H. FITTS.

CHURCH CENTENNIAL AT CANDIA.

THIS occasion, said the *Manchester Daily Mirror and American* of April 11, 1871, was observed by the Congregational Church in Candia, Wednesday, April 5th.

Mr. Jesse Remington Fitts presided. The choir opened the exercises with the old anthem, "Strike the Cymbal." Prayer was offered by the Rev. W. T. Herrick, followed by the hymn,

"See what a living stone
The builders did refuse,"

to the tune of "Stafford," a hymn always read by Mr. Remington at communion.

Rev. James H. Fitts, of West Boylston, Mass., native of the town and son of the church, then commenced the historical address. Beginning with the petition of thirty-eight settlers of Chester for an act of incorporation—March 22, 1763—an account of the difficulty they had in attending public worship, the speaker gave a very interesting account of the building of the house of worship, which took, before it was fully completed with bell, porch, and weathercock, 37 years. The parsonage, also, was begun in 1770-71, was occupied about forty years, and torn down in 1837. It was said to have been a continual bill of expense to the town, and never to have been fit to live in. In 1831, the meeting-house was transferred from the town to the Congregational society, and church and state fairly severed.

The church was probably organized in 1771, and its membership for the first twenty years did not exceed 52 members. Since that time, its aggregate membership has been 670. Until 1790, what is known as the half-way covenant was admitted, whereby

persons came to the communion by virtue of a moral character, and their children were admitted to baptism.

When about half through with his discourse Mr. Fitts gave out a hymn which, he said, was one always read by the Rev. Dr. Burnham, of Pembroke, when he preached for us, the subject usually being the doctrine of election. It commenced,

"Behold the potter and the clay."

The first minister who preached in Candia was the Rev. Jonathan Searle, hired for a time in 1764. Tristram Gilman next supplied the pulpit nearly four years, but declined a settlement. The first settled minister was David Jewett, about May, 1771; dismissed Aug. 21, 1780. From 1781 to 1789 Joseph Prince, the blind evangelist, supplied the pulpit. His life was a very remarkable one in many respects, and many interesting facts were given concerning him. His own father was opposed to his preaching, until, one day, hearing him by accident, he was so moved by his fervor and eloquence that he ever after acknowledged his mistake. In those early days, too, the jealousy of the ecclesiastical authorities forbade his preaching without a license, so he was often in the constable's hands, and as he was generally sent from the bounds of one town to another to get rid of him, he managed to spread the gospel at town's expense.

The Rev. Jesse Remington, settled Oct. 20, 1790; died March 3, 1815. Isaac Jones, Feb. 7, 1816; dismissed May 12, 1818. He has since been a missionary in all the New England States, except Connecticut, and is still living in Derry, nearly ninety years old. Abraham Wheeler, installed in 1819, and dismissed in 1832. He died at Grafton, Ohio, Dec. 4, 1857, aged 78 years. Chas. P. Russell, ordained Dec. 25, 1833; dismissed May 26, 1841; resides at Washington, D. C. William Murdock, 1841-1853; W. T. Herrick, 1854-1859; E. N. Hidden, 1859-1865; Lauren Armsby, 1865-1870.

The speaker had by his side a Geneva Bible, printed in 1613, which was the family Bible of Lieut. Abraham Fitts, also several printed sermons delivered on occasions of ordination or death of old ministers. At the close of the morning exercises the congregation and choir united in singing "Old Lang Syne."

A collation was spread in the vestry where "ye viands of y^e olden time" received ample justice. At about 3 P. M. the people once more assembled in the audience room and the choir sang the "Easter Anthem."

Remarks were afterwards called for from Mr. F. B. Eaton, historian of the town, former pastors Rev. Messrs. Murdock, Herrick and Hidden, ex-Governor Smyth, John M. Prince, Esq., of Boston, a grandson of the Rev. Joseph Prince, very erect and vigorous in his old age of 82, and by ministers native of Candia, Rev. Moses Patten, of Carlisle, Mass.; Rev. John D. Emerson, of Biddeford, Me.; Rev. S. F. French, of Hamilton, Mass.; Rev. Geo. French, of Andover, Mass., and also by clergymen from Deerfield and Raymond.

During the afternoon the choir sang "Invitation," "The New Jerusalem Garland," and closed with "Coronation," the congregation joining.

The exercises throughout were deeply interesting. Each side of the organ, wrought in evergreen, appeared the figures 1771, 1871. The singing and playing was excellently done, the collation admirably served, and all the impressions such as befitted so rare an occasion.