

**HISTORY OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN
DUNSTABLE-NASHUA, N.H. AND OF
LATER CHURCHES THERE, IN AN
ADDRESS TO THE NASHUA HISTORICAL
SOCIETY DECEMBER 16, 1885**

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History of the First Church in Dunstable-Nashua, N.H. And of Later Churches There, in an Address to the Nashua Historical Society December 16, 1885 by John Wesley Churchill & Charles Carroll Morgan

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JOHN WESLEY CHURCHILL & CHARLES CARROLL MORGAN

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LATER CHURCHES THERE, IN AN
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HISTORY OF
**The First Church in Dunstable-
Nashua, N. H.**

AND OF

LATER CHURCHES THERE

AS SKETCHED BY
PROF. JOHN WESLEY CHURCHILL

IN AN ADDRESS TO
THE NASHUA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
DECEMBER 16, 1885

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND EDITORIAL NOTES
AND A BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH OF
PROF. CHURCHILL

BY
CHARLES CARROLL MORGAN

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INTRODUCTION.

The following address by Prof. John Wesley Churchill is now printed, for the first time, in enduring form. It was published originally in the columns of the Nashua Daily Telegraph and of the Nashua Daily Gazette immediately after its delivery. Copies of these newspapers containing the address can be found at present only in private hands, are very few, and have been kept with extreme care lest they become lost or destroyed. Unfortunately they are disfigured with many typographical errors and other mistakes such as are hardly avoidable in hasty journalistic work.

In the hope to correct such faults, the editor of this book wrote to the widow of Prof. Churchill, asking if his manuscript of the address could be had, to aid in the work. The following gracious letter came in reply.

Andover, Mass., April 16, 1917.

Mr. Charles C. Morgan:—

My dear Sir,—Circumstances have delayed an answer to your kind and courteous letter of March 19.

I regret to tell you that the manuscript you desire is not to be found among my files of papers. I have a distinct remembrance that the address was written under adverse circumstances as to time and place, on account of Mr. Churchill's seminary duties in Andover and the research work in Nashua. Almost all of the writing was accomplished while journeying between the two places, and the manuscript was necessarily marred by erasures and interlining. I recall too that the press reports were not satisfactory, and that Mr. Churchill intended to re-

duce and condense *very much* the printed matter, as well as to correct errors.

As I had not seen a printed copy of the address, I turned over your letter, with stamps you enclosed, to my brother-in-law, Mr. Elbert L. Churchill, Arlington, Mass., Cooperative Bank. He thought we might possibly have a condensed printed copy. He will communicate with you in regard to the matter.

But I wish to thank you personally for your kind and appreciative memorial words. I am grateful that my husband's friends in his old home hold his memory in honored remembrance.

Most sincerely yours,

MARY DONALD CHURCHILL.

(Mrs. John Wesley Churchill.)

After the lapse of time enough for careful search, the following agreeable letter came from Prof. Churchill's brother.

Arlington, Mass., May 14, 1917.

Mr. Charles C. Morgan,
Nashua, N. H.

Dear Sir,—Your letter dated March 19, 1917, addressed to Mrs. J. Wesley Churchill, Andover, Mass., was duly received and has been handed to me for reply.

I regret to say that the documents referred to are not in my possession, and Mrs. Churchill informs me that they are probably destroyed.

I remember very distinctly and pleasantly the occasion referred to, and that I was very proud of my brother for the part taken by him.

The newspaper reports of his address doubtless will be the only record obtainable, and I am sorry that they

are found to be inaccurate. If at some future time these papers should be found and I have knowledge of the same, I shall be pleased to forward them to the church authorities, to be disposed of as they shall see fit.

Yours respectfully,

ELBERT L. CHURCHILL.

In Mrs. Churchill's letter, she speaks of her husband's research work in Nashua. Undoubtedly representatives of the various churches, mentioned, were glad to supply him with copies from their church records and with other useful information. Yet it is plain he was unsparing in his personal efforts; since a unity of purpose and conscientiousness of endeavor is manifest throughout.

As the greater part of his address was written in the cars, while he was journeying to and fro many times between Andover and Nashua, he was forced to such hasty composition as made later revision and improvement desirable. The need of revision probably was more apparent to him than to others. Undoubtedly his quick eye noticed that a few of the words he had used were not such as he preferred; that sentences he meant to divide were left unbroken; that transpositions he had intended were overlooked; and that the newspaper punctuation frequently failed to bring out his meaning as he desired. But his admirable elocution probably did much to hide these imperfections, and it is quite likely his listeners scarcely noticed them.

At this late day, an attempt at a thorough revision, when so little can be found to aid in the work, would be presumptuous. Yet, on re-reading the address, it is thought well to make such amendments in form as there is good reason to believe he desired, but without any material changes in substance.

Although Mrs. Churchill says he "intended to reduce and condense *very much* the printed matter," no alterations of this nature have been attempted.

The most striking characteristics of Prof. Churchill's address are the broad tolerance and loving spirit that pervade it from beginning to end. His keenly sympathetic nature, always alive to the feelings of others, is everywhere apparent.

It is believed that the brief biographical sketch at the end of the book will be welcome to many readers.

It may be well to supplement what is said by Prof. Churchill, on page 27 of his address, with the following statement:—

The first armed resistance by any of the American colonists to the tyranny of Great Britain was in disapproval of a royal decree forbidding their importation of arms or military stores. During the progress of former events leading up to the Revolutionary War, the Colonial Assembly of New Hampshire, early in 1774, appointed a committee of correspondence for promoting concert of action with the other colonies in protective measures. Soon afterwards the Assembly brought about the election of two delegates to the First Continental Congress, which met in Philadelphia on September 5th of that year. One of these delegates was John Sullivan, a capable lawyer whose office was in Durham, N. H., and who was a major in the N. H. militia. Sullivan acquitted himself satisfactorily, as a member of this congress, in companionship with such famous provincials as George Washington, John Adams, Edward Rutledge and others. In December of the same year, tidings were received of the royal decree just mentioned and of the expected arrival of ves-

sels bringing troops to secure the retention in British possession of Fort William and Mary commanding the entrance to Portsmouth harbor. Immediately a small militia force was rallied, under the lead of Maj. Sullivan — with John Langdon, second in command, — and, on the night of December 14th, they surprised and captured the fort. Its little garrison of six was made prisoners, in spite of a determined resistance.

The next day, fifteen of the lighter cannon of the fort and all its small arms were removed, and were soon distributed privately in the neighboring towns. Nearly 200 kegs of powder that fell into the hands of the captors were secretly carried to Durham, where they were hidden for a time beneath the pulpit of its meeting-house. Afterwards they were stealthily conveyed to Charlestown, Mass., — reaching there just in time to replenish the scanty powder-supply of the American troops engaged in the Battle of Bunker Hill, and thus enabling them to more effectually check their British assailants.*

It will be noticed that the capture of Fort William and Mary occurred more than four months before the Battle of Lexington and Concord. This early event did much to fire the hearts of the New Hampshire colonists, and to prepare their hardy frontiersmen (trained as minutemen in Indian warfare) to snatch their arms when tidings of the struggle at Lexington reached them and to speed as fast as their horses could carry them to the neighborhood of Boston. It should be remembered that among these volunteers was Col. (afterwards Gen.) John Stark, the

* For an entertaining sketch of Sullivan — who, in June, 1775, was appointed by Congress a brigadier general, and commanded at Winter Hill during the siege of Boston — see "Colonial Life in New Hampshire," by James H. Fassett.

famous leader of New Hampshire rangers during the seven years of previous hostilities against the French and Indians. With him were many who shared in his experiences. Together they formed the left wing of the colonial troops at the Battle of Bunker Hill, and were the last to retire before the enemy. Indeed it is said that the New Hampshire frontiersmen, under the command of Col. Stark, Col. Reed and Col. Poor, made up a majority of the American soldiers in this first pitched battle of the Revolution.

Besides what is said hereafter of Mr. Kidder on page 26, it may be well to note the *legal* aspect of his case. As his "settlement" was of the kind explained in the paragraph beginning at the foot of page 11 (namely, a settlement for life — taking him "for better or worse," and being akin to a marriage dowry) it could be modified thereafter only by a new agreement between the parties. This fact was recognized by both; and a committee, mutually chosen, was authorized to make new terms. The committee — as it appears — arranged to have Mr. Kidder remain with the church, at least as its *nominal* pastor, so long as he was able in some measure to satisfactorily perform his ministerial duties. Probably the committee continued to serve as a permanent arbiter in the case. Just how early Rev. Mr. Sperry *began* to act as assistant pastor, we are not informed. But, on the 3d of November, 1813, — as shown on page 8 of the old Record Book of the Church, — Mr. Sperry was settled as the *regular* pastor, and so continued until his dismissal in 1819, about a year after Mr. Kidder's death.

CHARLES CARROLL MORGAN.

November, 1917.