

**CELEBRATION OF THE ONE  
HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE  
MEETING HOUSE OF THE FIRST  
RELIGIOUS SOCIETY IN  
NEWBURYPORT, OCTOBER 31, 1901**

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Celebration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Meeting House of the First Religious Society in Newburyport, October 31, 1901 by Various

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**VARIOUS**

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By mail

## MORNING EXERCISES.

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On Thursday morning, October 31, 1901, the meeting house of the First Religious Society in Newburyport was in a gala dress for the celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the dedication of the edifice. The pulpit was adorned with autumn leaves and on the platform below were many potted plants and flowers, with tall rich ferns, and a large audience assembled to take part in the celebration.

The choir consisted of the following well known vocalists: Messrs. G. E. L. Noyes, Wallace Adams, R. G. Adams, L. S. Choate, Mrs. H. A. Gillett, Miss E. C. Adams, Miss Jessie Junkins and Mrs. Horace Noyes. Mrs. E. H. Noyes was organist.

The exercises opened with an organ voluntary by Mrs. Noyes, followed by an anthem by the choir, "I Will Sing of Thy Power, O God!"—*Sullivan*. The 145th psalm was read responsively, Rev. Charles Summer Holton of the First Church of Newbury, leading. The Choir next sang the Elijah chorus, "He Is Watching Over Israel,"—*Mendelssohn*. Rev. William Henry Pearson of Somerville, a native of this city, led in prayer. The choir sang *Mendelssohn's* "I Waited for the Lord." The congregation sang the following original hymn written by Rev. Samuel Longfellow for the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the society:



HYMN BY REV. SAMUEL LONGFELLOW.

By this broad stream our fathers made their dwelling,  
Built their ships and launched them from the shore,  
Trusting in God when waves were roughly swelling,  
They dared the sea, nor trembled at its roar.  
God of our fathers we trust in Thee :  
As with the fathers, so with the children be.

Honor we still their faith and brave endeavor ;  
Cherish the walls their piety has reared ;  
We sail not on the ancient lines forever,  
Yet trust no less in God whom they revered.

Our broader day with fresher light beholding,  
Changing the creed, but keeping firm the faith.  
Freely the ancient forms of thought remoulding.  
Asking what word today the spirit saith.

We, from the tide-worn piers our ships unmooring,  
Afloat, but not adrift, upon the tide ;  
Dare truth's rough sea ; in faith our hearts assuring.  
Safe must he be who sails with God for guide.

Then followed the historical address by Mr. Nathan N. Withington.

ADDRESS OF MR. NATHAN N. WITHINGTON.

Why are we assembled on this occasion? and why at this particular time? The answer to each of these questions is that we are gratifying a sentiment. We have come together with no purpose to consult for the welfare of our persons or estates, to devise no means by which the future may be made more prosperous for ourselves or our children, nor is it our aim to attain any material good whatever. We have come merely to express a sentiment of attach-

ment and veneration for an edifice which is itself the material embodiment of a sentiment.

Then as to the question of the time of this celebration, the date is fixed by sentimental considerations. It is a centennial. But what is it dignifies the lapse of an hundred years to our minds more than does the close of any other period? It is purely a sentiment.

If we had been formed with four digits on each hand instead of five doubtless the hundred would be what we now call sixty-four, and this celebration would have been held in the year of the close of the civil war. Or if we had had twelve instead of ten fingers and thumbs the century would have been forty-four years longer than it is now. Sentiment, mere sentiment is the cause and has fixed the date of our celebration.

But this truth instead of depreciating the importance elevates it to a higher plane. The most heroic lives are those devoted to, and the noblest deaths are those sacrificed for a worthy sentiment. The hearth and home, the temple in which fathers and mothers worshipped, are nothing but bricks and mortar, stone, wood, iron and glass except for the associations which cluster around them and sanctify them to us with memories of all that is dearest and most delightful to the heart of man. The flag of one's country is a mere strip of colored bunting not so useful for comfort as a blanket, and yet it typifies for us home, native land, friends and neighbors, good government, and all that makes life worth living, and men die by thousands and tens of thousands in battle on sea and land to keep that emblem fluttering in the breeze and raised above that of the flag of any enemy. We

marry for sentiment, we live by sentiment and if needs be we die to maintain our cherished sentiments.

It is eminently fitting then that we should celebrate the centennial of the erection of this sacred edifice. Nor is it an irrational feeling to venerate its walls and pews, its pulpit and galleries and windows hallowed by the memories of the great and good men and women who have worshipped here, by the now silent voices of the eminent orators, clerical and lay, who have spoken from this desk, and by the many associations of this place with relatives beloved and friends gone before, which make it venerable as holy ground, while the friends to be met here from Sunday to Sunday connect with the edifice some of our pleasantest associations of the present.

It may be that the edifice without the sentiment attached to it, like a barn, is nothing but a building, and that a century is a mere arbitrary division of time, but I cannot help feeling a strong emotion at the thought that for more than half of that century this house was the place of worship for relatives and friends the dearest I have had, and it was with uncommon pleasure that the invitation to speak here was accepted since interest in the subject might in some degree supply the inadequacy of the speaker. To many persons in this community similar associations make this house a sacred edifice and the spot where it stands holy ground. So that the centennial of its dedication as a house of worship for our forebears and ourselves is a true epoch, worthy of celebration with more than ordinary interest.

When we look back an hundred years to the first opening of this house for public worship the first