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UNION CHURCH

Records, 1822-1948

3 oversize boxes
1 manuscript box

Processed: April 1988
By: Thomasin Kellermann

Acquisition: These records have been deposited with the
Congregational Library at an undetermined time.

Access: The collection is unrestricted.

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INTRODUCTION

The church records of Union Church from its organization in 1822 through its absorption of Berkeley Temple in 1907 and its eventual merger with Old South (Third) Church in 1948 is the subject of this inventory.

The records of Union Church have been deposited with the Congregational Library some time after its merger with the Old South Church. The early church records of Berkeley Temple (formerly called Pine St. Church and Berkeley St. Church) have also been deposited in the Congregational Library. The church and society records of the Old South Church have been placed on permanent loan in the Library.

The Congregational Library has not acquired any records of the Essex St. Congregational Society or the Columbus Avenue Congregational Society. Therefore, all the records have been grouped into one main subgroup entitled "Church Records" and the appropriate series have been arranged under this one subgroup.

These records consist mainly of record books and some loose papers in folders. For the sake of ease, both volumes and loose papers have been referred to as "folders" and have been consecutively numbered.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

In the early 1800s the Congregational churches in Boston were bitterly divided between the Trinitarians and the Unitarians. Certain individuals from Boylston Hall Church, most notably Nathan Parker and James Melledege with the help of others, erected in 1819 a meeting house at Essex St. for the purpose of defending the Old Faith. Two years later, the congregation had a falling out with its pastor, and a majority of the church resolved to remove with its pastor back to Boylston Hall.

The ten remaining members of the church convened an ecclesiastical council, at the end of which Old South Church and Park St. Church agreed to strengthen the fledging church. In 1822 nine members from Park St., three from Old South and three from a church in Braintree were received into membership. As an allusion to its unusual reception of members, the name Union Church was adopted by the church.

In 1827 the Essex St. Congregational Society was incorporated, at which time the original Trust Deed was cancelled. The meeting-house was substantially rebuilt in 1840. By the mid-1860s the urge to relocate was growing among church members. Acting on the sentiment, in 1868 the Society empowered the Prudential Committee to buy land at the corner of Columbus Avenue and West Newton St.

This was exactly ten years after the Berkeley St. Church moved into the South End. A new church was dedicated in 1870 and the Columbus Avenue Congregational Society was incorporated. In 1871 new by-laws were adopted, and the rules and regulations, covenant and confession of faith were adopted and published by the church in 1876.

A ubiquitous debt was an overriding concern of most Boston churches. A mortgage was taken out to build the

original meeting-house on Essex St. and to rebuild it in 1840 and to finance the new church building on Columbus Avenue. Consecutive mortgages were financed in 1882, 1883 and 1884. In March 1887 the Columbus Avenue Congregational Society proposed a plan for the payment of the debt, agreeing never again to mortgage church property. By the end of 1888 the debt of \$35,000 was cleared.

In an effort to consolidate the financial interests of the church and society, the Society in 1895 entered into a two-year agreement with the church. During this time, the church occupied the property as "tenants-at-will", reserving the right to rent pews and collect pew taxes. The church incorporated in

In 1906 an ecclesiastical council on Congregational interests in the South End was held at Old South Church. Following their recommendation, a merger of Berkeley Temple and Union Church was effected in 1907. The church was restructured, and Allen A. Stockdale of Berkeley Temple was installed as pastor of Union Church.

However, the same financial difficulties that had forced Berkeley Temple to dissolve was weakening the foundations of Union Church. As waves of immigrants moved into the South End, Congregational churches in this part of the city lost their traditional membership base.

Throughout the early to mid-1900s Old South Church gave much-needed financial support to Union Church. It was not sufficient. In 1948 the Standing Committee of Union Church recommended to the church that it merge with Old South, and a merger of the two churches was effected in June of that year.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

Church running records are complete from church beginnings in 1822 through its merger with Old South Church in 1948. The records of the Standing Committee, which was responsible for the general oversight of church activities, are complete from 1883-1949. Statistics on baptisms, marriages and funerals are complete for 1895 through 1948.

The financial records of the church Treasurer are complete for the period 1907-1920. There is a record book of meetings and two cash books regarding the management of church funds by the Ministers and Deacons as Trustees, 1841-1913. There are no financial records of any sort after 1929.

Notably absent from this collection are records of the Essex St. Congregational Society and the Columbus Avenue Congregational Society. There are only one or two minor volumes of pew records and ancillary organization records.

A chronological outline of important church activity through 1906 compiled faithfully from church and society records by S. Fisher is invaluable. This manuscript work, arranged by date of church meeting, can be used as an index to the church records.

The history of Union Church may be roughly divided into two periods. The first period runs from 1822 through 1906. The second period dates from 1907 when Berkeley Temple merged with Union and church was restructured.

A good understanding of the historical development of Union Church is provided by a history of the church written for its centennial in 1922. This publication gives equal space to a telling of the history of Berkeley Temple (earlier known as Pine St. Church and Berkeley St. Church), in addition to giving a short history of the origins and pastors of Union Church.

SERIES LISTING

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SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

Subgroup I Church Records. Series I Church Running Records. 1822-1949. Volumes arranged chronologically by date.

Record books.

Series consists of four manuscript volumes and two typescript looseleaf notebooks. Some printed material is pasted into the later volumes. Material includes the minutes of annual meetings including annual statistics, the recommendations of the Standing Committee and copies of some correspondence. Although separate record books were kept for vital statistics (see Series II) the names of members received and dismissed and the names of those who had been baptized or had died during the year are included as part of the running records.

Subgroup I Church Records. Series II Vital Statistics and Membership. 1876-1948. Arranged by type of record.

Record books, loose papers.

It appears that no record books containing vital statistics for the years 1822-1894 have survived. Baptismal records were kept in two overlapping record books. Folder 1 contains a gap in baptismal records from 1909-1913; there is possible coverage of these years in Folder 2, 1895-1924. Marriage records contain the names of both parents. A book of members contains the members' signatures. In the rear of this volume are written the "Ecclesiastical principles and rules" that Union Church adopted in 1876.

Subgroup I Church Records. Series III Standing Committee Records. Dec. 1883-June 1949. Volumes arranged chronologically by date.

Record books.

A working body composed of Pastor and deacons, Treasurer, Superintendent of Sunday School and some church members at large, the Standing Committee had broad responsibility for the prudential and ecclesiastical affairs of the church. From among its own members it appointed the members of other standing

committees, the Finance Committee, the Examining Committee, the Pew and Ushers Committee and the Religious Education Committee. The reports of these various committees were read at Standing Committee meetings; it is not known whether these committees kept separate records of their own. Business matters included the maintenance and repair of church property, the scheduling of church activities and the appearance of candidates for admission to the church. The Standing Committee regularly made recommendations to the Church regarding general church interests.

Subgroup I Church Records. Series IV Pew Records. Early 1900s. No arrangement.

Record books, loose papers, pew plan.

Pew records were maintained by the Pew and Ushers Committee, which was responsible for the rental of pews as well as the compilation of statistics on church attendance and the appointment of ushers. The surviving records consist of two undated volumes probably compiled in the early 1900s. These volumes are written in pencil and the entries are often crossed out. Since they seem designed more for personal use, their value as official church records is marginal. They, like the pew plan, survive merely as samples of the record-keeping of the period.

Subgroup I Church Records. Series V Ancillary Organization Records. 1908-1925. Volumes arranged chronologically by date.

Record books.

Only two miscellaneous volumes concerning the religious extension work of Union Church survive, one of which is a cash book. The records of the Corner Stone Class are of interest because the origins of this adult class can be traced back to Berkeley Temple.

Subgroup I Church Records. Series VI Financial Records. 1882-1950, with gaps. Arranged by type of record.

Record books, loose papers.

Major period of coverage is 1907-1920. Overlapping records of two kinds were kept by the Treasurer. Arranged chronologically by date, the journals provide a detailed item-by-item record of expenditures and receipts. Ledgers are arranged strictly by accounts. Invested funds (loosely called "church funds" or "Trust funds") were kept in a separate account and administered by the Ministers and Deacons as Trustees. A record book of their meetings from 1841-1929 survives; according to a note in the records, after several initial meetings in 1841 there are no records of meetings until 1871. In the 1841-1873 cash book, the financial transactions of the church Treasurer are intermingled with those of the treasurer of church funds. Evidence of Old South Church's financial support of Union Church survive in copies of applications for aid made by Union to the older church.

Subgroup I Church Records. Series VII Legal Papers, Publications and Memorabilia. 1887-1929. Arranged by type of record.

Published volumes, loose papers.

Documents which pertain to Union Church as an entire body have been brought together in this series. Two histories of Union Church, one a manuscript volume and the other a volume published for the centennial in 1922 are an important aid in understanding the church. Miscellaneous publications of the church as well as miscellaneous addresses and essays of those associated with the church at various times are included in this series.

CONTAINER LIST

CHURCH RUNNING RECORDS

BOX	FOLDER	
1	1	Records, June 1822-March 1844
	2	Subject index, 1822-1828
	3	Records, March 1844-April 1882
	4	Records, May 1882-Jan. 1915
	5	Records, Feb. 1915-Nov. 1927
	6	Records, Jan. 1928-Dec. 1935
	7	Records, Jan. 1936-April 1948

VITAL STATISTICS AND MEMBERSHIP

BOX	FOLDER	
2	1	Baptisms; 1895-1908, 1914-1920, 1921-1948
	2	Marriages, 1895-1911; Funerals, 1895-1948; Baptisms, 1895-1924
	3	Marriages, 1912-1948
	4	Members, 1876-1948
	5	List of members, 1894 (folder)
	6	List of members transferred from Berkeley Temple, 1907 (folder)
	7	List of members, 1900s (folder)

STANDING COMMITTEE RECORDS

BOX	FOLDER	
2	8	Records, Dec. 1883-Oct. 1894
	9	Records, Jan. 1895-Jan. 1909
	10	Records, Feb. 1909-Feb. 1922
	11	Records, March 1922-March 1940
	12	Records, April 1940-June 1949

PEW RECORDS

BOX	FOLDER	
2	13	List of names, assigned sittings and locations, c. 1900
	14	Pew valuations and assessments, c. 1900
	15	Pew plan, c. 1827 (This item has been removed and is stored in the RBR, Manuscript Drawer)
	16	Sample pew transfers, 1800s (folder)

ANCILLARY ORGANIZATION RECORDS

BOX	FOLDER	
3	1	Corner Stone Class, Records; Nov. 1908-March 1925
	2	Sabbath School, Cash book; 1914-1921

FINANCIAL RECORDS

BOX	FOLDER	
3	3	Treasurer's reports; 1884, 1885, 1886, 1887, 1888, 1889 (folder)
	4	Treasurer's journal, 1907-1914
	5	Treasurer's ledger, 1907-1912
	6	Treasurer's journal, 1914-1920
	7	Treasurer's ledger, 1913-1920
	8	Trustees, Church fund records; 1841-1929
	9	Trustees, Church fund cash book; 1841-1873
	10	Trustees, Church fund cash book; 1873-1913
	11	Cancelled mortgages; 1882, 1883, 1884 (folder)
	12	Applications for aid from Old South Society, 1909-1941, some gaps (folder)
	13	Papers concerning Sarah D. Lane Trust Fund, 1941-1950 (folder)
	14	Bills paid by Society, 1841-1852 (container)

LEGAL PAPERS, PUBLICATIONS AND MEMORABILIA

BOX	FOLDER	
4	1	Indenture, 1887 (folder)
	2	Transfer of funds subsequent to church mergers, 1907, 1948 (folder)
	3	Act of incorporation, 1915 (folder)
	4	Responsibilities of Board of Deacons, c. 1920 (folder)
	5	By-laws, three versions; 1929, others undated (folder)
	6	Handbook, 1885; Standing Committee rules, c. 1927 (folder)
	7	Centennial history of Union Church, 1922 (folder)
	8	Sample services, 1900s (folder)
	9	Manuscript history of Union Church, 1906 (folder)
	10	Miscellaneous addresses, no authors, no dates (folder)

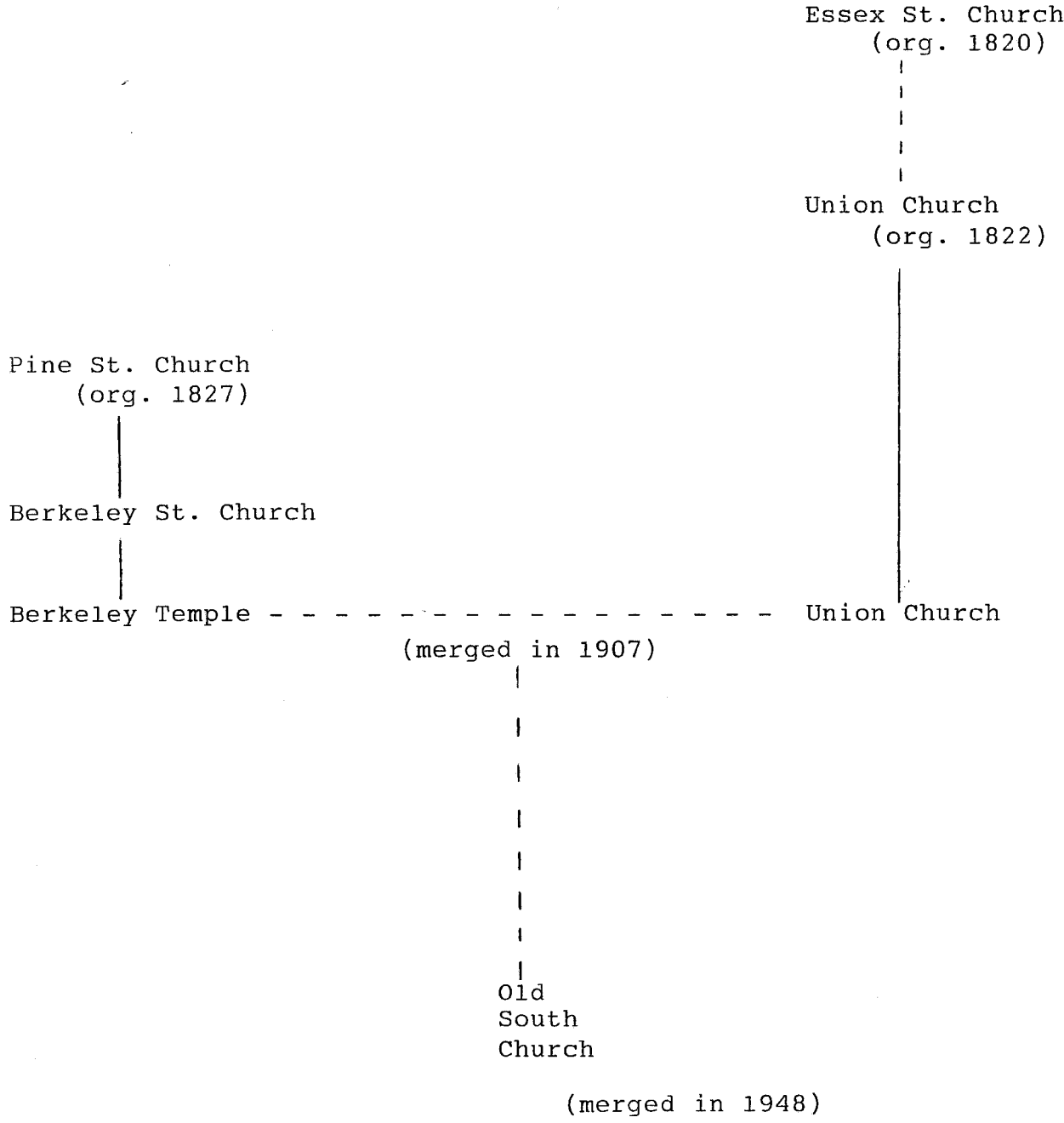
APPENDIX I

PASTORS OF UNION CHURCH AND DATES OF SERVICE

Samuel Green	1823-1834
Nehemiah Adams	1824-1878
Henry M. Parsons	1870-1874
Frank Warfield	1876-1881
R.R. Meredith	1883-1887
Nehemiah Boynton	1888-1896
Samuel Lane Loomis	1896-1907
Allen A. Stockdale	1907-1913
Ernest Graham Guthrie	1914-1925
Herbert A. Jump	1927-1932
Dwight J. Bradley	1934-1937
Fred D. Bennett	1938-1944
Ferdinand J. Loungway	1945-1948

APPENDIX II

CHART ILLUSTRATING HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF UNION CHURCH



NOTE ON ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

There is some supplementary printed material on the Church and its pastors in the regular library collection. Consult the Catalogue for more information.