Franklin, Mass. First Congregational Church records, 1737-1877. RG4842

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English
DACS2 - 2013
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Summary Information

Repository: Congregational Library & Archives
Creator: First Congregational Church (Franklin, Mass.)
Creator: West Parish Church (Wrentham, Mass.)
Title: Franklin, Mass. First Congregational Church records, 1737-1877.
ID: RG4842
Date [inclusive]: 1737-1877
Physical Description: 0.28 Cubic Feet (1 box, 3 reels)
Language of the Material: English
Abstract: The Second Church of Wrentham, also known as the West Parish Church, was established in 1738. When the West Precinct of Wrentham separated from Wrentham and incorporated as Franklin in 1778, the West Parish Church was renamed the First Congregational Church of Franklin. Included within the collection are meeting minutes, committee reports, society records, and vital records.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], in the Franklin, Mass. First Congregational Church records, 1737-1877, RG4842. The Congregational Library & Archives, Boston, MA.

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Historical Note

Against the backdrop of the First Great Awakening, twenty-four members from the Second Precinct of Wrentham split from the First Church and signed the covenant which became the founding document for the Second Church of Wrentham, also known as the West Parish Church, in 1738. Not long after, the call went out to Rev. Elias Haven to become the first pastor of the new church. He accepted and was ordained on November 8, 1738. The first meeting house was constructed in the summer of 1739. It was a simple structure which included no pews except for the two which had been constructed at the expense of the pew owners. By 1772 the church's membership had outgrown the first meeting house and the search for a
new location was begun. However, disagreements within the church community, and difficulty with the
town, long delayed the purchase of new land and construction.

In 1778, the West Precinct of Wrentham separated from Wrentham and was incorporated as Franklin
in honor of Benjamin Franklin. It had been hoped that Benjamin Franklin would donate a bell for a
church steeple, but instead he donated 116 books which became part of the Franklin Public Library's
initial collection. At the same time as the town of Franklin was incorporated, the West Parish Church
was renamed the First Congregational Church of Franklin. Construction on the second meeting house did
not begin until 1787 and was completed in 1789. In 1806 a belfry was constructed and the first bell was
installed. In 1827, a formal Sunday School was founded and attached to the church. Due to the growth
of the town of Franklin after the Civil War, a third meeting house was found necessary and construction
completed on it in 1872. The fourth and final church building was constructed in 1895. Throughout the
nineteenth-century, the church actively participated in benevolent societies and several members of the
church participated in both foreign and home mission societies.

Franklin was not spared from the Great New England Hurricane of 1938 and during the storm the
church building for the First Baptist Church of Franklin, established in 1868, was destroyed. The
First Congregational Church invited the Baptists to use their building for worship. In 1941, the two
congregations reformed together to form the Franklin Federated Church.

The Franklin Federated Church, which is associated both with the United Church of Christ and the
American Baptist Church, continues to serve the Franklin community today.

Scope and Contents

This collection documents the early administrative history of the First Congregational Church in
Franklin. Included within the materials are meeting minutes, committee reports, society records,
baptismal records, membership records, examples of church discipline, and correspondence.

Arrangement

This collection has been arranged in chronological order by start date.
Administrative Information

Publication Statement

Congregational Library & Archives

14 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108
info@14beacon.org
URL: http://www.CongregationalLibrary.org

Revision Description

Zachary Bodnar: Minor revision to the description of microfilm records, minor change to the arrangement, changed the date range in the collection title, added Haverhill to the collection title, minor adjustments made to notes. July 17, 2019

Restrictions on Access

Access to this collection is unrestricted and open to the public.

Restrictions on Use

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Acquisition Information

No acquisition information for Ecclesiastical records; originally RG0177. Materials permanently loaned to the Congregational Library & Archives by the Franklin Federated Church in 2007.

Accruals

Additional accruals are expected for this collection in the form of full-text transcription. There is no anticipated date for this accrual.
Processing Information


Controlled Access Headings

- Baptismal records.
- Charities.
- Church discipline.
- Church membership.
- Church records and registers -- Massachusetts -- Franklin.
- Church records and registers -- Massachusetts -- Wrentham.
- Church societies.
- Marriage records.
- Necrologies.
- New England's Hidden Histories.
- Barnum, Caleb, -1776
- First Congregational Church (Franklin, Mass.)
- Franklin (Mass.) -- Church history.
- West Parish Church (Wrentham, Mass.)
- Wrentham (Mass.) -- Church history.

Technical Requirements

A microfilm reader is required in order to access microform materials. One microfilm reader is available to the public upon request.

To access digital user's copies via online-interface, a java-enabled web browser is required. Internet Explorer 8.x and later, Firefox 5.x and later, Opera 12 and later, Safari 5.x and later, or any version of Google Chrome are recommended.

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Collection Inventory

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title/Description</th>
<th>Instances</th>
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<tr>
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<td>volume 1</td>
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**Digital Copies:**

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are available to view online. In addition, transcriptions of this record book are available to view alongside the corresponding page image in the above link.

**Scope and Contents**

Records included here document the church's covenant and meeting minutes. Also included are records of correspondence, baptisms, and membership.

<table>
<thead>
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</table>

**Restrictions on Access:**

Only the service copy is available for library use. The archival master and print master copies are restricted for preservation purposes.

**Scope and Contents**

This microfilm contains photographic copies of the Records of the Second Church, 1737-1781 and the Records of the Church in Franklin, 1781-1877, which are both a part of this collection.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Ecclesiastical council results, 1767</th>
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<td>folder 1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Digital Copies:**
Digital Copies

These ecclesiastical council records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are available to view online.

Scope and Contents

The ecclesiastical council recorded in this document was gathered to judge the moral character of Rev. Caleb W. Barnum and contains the recommendations of the council regarding his removal.

Marriage records and necrologies, 1773-1827

Scope and Contents

This folder includes both marriage records and necrologies.

Records of the Church in Franklin, 1781-1877

Scope and Contents

These records document the minutes of church meetings, correspondence, and religious societies. The records also include lists of baptisms, membership admissions and dismissions, censures, marriages, and deaths.