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Dover, N.H. First Parish Church records, 1614-1862. RG1319

This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on January 13, 2020.

English

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Congregational Library & Archives

14 Beacon Street

Boston, MA 02108

info@14beacon.org

URL: <http://www.CongregationalLibrary.org>

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Summary Information

Repository:	Congregational Library & Archives
Creator:	Belknap, Jeremy, 1744-1798
Creator:	First Parish Church (Dover, N.H.)
Creator:	Tufts, Asa Alford, 1798-1884
Creator:	Winslow, Hubbard, 1799-1864
Title:	Dover, N.H. First Parish Church records, 1614-1862.
ID:	RG1319
Date [inclusive]:	1614-1862, 1967
Physical Description:	.83 Cubic Feet (2 boxes, 2 reels)
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	Gathered in 1633, the First Parish Church in Dover is the oldest church in New Hampshire. Rev. Hanserd Knollys organized the First Parish Church as a religious organization in 1638. The church joined the United Church of Christ in 1961 and the name changed to First Parish Congregational Church in 1996. Records include births, marriages, deaths, dismissals, disciplinary cases, meeting minutes, financial records, and pew plans; letters by Rev. Jeremy Belknap, Rev. Hubbard Winslow, and the church's clerk Asa A. Tufts, and between congregations.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], in the Dover, N.H. First Parish Church records, 1614-1862, RG1319. The Congregational Library & Archives, Boston, MA.

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Historical note

Gathered in 1633, the First Parish Church in Dover is the oldest church in New Hampshire. The first permanent settlement in New Hampshire, the lands that would eventually become Dover were initially

settled by a pair of fishmongers from London. In 1633, the land was bought by a group of English Puritans. Over the next 150 years, with the arrival of mills and other infrastructure, the small settlement grew in population, size and prosperity.

The settlement's first church services were held on the last Sunday of October 1633 by Rev. Leverich at Dover Point; a year later the first meeting house was built on the same location. Little is known about the first meeting house except that it was made of mud and logs with a thatched roof and that it served the community's purposes until 1658 when a new meeting house was erected on Dover Neck. The third meeting house was located on Pine Hill from 1710-1759. In 1758 the fourth meeting house, built out of wood, was constructed in Tuttle Square. Construction on the fifth, and final, meeting house, a new brick church building, was concluded with its dedication on December 31, 1829.

Rev. William Leverich was the first minister to hold church services in Dover in 1633 and is considered the founder of Mission and Action in Dover. Rev. Hanserd Knollys organized the First Parish Church as a religious organization in 1638. Rev. Jeremy Belknap, who wrote the three volume "History of New Hampshire" and founded the Massachusetts Historical Society in 1791, was the minister at the First Parish from 1769-1786. Rev. David Root was well-known for his opposition to slavery and his anti-slavery sermons, as was his successor Rev. Jeremiah S. Young, who on October 28, 1841 passed a resolution against slavery.

The First Parish Church joined the United Church of Christ in 1961 and in 1996 the name changed to First Parish Congregational Church in 1996. It is a member of the New Hampshire Conference, UCC and of the Carroll-Strafford Association. The First Parish Congregational Church continues to serve the community of Dover, New Hampshire, today.

Ministers	
William Leverich	1633-1635
George Burdet	1637-1638
Hanserd Knollys	1638-1640
Thomas Larkham	1640-1642
Daniel Maud	1642-1655
John Reyner	1655-1669
John Reyner, Jr.	1669-1676
John Pike	1678-1710
Nicholas Sever	1711-1715

Jonathan Cushing	1717-1769
Jeremy Belknap	1769-1786
Robert Gray	1787-1805
Caleb H. Shearman	1807-1812
Joseph W. Clary	1812-1828
Hubbard Winslow	1828-1831
David Root	1833-1839
Jeremiah S. Young	1839-1843
Homer Barrows	1845-1852
Benjamin F. Parsons	1853-1856
Elias H. Richardson	1856-1863
Avery S. Walker	1864-1868
George B. Spalding	1869-1883
George E. Hall	1884-1908
Evarts W. Pond	1909-1912
Walter A. Morgan	1913-1917
Robert W. Coe	1918-1921
Lewis E. Purdum	1921-1929
David P. Hatch	1929-1938
Ralph S. Huffer	1939-1965
William W. Tucker	1965-1971

L. Arthur Domingue	1972-1978
William U. Conway	1978-1986
J. E. Lane	1985-1987
David L. Slater	1988-2009
R. E. Staley	1988-1992
J. G. Pirie	1993-1994
R. L. Hirtle	1993-1994
G. L. Crouch, Jr.	1994-1998
K. Geuther	1998-2004
J. G. Pirie	2000-2001
A. Campbell	2001-2004
N. M. Talbott	2004-2009
J. Mcardle	2009-2010
N. B. Bendroth	2009-2010
J. W. Lynes	2011-2012
M. S. Bennet	2012-2017

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Scope and Contents

The Dover, N.H. First Parish Church records consist of administrative church records and correspondence from 1614-1862. The scope includes records of births, marriages, deaths, meeting minutes, financial records, and pew plans; letters by appointed clergymen, including Jeremy Belknap, Hubbard Winslow, and Asa A. Tufts, between congregations, and from parishioners wishing to leave the

congregation. Microfilm materials duplicate some of the physical material but additional correspondence not present in the physical material are present on the microfilm.

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Arrangement

The collection is divided into three series. Records in each series have been arranged chronologically, by start date, and by topic.

Series 1: Correspondence, 1639-1855

Series 2: Church Records, 1717-1857

Series 3: Microfilm, 1614-1862

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

Congregational Library & Archives

14 Beacon Street

Boston, MA 02108

info@14beacon.org

URL: <http://www.CongregationalLibrary.org>

Restrictions on Access

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

Restrictions on Use

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Acquisition Information

Materials were received at two different dates. Microform materials (RG1319) were received at an unknown date. The remaining materials (originally RG5360) were loaned to the Congregational Library & Archives from the First Parish Congregational Church (Dover, N.H.); Accession 2017-17.

Location of Originals

The physical materials in this collection are held by the First Parish Church in Dover, New Hampshire. The Congregational Library & Archives maintains digital and microfilm surrogates for much of the collection.

Accruals

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

Custodial History

Microfilm copies were created by the Genealogical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah, in 1967.

Processing Information

Processed by Susan Stanley, March 2018, using DACS Second Edition. Additional description by Zachary Bodnar, February 2019. Item level descriptions by Jules Thomson, January 2020.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Antislavery movements.
- Baptismal records.
- Church membership.
- Church records and registers.
- Congregational churches.

- Installation (clergy).
- Marriage records.
- New England's Hidden Histories.
- Pews and pew rights.
- Belknap, Jeremy, 1744-1798
- First Parish Church (Dover, N.H.)

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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Bibliography

Bryant, Donald R. *History of the First Parish Church Founded 1633*. Dover: First Parish Church, 2002.

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Collection Inventory

Correspondence, 1639-1855

Physical Description: 11 Folders

Scope and Contents

Correspondence contains letters by appointed clergymen, including Jeremy Belknap, Hubbard Winslow, David Root, Asa A. Tufts, Homer Barrows, and Jeremiah Young. There are correspondences between congregations and letters written on paper with the anti-slavery letterhead from parishioners wishing to leave the congregation.

Title/Description	Instances
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Letter of public assurance, 1639	
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Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

This document was digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

This single-page document consists of a "letter of public assurance" addressed "to all public officers and others in this jurisdiction whom this may concern". The content relates to the case of Separatist minister "Mr. Hansard Knollys" (Rev. Hanserd Knollys, 1599–1691) who was subject to prosecution on charges brought against him by the high commission court in England. In the letter, the unsigned authors grant legal assurance of safe passage for Rev. Knollys during his trial.

Belknap, 1786

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

These six items of correspondence were all authored by the Rev. Jeremy Belknap, a Congregational minister better known for his contributions to the corpus of American historical works. After twenty years as minister to the Parish Church in Dover, Rev. Belknap resigned due to the church's failure to resolve his salary complaints. The letters enumerated below correspond to this dispute, which reached a breaking point in the spring and summer of 1786 and resulted in Rev. Belknap's dissolution of his ministry.

Item list

1786 April 30

from Rev. Belknap to the First Parish in Dover:
letter regarding Rev. Belknap's effort to lobby for an increase in salary due to the depreciation of paper currency

1786 June 12

from Rev. Belknap to the First Parish in Dover:
letter declining the church committee's invitation to converse about the current "difficulties"

1786 June 15

from Rev. Belknap to the First Parish in Dover:
letter confirming Rev. Belknap's decision to resign from his former duties

1786 June 16

from Rev. Belknap to the First Parish in Dover:
letter with a further reiteration of Rev. Belknap's
intentions

1786 June 16

from Rev. Belknap to the First Parish in Dover:
letter with request for an official dismissal or
alternatively the convening of an Ecclesiastical
Council to decide the matter

1786 July 27

from Rev. Belknap to the First Parish in Dover:
typewritten copy of an original letter elaborating
on the reasons for Rev. Belknap's resignation,
including objection to the practice of a general
parish tax as a means to pay his salary

Correspondence, 1828-1838

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New
England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions
are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

These official church records deal mainly with ministerial
business, including invitations to clergy to preach and their
responses. There is also a parishioner recommendation
letter and a copy of meeting minutes. Items are enumerated
below.

Item list

1828 September 13

by Asa Tufts [secretary]: meeting minutes

1828 November 23

from Hubbard Windlay to the Church and Society
of the First Congregational Parish of Dover: letter
declining invitation to preach regularly

1831 November 30

from J. H. Keeler to Asa Tufts: letter excusing
himself from an ecclesiastical council

1831 December 7

from "L" to [unknown]: letter requesting
references for two potential ministers

1832 May 28

from A. D. Eddy to William Woodman: letter
with description of recent travels

1832 October 23

from Warren Fay to the First Church in Dover:
letter declining ministerial call

1838 August 6

from the Congregational Church in Great
Falls to the First Church in Dover: letter of
recommendation for parishioner Oliver Carter

Winslow, 1831

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

These records relate to the ministry of Rev. H. Winslow, specifically the end of his ministry, his health concerns, and the search for a replacement minister.

Item list

1831 June 11

from Rev. H. Winslow to "the wardens of the First Parish in Dover": letter describing his health concerns and need for a new pastor

1831 June 11

from Rev. H. Winslow to "the wardens of the First Parish in Dover": copy of above letter with reply from church wardens

1831 November 13

from Rev. H. Winslow to Dr. Asa A. Tufts: letter describing his health concerns

1831 November 30

by Israel W. Putnam [moderator]: results of an ecclesiastical council dismissing Rev. Winslow

1831 December 11

from H. Winslow to Dr. Asa A. Tufts: letter suggesting replacement ministers

Backus, 1831-1835

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

These records relate to the church's attempt to instate Rev. J. Turnbull Backus as minister, and Backus's refusals of the call. One letter includes arrangements for temporary preaching.

Item list

1831 August 19

from Allen Gannett to William Woodman: recommendation of J. T. Backus as replacement minister

1832 February 13

from J. Turnbull Backus to William Woodman:
letter declining the ministerial call

1831 October 31

from J. Turnbull Backus to William Woodman:
letter reiterating his poor health and declining the
ministerial call

1831 August 24

from J. Turnbull Backus to William Woodman:
letter with arrangements for preaching

Root, 1833-1839

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

These records, mainly correspondence, relate to the ministry of Rev. David Root, specifically to his illness and resignation. They include letters from Rev. Root to the church committee and replies.

Item list

undated

from Rev. David Root to the First Parish in
Dover: copy of letter declining preaching due to
ill health

1833 January 21

from Rev. David Root to the committee of the
First Church and Parish in Dover: letter regarding
his ministry

1834 April 24

from Charles Ricker to Rev. David Root: letter
regarding his dismissal

1835 March 25

from J. H. Miller to the First Church in Dover:
invitation to an ecclesiastical council for the
merging of the Pleasant Street Church in
Portsmouth, N.H. and the North Church

1835 May 28

from Rev. David Root to the First Parish of
Dover: copy of resignation letter

1837 June 10

from Rev. David Root to the First Congregational
Church of Dover: letter calling for an
ecclesiastical council regarding his resignation

Norris, 1834-1839

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

These records relate to the disciplinary case of parishioner Daniel Norris, resulting from a financial dispute with other parishioners. Documents include legal testimonials by witnesses and plaintiffs in the case, summons to the hearing, and finally Norris's confession to the church. Items are enumerated below.

Item list

1834 February 10

by T. E. Sawyer: copy of receipt by Richard McDuffee to Thomas Roberts, with elaboration of legal dispute

1835 March 17

from John W. Hayes to Daniel Norris [on behalf of the church]: letter with summons to a disciplinary hearing

1835 March 23

by Thomas Roberts : legal testimony

1835 March 26

by John W. Hayes: report on disciplinary case of Daniel Norris

1835 January 19

by Thomas Pickering, David Legro, and Richard McDuffee: legal testimony

1839 February 5

from Daniel Norris to the congregation of the First Church in Dover: confession and request for forgiveness

Correspondence, 1839-1842

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

These records comprise letters to and from the church in Dover, discussing pulpit supply and preaching, disciplinary cases of parishioners, and one request for dismissal. Items are enumerated below.

Item list

1839 August 28

from E. J. Lane to Rev. Mr. Young: letter with request for pulpit supply

1839 September 4

from William J. Breed to E. J. Lane: letter making arrangements for preaching

1839 October 10

from Rev. J. S. Young to the committee of the First Church in Dover: letter declining offer to continue preaching

1842 July 6

from Rev. J. S. Young to Charles Ricker: letter with summons to a disciplinary hearing

1842 July 8

from E. J. Lane to Mr. Palfrey Downing: letter with summons to a disciplinary meeting

1842 July 10

from Elizabeth L. Fols to the Congregational Church in Dover: letter asking for dismissal

A. Folsom and Others, 1842

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

These records relate to the departure of several parishioners from the church in Dover, and the church's subsequent dismissal of the members. In a document submitted to the church, the absenting members describe their opposition to the church's refusal to condemn slavery.

Item list

1842 October 9

from Abraham Folsom to the First Congregational Church in Dover: letter regarding the abolition of slavery

1842 October 9

by the First Church in Dover: letter dismissing Abraham Folsom and other members

Correspondence, 1845-1849

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

These records consist of official church correspondence, including parishioner transfer letters, ministers' letters, invitations to ecclesiastical councils, and summons to disciplinary meetings. Items are enumerated below.

Item list

1845 June 14

from Homer Barrow to the First Congregational Church and Society in Dover: letter with acceptance of ministerial call

1845 June 23

from the First Congregational Church of Christ in Dover to the Congregational Church of Christ in Rochester: invitation to ecclesiastical council for the ordination of Rev. Homer Barrow

1848 September 4

from the First Church in Dover to the First Presbyterian Church in Newburyport: parishioner transfer of Hannah Coffin

undated

from the First Church in Dover to the Baptist Church in Dover: parishioner transfer of "Miss A. B."

undated

from the First Church in Dover to Daniel Gale: letter with summons to a disciplinary hearing

undated

from the First Church in Dover to Samuel Prescott: letter with summons to a disciplinary hearing

1849 March 1

from Hayden K. Higby to E. J. Lane: letter requesting letter of transfer to the Old South Church in Boston

Congregations, 1853-1855

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

These records comprise four invitations to ecclesiastical councils, from other churches to the church in Dover. The invitations are for ordinations and dismissions of ministers.

Item list

1853 December 22

from the Congregational Church in Great Falls to the Congregational Church in Dover: invitation to ecclesiastical council for dismissal of Rev. McCollom

1853 December 12

from the Congregational Church in Epping to the Congregational Church in Dover: invitation to ecclesiastical council for the ordination of Rev. Lyman White

1855 October 31

from the Congregational Church in Hampton to the Congregational Church in Dover: invitation to ecclesiastical council for the ordination of Rev. John Colby

1855 October 22

from the North Church and Parish in Portsmouth, N.H. to the Congregational Church in Dover: invitation to ecclesiastical council for the ordination of Rev. Lyman Whiting

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Church records, 1717-1857

Physical Description: 9 Items (5 folder, 4 volumes)

Scope and Contents

Church Records include records of births, marriages, deaths, meeting minutes and financial outlines of the pews. There are documents regarding the instalment of Rev. Benjamin F. Parsons, lists of congregation members, documents regarding the situation of A. Farnsworth, and tax documents.

Title/Description	Instances
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Church record of marriages, baptisms and deaths, 1717-1829	
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Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

The Church Record of Marriages, Baptisms, and Deaths is a volume containing records of Marriages: May 1767 - Jan. 1829; and Baptisms and deaths: Oct. 1717 - Dec. 1786. It is signed by Jeremy Belknap.

Church record book, 1762-1862

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

This record book consists of committee reports, meeting minutes, correspondence drafts and copies, as well as financial records.

Separated Materials:

Separated Materials

Between pages 122-123, three loose documents were found in and placed in their own folder: Tax Documents 1781-1784.

Church record book vol. 1, 1766-1829

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

The Church record book vol. 1 contains Jeremy Belknap's historical notes on the town and church of Dover until October 1789. The volume also contains records of marriages and baptisms, lists of members admitted to the church, a list of the children of Rev. Jonathan Cushing, and notes written by other clergymen.

Church record book vol. 2, 1831-1857

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

The Church record book vol. 2 contains names of church members, records of deaths and baptisms, notices of ministers, and prints of Rev. Hubbard Winslow, Rev. David Root, and Hanserd Knollys. There are printed church manual clippings as well as a photograph of Dea. Lane. The title leaf is signed by Asa A. Tufts in 1831.

Tax documents, 1781-1784

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

These three loose documents were found in the church record book dating to 1762-1862, between pages 122-123, and placed in their own folder.

1781 April 10

by Rev. Jeremy Belknap: notice of receipt for parish taxes levied

1784 May 1

by Stephen Evans to the parish wardens: request for payment of one pound, nine shilling and sixpence from the parish collection of 1782

undated

list of payments received from various subscribers

Church records, 1825-1834

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

These records comprise official church correspondence and include invitations to ecclesiastical councils, ordinations, articles of faith and church covenant documents.

Item list

undated

[used by] Rev. Clary: articles of faith

1828 August 6

by Jonathan French [moderator]: result of ecclesiastical council dismissing Rev. Clary

1831 November 16

from the Church of Christ at Meredith Bridge to the Church of Christ at Dover: invitation to ecclesiastical council for ordination

1832 June 6

from the Church of Christ in Pleasant Street, Portsmouth to the Church of Christ in Dover invitation to ecclesiastical council for ordination

1833 February 6

by John Smith [scribe]: result of ecclesiastical council to install Rev. Root

1833 January 25

template letter for ordination invitation

1834 July 15

articles of faith and covenant

1835 September 17

from the Congregational Church in Rochester to
the Church in Dover: invitation to ecclesiastical
council to dismiss pastor

Documents regarding A. Farnsworth, 1840-1841

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

These four documents relate to a disciplinary case against parishioner Asa Farnsworth, who was allegedly seen going into the bedroom of the widow Mrs. Benn without anyone besides the two of them present.

Item list

1840 December 5

by Francis Cogswell and others: committee report
on Asa Farnsworth's behavior toward the widow
Mrs. Benn

1841 April 9

from Asa Farnsworth to the Congregational
Church of Dover: letter relating to his own
disciplinary case

1841 June 28

from Asa Farnsworth to the Congregational
Church of Dover: letter relating to his own
disciplinary case

undated

draft of ruling in Asa Farnsworth's disciplinary
case

Church records, 1845-1855

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

These records consist of official church and parish documents, including several meeting minutes and invitations, and also several financial reports. Items are enumerated below.

Item list

1845 May 11

by E. J. Lane [clerk]: church and parish meeting minutes

1849 December 2

by E. J. Lane [clerk]: church meeting minutes

1849 December 5

by B. R. Allen [moderator]: ecclesiastical council meeting minutes

1852 July 6

by Adam Jobey [moderator]: ecclesiastical council meeting minutes

1852 May 27

meeting notice

1853 December 16

from the Mather Church and Society to the First Church in Dover: invitation to ecclesiastical council for ordination

1854 March 31

list of subscribers for the American Sunday School Union

1855 January 1

reports of the church treasury committee

Documents regarding Rev. Parsons, 1852-1853

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

These documents relate to the selection and ordination of Rev. Benjamin Parsons, including correspondence to and from the First Parish Church in Dover. Items are enumerated below.

Item list

1852 December 28

from Benjamin Parsons to the Congregational Church and parish in Dover: letter with acceptance of ministerial call

1852 December 29

from Benjamin Parsons to the Congregational Church and parish in Dover: addendum to acceptance of call with salary request

1852 December 31

from the Congregational Church in Dover to S. L. Pomroy: invitation letter to the installation of Rev. Parsons

1853 January 12

by B. N. Allen [moderator]: results of
ecclesiastical council for the settlement of Rev.
Parsons

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Microfilm, 1614-1862, 1967

Scope and Contents

The microfilms contain death, marriage, and baptismal records, calendar notes, and meeting minutes. Also containing letters from Jeremy Belknap and other documents, these microfilms contain much of the material from Series 1 and 2.

Title/Description	Instances
Dover, NH, First Parish Church records, 1614-1862, 1967	reel 1
Dover, NH, First Parish Church records, 1614-1862, 1967	reel 2

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