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Pembroke, Mass. First Church records, 1712-1953. RG5109

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English

DACS2 - 2013

Congregational Library & Archives

14 Beacon Street

Boston, MA 02108

info@14beacon.org

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

Table of Contents

Summary Information	3
Historical Note	3
Scope and Contents	7
Arrangement	7
Administrative Information	8
Controlled Access Headings	9
Technical Requirements	9
Bibliography	10
Collection Inventory	10

Summary Information

Repository:	Congregational Library & Archives
Creator:	First Church (Pembroke, Mass.)
Title:	Pembroke, Mass. First Church records, 1712-1953.
ID:	RG5109
Date [inclusive]:	1712-1953
Physical Description:	1.09 Cubic Feet (1 box)
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	The First Church in Pembroke was organized October 22, 1712 and its first minister, Daniel Lewis, was ordained December 3, 1712. Under Lewis the parish flourished and in 1727 a larger, meeting house was built. The third meeting house was erected by the end of 1837. In 1841 the church became Unitarian and in 1964 the church rejoined the Congregational denomination. The First Church in Pembroke continues to serve the community today. This collection documents the history and life of the church and includes membership lists, administrative records, financial records, and church correspondence.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], in the Pembroke, Mass. First Church records, 1712-1953, RG5109. The Congregational Library & Archives, Boston, MA.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Historical Note

For the settlers of an area of Duxbury known as *Mattakesett*, a Massachusetts word meaning "Place of much fish," worship was difficult as the nearest meeting houses were 20 miles away. Public worship began in an old Huguenot orchard, earning it the name "Sabbaday Orchard," and the first meeting house was likely erected there around 1708, though there are two competing accounts regarding the specifics of this earliest meeting house. On March 21, 1712, the town of Pembroke, which encompassed the whole of *Mattakesett*, was incorporated. As a part of that act, the new town agreed to "procure and settle an orthodox, learned minister of good conversation." The First Church in Pembroke was organized October

22, 1712 and its first minister, Daniel Lewis, was ordained December 3, 1712. Sometime before 1717, the congregation moved to the Common and in 1717 this meeting house was enlarged to accommodate members of the Massachusetts tribe. Under Lewis, a Calvinist, the parish flourished and again in 1727 a larger, meeting house was built. Pembroke was split into an East and West Parish in 1748; the Second Church was gathered that same year in the West Parish. Lewis's ministry ended with his death on June 29, 1753.

The First Church continued to flourish under the ministry of Thomas Smith who was ordained December 4, 1754. Unlike his predecessor, Smith was a relative religious liberal. Under his ministry, the parish swelled so that finding a place to sit was often impossible and in 1763 the meeting house was again expanded. On December 28, 1772, at a meeting of the whole town held in the second meeting house, the Pembroke Resolves were penned and approved by vote, representing "the first public declaration contemplating political independence of Europe by an American assembly." Late in Smith's ministry, a separation occurred within the parish due to disagreements over Smith's liberalization of church music. 1787 was the final year of Smith's ministry; due to the loss of his sight he was assisted by Kilborn Whitman who would succeed Smith and was ordained in December of 1787. Smith passed away on July 7 1788.

In 1820 the West Parish in Pembroke was incorporated as the town of Hanson and the Second Church was renamed at that times. The First Parish remained largely unchanged until December of 1836, during the ministry of Morrill Allen, when the second meeting house was condemned and ordered to be taken down. The meeting house was torn down and the third, and final, meeting house was constructed and dedicated on the same lot by the end of 1837. As part of this construction, a bell and clock were installed in the belfry. The clock was a gift to the Town of Pembroke by Rev. Allen. The bell cracked in 1839 while ringing for a fire marshal and a new one was installed that same year. Allen, famed for his frequent agricultural writings, was the longest serving minister of the First Church, having served nearly 41 years before he departed in 1841 to run for office as a Massachusetts state senator. After Rev. Allen's departure, the First Church joined the Unitarian denomination. In 1868, another separation occurred within the parish, this time over the installation of an organ from the Organ Fund Society. On April 8, 1893, lightning struck the belfry, causing extensive damage to the church. These damages were repaired by the fall when the church was rededicated.

In large part due to declining membership and other financial difficulties, only exasperated by United States entering World War II, the third meeting house fell into disrepair during the first half of the twentieth-century. Ten women formed the Church Restoration Committee and borrowed \$1,000 (approximately the equivalent of \$17,000 in 2017) to begin a major restoration project in 1947. Less than a year later, the debt was paid off. In 1958, a house was purchased by the First Church to be used as a parsonage. Once again, lightning struck the First Church in 1985; this time the damages were repaired with the help of the Town of Pembroke as part of its efforts to refurbish the clock. In 1964 the First Church rejoined the Congregational denomination and in 1986 the First Church voted to join with the United Church of Christ. In 1989 the ladies of the First Parish Sewing Circle donated their building to the First Church to be used for Sunday-school classes. The First Church in Pembroke continues to serve the local community today.

Ministers

Daniel Lewis	1712-1753
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Thomas Smith	1754-1787
Kilborn Whitman	1787-1796
James Hawley	1798-1800
Morrill Allen	1801-1841
Joshua Chandler	1842-1844
Preserved Smith	1845-1849
William L. Stearns	1849-1856
William Bicknell	1857-1861
Theophilus Doggett	1861-1874
Jesse Temple	1874-1877
James H. Collins	1877-1879
John M. W. Pratt	1881-1884
Henry Dana Dix	1885-1887
Charles Gardner	1888
William H. Fish	1888-1889
John B. Barnhill	1889-1890
Charles E. Perkins	1890
Thomas Thompson	1890-1891
William Brunton	1891-1892
Stanley M. Hunter	1893-1894
Martha Aitkin	1894-1895

Edward C. Guild	1895-1896
John W. Barker	1900-1901
Henry Westfall	1902-1906
Palfrey Perkins	1906-1908
Paul H. Drake	1908
Lyman V. Rutledge	1909-1910
John Malick	1910-1911
Charles H. Lyttle	1912-1914
Leonard Cushman	1914
William Milsesel	1915-1916
Arthur H. Sargent	1917-1918
Howard Charles Gale	1918
Alfred Wilson	1921
Reid	1925
George Rex Mursell	1926
Bryant	1927
Edward McGlennon Jr.	1928
Harvey Loy	1929
Elizabeth Marquand	1929-1930
Gerald Fitzpatrick	1931
Arthur H. Coar	1933-1947

Charles Fletcher	1947-1948
Lawrence Jaffa	1949-1953
Bertrand H. Steeves	1953-1956
Quentin R. Leisher	1956-1961
Malcolm Brummitt	1962-1966
W. Chester Jostrom	1967-1969
Robert G. Morris	1969-1982
Donald Orcutt	1982-1991
David L. Clarke	1992-2000
Richard Z. Giragosian	2002-2016
M. E. Jackson	2016-2018

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Scope and Contents

This collection includes the documentary history of the First Church in Pembroke. Included within the collection are membership lists, church correspondence, newspaper clippings, administrative records, financial records, meeting minutes, committee reports, and a small printed bible which belonged to Daniel Lewis, the first minister of the church.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Arrangement

This collection is primarily arranged in chronological order, by start date, and by topic.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Revision Description

Zachary Bodnar: Revised finding aid notes, agents, title fields, and subjects using the current implementation of the processing manual. 2019-05-31

Restrictions on Access

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

Restrictions on Use

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Acquisition Information

Materials permanently loaned to the Congregational Library & Archives in 2013 by the First Church in Pembroke, Massachusetts; no accession number.

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

Some materials in the collection, namely the two lists of communicants, have had preservation and restoration work done to them by the Northeast Document Conservation Center at an unknown date.

Processing Information

Processed by Zachary Bodnar, September 2017, using DACS Second Edition.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Controlled Access Headings

- Baptismal records.
- Church finance.
- Church membership.
- Church records and registers.
- Marriage records.
- Necrologies.
- New England's Hidden Histories.
- Lewis, Daniel, 1685-1753
- First Church (Pembroke, Mass.)
- Pembroke (Mass.) -- Church history.

Technical Requirements

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.

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Bibliography

Cross, Karen. *In the Beginning... The First Three Hundred Years of the First Church in Pembroke, Massachusetts*. Pembroke: Silver Lake Press, 2011. 17.11.1 P36.64 FIRCH

[^ Return to Table of Contents](#)

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Instances	
Daniel Lewis's bible, circa 1712	box 1	volume 1
Church records, 1711-1887	box 1	volume 2

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

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

Scope and Contents

This volume includes 109 pages of church records dating from 1711-1887. Included within the church records are a list of ministers, a dedication for the church written by Daniel Lewis, lists of votes, lists of deacons, captains, and members, minutes of church meetings, records of dismissal, records of baptism, records of admission, records of marriage, records of death, historical information on the church and town of Pembroke, ecclesiastical council meeting minutes, church covenants, church communications, and ministerial records, as well as loose documents.

Church records, 1764-1805	box 1	volume 3
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Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

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

Scope and Contents

This volume includes 88 pages of church records dating from 1764-1805. Included within the church records are a list of ministers, lists of votes, minutes of church meetings, minutes

of precinct meetings, and financial receipts, as well as loose documents.

List of communicants, 1714-1796	box 1	volume 6
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Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

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

Scope and Contents

This volume includes 24 pages of annual lists of communicants dating from 1714-1796. Also included are church and precinct meeting minutes.

List of communicants, 1736-1742	box 1	volume 7
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Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

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

Scope and Contents

This volume includes 16 pages of annual lists of communicants dating from 1736-1742.

Church correspondence, 1764-1949	box 1	folder 3
Treasurer's ledger, 1811-1887	box 1	volume 8
Ministerial fund, 1812-1947	box 1	volume 9
Ministerial fund, 1885-1943	box 1	volume 10
Church certificates, 1815-1856	box 1	folder 1
Members leaving, 1820-1851	box 1	folder 2
First Parish membership book, 1858-1920	box 1	volume 11
Clippings, 1877-1932	box 1	folder 5
First Parish monthly meetings, 1887-1912	box 1	volume 4
First Parish monthly meetings, 1912-1953	box 1	volume 5
Printed materials, 1894-1949	box 1	folder 4

Scope and Contents

This folder contains print materials created by the First Church such as orders of worship.