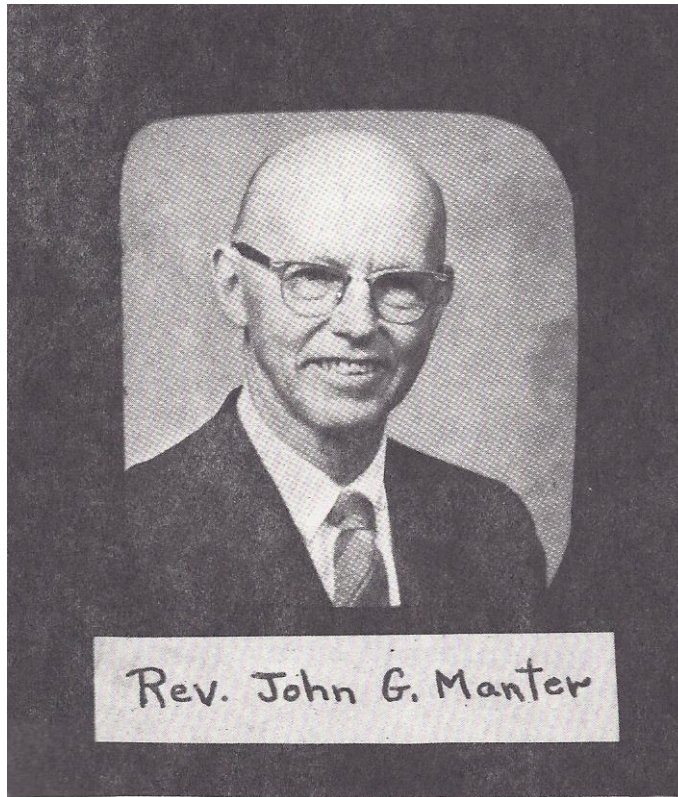


A History of the Village
And
The First Congregational Church
Windham, Connecticut



275th Anniversary
1700 – 1975
December 10, 1975



Rev. John Manter

A Message from the Pastor

Windham, Connecticut and the First Congregational church of that community are grateful and very much indebted to Ruth Standish Swift for her research and enthusiasm in exploring the history of the church and town.

Mrs. Swift, who is a direct descendant of Captain Myles Standish of the Plymouth Colony and of George Chamberlain, a veteran of the Civil War from Windham, has written a book which makes Windham's history come alive. Her style is very readable and awakens our interest in past events. She has portrayed carefully the background under which many of our local events unfolded.

Believing God is working out his purpose in the affairs of men makes us examine more thoroughly the experiences of those who molded Windham's history and causes us to appreciate more fully those who have contributed to it. We both glory in their strength and wisdom and would learn from any mistakes. As we contemplate the future we are grateful for their well-laid foundation and receive inspiration to press forward.

Many will want to enrich their knowledge of the history of Windham by reading this account which all the family will enjoy. The reader will certainly catch the spirit of the writer who has expressed great pleasure in performing a task which has demanded considerable time and careful examination of historical records.

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Acknowledgement

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Ruth Swift

Historical Committee

Chairperson – Emily Rood

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Rev. John Manter, Eden C. Cook, George Douglass, Mary Phelps, Patricia Woodward, Donald Eldridge and Ruth Swift

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"Round the first homestead, settling one by one,
 New households gathered; Windham was begun.
 Along 'Old Nipmuck Path' her street was laid
 And homes were built where once the Indian Strayed."
 Theron Brown

Some homes still stand where they had been
 Giving echoes of Fitch, Dyer, and Elderkin.
 Amid Windham's busy and modern ways
 Still live the memories of by-gone days.
 Ruth Smith

Chapter I.

The first inhabitants of the area, which is now the Town of Windham, were the Indian tribes of the Algonquian Nation. They were known locally as the Nipmucs or Nipnets, which means “pond or fresh-water Indians”, the Wabbaquassetts known as “the mat-producing tribe” because of the skill in making mats out of the many reeds and grasses, and the Mohegans meaning “wolves”, who had invaded the area about 1600, or some twenty or thirty years before the arrival of white settlers in Connecticut.

The Indians were tall, straight, and well built. Their dress consisted almost wholly of skins of animals that had been tanned and cured to be soft and pliable. Usually the clothing was decorated with feathers, porcupine quills, or dyes made from the oak, elder, sumac, and other barks.

They lived in either round or long houses made of poles covered with bark or woven mats. Some long houses were fifty to one hundred feet long, twenty-five to thirty feet wide, and occupied by a number of families.

The Indians lived by hunting, fishing, and farming. Several of the tribes in one place, as for example the Mohegans, Nipmucks, Pequots and Quinnipiaccs, raised fields of corn, and other such crops as beans, pumpkins, artichokes, squash, tobacco, Indian turnips and hemp.

The Mohegans established their headquarters at the mouth of Thames River after driving the Narragansetts and thereafter assumed jurisdiction of the area tribes. The Pequots lived west of the Thames and were warlike and cruel. “Every tribe, except the Mohegans, feared them.” (Humphreville, VanDusen, 10)

The English first became familiar with Windham County as they traveled to make their first settlement in 1635. A rude trail called the Connecticut Path, crossed the Wabbaquasset country and became the main thoroughfare of travel between Boston and Hartford. Another famous Indian trail beginning near Windham and leading to Massachusetts was the Nipmuck Trail.

The Town of Saybrook is one of the oldest towns in Connecticut and its early history had a direct bearing on what happened later at Windham. The town was originally planned as a refuge for Lord Saye and Seale, Lord Brooke, and other noted men who were dissatisfied with the civil and religious matters in England.

In 1635, Lion Gardiner and John Winthrop, Jr. erected a fort and named it Fort Saybrook. It was attacked by the Pequots in 1636 and all during that severe winter, the settlers in the four small settlements of Winsor, Wethersfield, Hartford, and Saybrook, were harassed by the hostile Pequots.

The following year Captain John Mason with a force of some ninety white men and from two hundred to five hundred friendly Niantics, Mohegans, and Narragansetts, attacked the Pequot encampment. There were few Pequot survivors. On July 13, 1637, the last encounter with the hostile tribe was at the swamp in Fairfield. A day of public thanksgiving was declared when all gave special prayers of thanks for the victory.

Uncas, Sagamore of the Mohegans, reclaimed his land and his tribe which Sassacus, sachem of the Pequots, had taken from him. This is no doubt may have been why Uncas was so willing to aid Captain Mason since he later became the most powerful sachem in Connecticut. When King Charles of England heard how the English had been helped in their fight against the Pequots, he sent Uncas “a Bible to show him the way to Heaven, and a sword to protect him from his enemies.” (Mills, 133)

Miantonomo, sachem of the Narragansetts, became jealous of Uncas. He planned to kill him and then destroy the English in Connecticut. Miantonomo was called to Boston to explain his actions but as there was no proof, he was only warned to keep the treaty and then released. In 1643, Miantonomo and his warriors confronted Uncas but they were defeated. Miantonomo was tried and condemned to death.

The Narragansetts were anxious to avenge the death of their chief, and took every opportunity to provoke the Mohegans. In 1657, they besieged Uncas at Fort Shatok. The Mohegans provisions were almost gone and they would have perished if Captain Mason had not sent Thomas Leffingwell with a canoe loaded with beef, corn, and peas. For this kindness and seventy pounds, Uncas deeded land which is now the site of Norwich to John Mason, Thomas Leffingwell, Reverend James Fitch, and others at the Saybrook settlement.

In 1660, some of the group moved to the new area. The Mohegans assisted them in carrying their goods. The settlers were the church of Reverend James Fitch of Saybrook. The meeting house in Norwich Town was built on a cliff and remained there for one hundred years. Thus Norwich became the daughter church of Saybrook and the future mother church of Windham.

Uncas divided his lands between his three sons. His third son, Atanawahood or Joshua, sachem of the Western Niantics, inherited the land between the Appaquage and Willimantic Rivers. In 1675, Joshua willed the tract containing Windham, Mansfield, and Canterbury to the following people: Captain John Mason, Reverend James Fitch and his son Captain James Fitch, John Birchard, Thomas Tracey, Thomas Adgate, Lieutenant Thomas Leffingwell, John Olmstead, a physician, Simon Huntington, William Hide, William Backus, Hugh Calkins, and Captain George Denison, all of Norwich. Two sons of Captain Mason of Stonington received land as did Daniel Wetherell of New London.

The outbreak of King Philip’s War in Massachusetts in 1675, made the settlers uneasy. The earlier work of John Eliot of converting the Nipmuck Indians and other tribes to Christian Life was undone when many of them turned to their savage ways again.

The summer of 1676 had been very dry. By August the corn had dried up and many trees lost their leaves and appeared dead. The Mohegans had powwows but their rain dances were to no avail. Uncas and a group of Mohegans consulted Reverend Fitch to see if he would ask his God for rain. Reverend Fitch then asked Uncas that if it did rain wouldn’t he attribute it to his powwows. Uncas replied that they had done their utmost but all in vain. He confessed before the group of Mohegans that if it should rain it would be in answer to the Englishmen’s prayer to their God. Naturally the settlers needed rain also and therefore prayed again. On that day, clouds appeared and the day following a

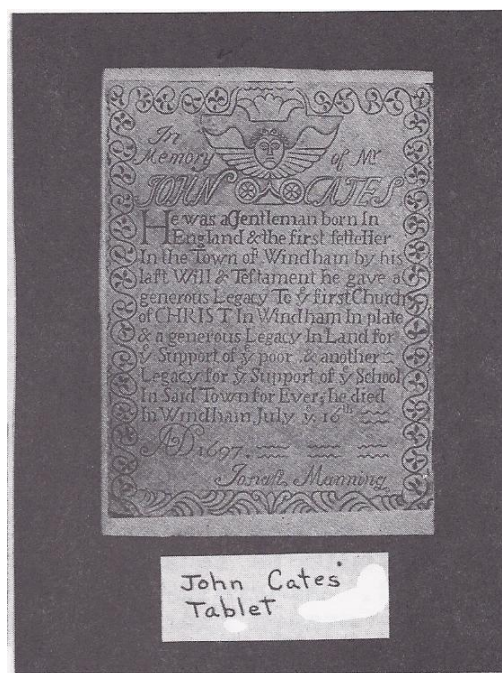
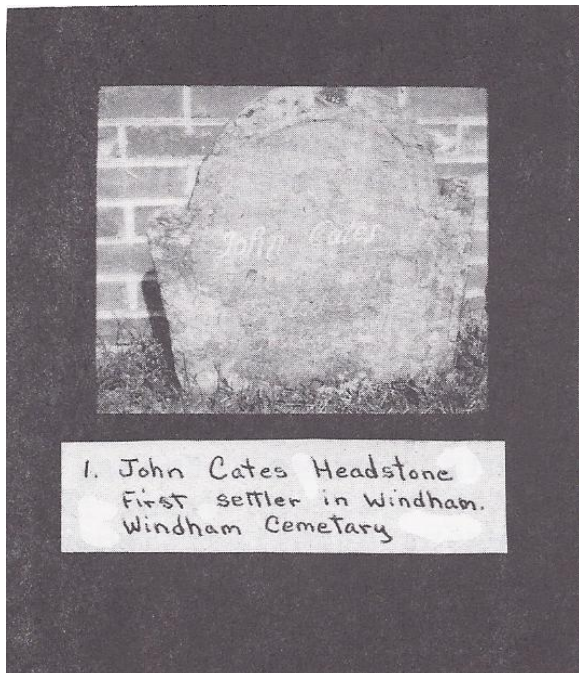
heavy rain fell. Uncas did not formally accept Christianity but several Mohegans were later named as church members.

The Mohegans remained faithful to the English. The sons of Uncas, Oweneco and Attawanhood with their warriors, joined the Massachusetts settlers against King Philip, who was the son of Massosoit, sachem of the Wampanoags.

The death of King Philip the following August, ended the threat to the peace of the settlers. The Nipmucks had been almost totally annihilated and the Wabbaquassetts had joined Uncas at Mohegan. The left Windham territory open to English settlement. They had to wait, however, because they were not sure of their ownership as John Winthrop claimed that he had bought it from the Quinebaug Indians. The English Governor Sir Edmund Andros, sent by King James of England to demand return of the Connecticut Charter, had said, "An Indian deed is worth no more than the scratch of a bear's paw." (Gross, 21) The recipients of the land decided to wait before making a settlement. With the change from King James to William, Prince of Orange, as King of England, Andros was arrested and a new governor put in his place.

Feeling more secure of their ownership, the group had the land surveyed, divisions made, and three villages planned, fifteen home lots at Hither-place (Windham Center), twenty-one at Ponde-place (Mansfield), and twelve at Willimantic. Highways were to be laid out through each destined village. Land was bought and sold but it was not until the autumn of 1688 that Windham received its first settlers.

John Cates, an English refugee, and his faithful negro servant Joe Ginne, found shelter in a cave or dug-out that winter. The next summer he purchased land from Daniel Mason and built the first house in Windham. He was to become an honored citizen of the town and when he died, July 16, 1697, he willed a generous legacy to the church and also for a school and for the support of the poor.

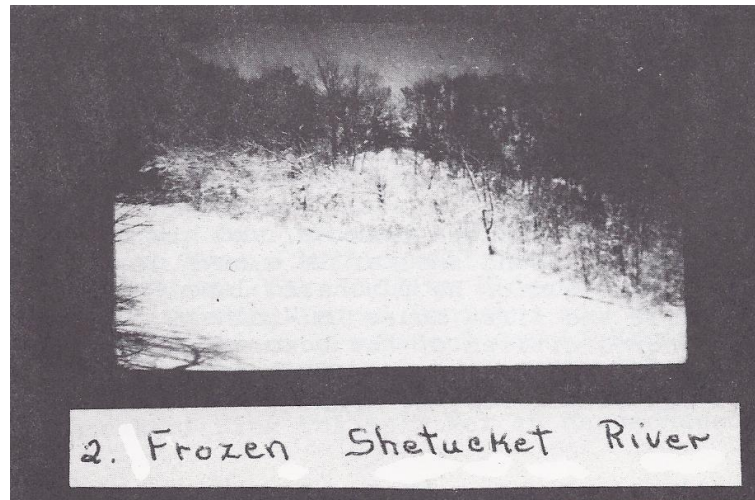


The second settler was Jonathan Ginnings who had bought land from John Birchard. The first child born in the settlement was their daughter. She was born February 10, 1691.

Other settlers arrived and there was much to do. There was land to break and fence in, houses to build, and a society to organize. The first public meeting was held on May 18, 1691. Jonathan Crane, who had bought land from Hugh Calkins, set up the first sawmill, the grist mill,

and a blacksmith shop. He came with his wife and children and in 1691 became the first townsman.

Religious services were held at times under a tree along with wandering Mohegans and Shetuckets attending. Services were also held at the home of Reverend Fitch or his son Jabez. When possible the group journeyed to Norwich, a distance of twelve miles along an Indian Path that connected the settlements. The train climbed over hills and through wild, rugged and wooded areas and across rivers. Some travelled on horse back but others would have to walk the distance.



In the autumn of 1691, the residents numbering thirty, petitioned to grant them a township to be called Windham, named after Windham of Sussex, England.

To the honored General Court, now sitting in Hartford, the request of your humble petitioners is as follows:

We whose names are hereunto subscribed, with several others, are proprietors of that tract of land given by Joshua, Sachem, deceased, unto several gentlemen of Norwich. We do humbly pray your honors that you would grant us a township and call it Windham, and that our town-brand may be ; and that your Honors would please grant us the same privilege to other new plantations in respect of forebearing us our country rates awhile, and this Honorable Court would enable us to levy our town rates upon the lands of such persons as are unwilling to bear their share of charge; this being granted will greatly oblige us to pray. We remain yours in all duty bound: -

Joshua Ripley
John Cates
Jeremiah Ripley
Jonathan Crane
Richard Hendee
John Backus

Joseph Huntington
William Backus
Jonathan Ginnings
Thomas Huntington
John Larrabee

October 6, 1691 (Larned, 68)

On May 12, 1692, the court granted the petitioners the liberty of a township and exemption from paying any country rates for the space of four years. The inhabitants were obliged to procure and maintain an able and faithful ministry.

The first "Town" meeting was held June 11, 1692. Joshua Ripley was chosen town-clerk; Jeremiah Ripley, Jonathan crane and Jonathan Hough, Townsmen; Thomas Huntington and John Royce, surveyors; Joseph Huntington, Jonathan Hough, Samuel Hide, and John Fitch, to lay out

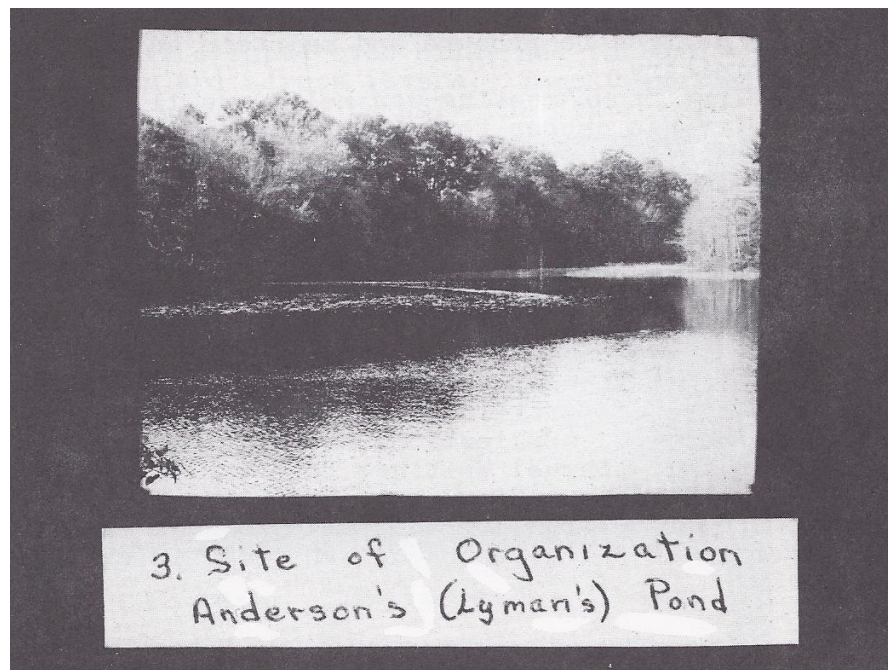
the highways. It was voted to ask Mr. Fitch about a minister and thereupon voted that Thomas Huntington would go to Milford to apply to Mr. Samuel Whiting for his services. It was agreed to use the home of Mr. John Fitch for a meeting house until one could be built and that it be "fortified and a lean-to built, every man doing his share of fortification." (Larned, 70) After repeated application, Mr. Whiting agreed to come to Windham. Samuel Whiting, born in 1670, was one of fourteen children. His father was Reverend John Whiting, a Harvard graduate and pastor of the First Church in Hartford. He had given Samuel Whiting his early education but later he studied with Reverend James Fitch of Norwich. He married Elizabeth Adams in 1696, whose mother was Alice Bradford, granddaughter to Governor William Bradford of Plymouth.

Mr. Whiting's first sermon was from the first verse of Genesis given on Sunday, January 1, 1693. It was agreed to pay him "twenty pounds in provisions pay and four pounds silver" for the first year. The next year he was to receive more.

Two years later his house was completed measuring sixteen feet by sixteen feet with two stories. It was located centrally between Windham and Ponde-place (Mansfield) at the "Crotch" which is the area below Bricktop.

The first house of worship was erected in 1697 in the area between the current Green and Webb Hill, the front part of William Backus' lot. The site for the meeting house gave rise to much controversy between the settlers of Hither-place (Windham) and Ponde-place (Mansfield). Since no decision could be made on its location, it was agreed in 1699 to ask a committee of the General Court of Connecticut for an answer to the problem. The committee stated that it was best to divide and each settlement to form their own ecclesiastical society, sharing the minister until the North parish could get one of their own. Services were to held part of the time in each place.

The question of the location of the meeting house finally settled, they were now ready to initiate measures for church organization. On December 4, 1700, Mr. Whiting was ordained and on December 10, 1700, the church was officially organized with a membership of twenty-six, fifteen of whom were men and thirteen women. The place where the church is said to have been organized was about a mile north of the public square and known as the Dingley house.



CHAPTER II

The First Century 1700 – 1800

The life of the early settlers was rough and demanding, but they were hard-working, honest people who had a strong belief in their church. The meetinghouse or church was the center of the community and used not only as a place of worship but as a place to store arms and hold town meetings. The building was not heated and therefore many would carry “foot stoves” which were little metal boxes filled with live coals.

Everyone was required to attend services on the Sabbath. The time of services was announced by a drum roll. Sermons often lasted from two to three hours and sometimes even longer. Prayers many times lasted one or two hours.

The meeting house started in 1697 was considered complete in 1703. It was located in the area between the current Green and Webb Hill. A committee decided where the members were to sit, taking into consideration their age, usefulness, property, and their standing in the church society. “Deacon Bingham was placed in the right-hand seat below the pulpit, and his wife in the pue answerable thereto; Deacon Cary in the left-hand seat, and his wife in the pue adjoining; Joshua Ripley and Lieutenants Fitch and Crane in the foremost pue; Abraham Mitchell at the head of the first, and Josiah Palmer of the second, seat, with their wives against them – and the remaining of the congregation in due order.” (Larned, 86)

The people at Ponde-place were not included as in May 1702, they had become a separate town. They did pay toward the support of the minister until such time as they could secure their own. Mr. Whiting’s services were shared by his making the trip to Mansfield until 1710. At that time, Ponde-place formed their own church and acquired their own minister. Twenty-five members were dismissed from Windham to become members of the first daughter church.

In 1708, Mr. Whiting accepted the Saybrook Platform in behalf of his church and from thereon participated in the meetings of the Association. This established communication between churches and a form of church government with final responsibility vested in the local church, the ecclesiastical unit being the members of the church. Windham was included in the North Association of Hartford County. A proviso to the Saybrook Platform stated “dissenters could qualify before county courts for organization into distinct bodies . . . provided it worked no detriment to the established church.” (Clark, 140) This often meant double taxation of any group other than the established Congregational Church. The “Saybrook Platform” was the first book printed in Connecticut by Thomas Short of New London.

The church grew rapidly under Mr. Whiting’s leadership and in 1713 the meetinghouse was found to be too small. Therefore a larger one was to be built.

Windham was growing in population, business and importance. Lieutenant Crane received permission “to keep a public victualing house, for the entertainment of strangers and travelers and the retailing of strong drink.” Samuel Webb, who bought Thomas Huntington’s place was allowed to keep a “house of public entertainment.” At first, taverns were regulated by the church and expected to promote public worship. Since the buildings were hear the watchful eye of the church, it was permitted to sell “beare”. “There was much good fellowship among the early settlers . . . The young people remained at home, marrying mostly among their own townspeople, till in process of years, nearly the whole population were knit together in one great family circle.”

The first homes were one-story cabins but soon the typical house was of two stories with a large chimney in the center to afford fireplaces on either side. There was usually a partial cellar. The exterior walls were covered with clapboards and the roof with “hand-rived” shingles. The interior walls were often plastered over with a mixture of clay and hay. The ceilings were low and required tall people to take care when entering the room. As wealth and family increased the houses were enlarged by various additions. The houses were cold and drafty in the winters and in the summer rattlesnakes were said to have crept in through the cracks.

Travel was difficult and at times dangerous. As there were no bridges, each traveler had to do the best he could in crossing a river. In a few isolated places, ferries operated. John Larrabee kept a ferry, with a “good and sufficient canoe” at the crossing of the Natchaug River in return for forty acres of land. Later a bridge was built by Robert Fenton. There were also dangers from roaming Indians and wild beasts such as wolves, bears, panthers, and wild cats. Rattlesnakes were everywhere. Bounties were paid per rattlesnake and even women and older children would do their part in ridding the area of this menace.

By law, it was required to form a “train-band” to protect the town if the need arose. John Fitch was appointed captain; Jonathan Cran, lieutenant; and John Cary, ensign. They held regular drills on the Green. Each town was “not to be deserted” and its inhabitants were forbidden to leave under penalty of a heavy fine. They were also compelled to support guard houses and scouts. They also had to provide equipment and ammunition.

The town during these early years, was very prosperous and its population grew constantly. A school house was ordered built in 1713 to be eighteen feet square and “not above twenty rods from the meeting house.” Previously, school was held at the home of Thomas Snell. Also that same year, the town voted to raise funds for a larger meetinghouse. It was completed in 1716. Ripley and Fitch were honored with the chief seats in the front and Joseph Dingley was allowed to sit in the pulpit because of his deafness. Mr. Whiting was again allowed to build his own pew for his wife and family. A committee was formed to build a pew for the gallery which was the area used by the young people and also the slaves.

As the town grew so did the responsibilities of its citizens. Practically everyone was required to perform some sort of public service such as the following: townsman, justice of the peace, constable, town clerk, treasurer, highway surveyor, fence-viewer, listers, collector of taxes, leather sealer, grand juror, tithing-man, Hayward or guardian of the boundaries, chimney-viewer, gauger, packer, sealer of weights and measures, key keeper, recorder of sheep marks, brander of horses, maintainer of a pound, and other responsibilities in church and town affairs. In 1719, a Court of Probate was established in Windham Center to serve all of Windham County. Captain John Fitch was selected to be the first judge.

During these early years, other churches in Connecticut were having problems with their parishioners showing a lack of interest in religious life. “Quarrelsomeness, licentiousness, drunkenness, lying and slander were wide spread.” (Clark, 264) In 1714, the General Assembly called upon the churches to inquire into the “religious indifference, the profanity and immorality that threatened to ruin the land.” Windham, however, was gaining strength as shown by the increase in membership. During a six month period in 1720-21, eighty people joined the church. On February 12, 1721, a special Thanksgiving service was held for this great blessing of religious interest. Residents of neighboring towns attended and Rev. Adams of New London wrote: “Oh, that the same good spirit from on high were poured out upon the rest of the country, for what pity is it that this simple place only should be wet with the dew of Heaven, while the rest of the ground round about remains (comparatively dry!” (Larned, 103) By 1725, the

Windham church had received three hundred eighty-three additional members since its organization. Even after the dismissal of sixty members to a second daughter church (that of Canada, now Hampton) in June of that year, Windham still retained two hundred sixty-four in the congregation.

On September 27, 1725, Rev. Whiting died of pleurisy while on a visit to Enfield. He was 56 years old and left his wife and a family of thirteen children, the youngest a little over a year old. They were left well provided for as Rev. Whiting had acquired a considerable amount of land. His estate also included a good size library, large supply of bedding, furniture, pewter, brass and a little silver. It was said his family was one of the religious militant families that could pray or fight as the occasion demanded, his sons being known for fulfilling their military duties. Rev. Whiting was sadly missed and the people of Windham were overwhelmed with grief. He was remembered as a “man of uncommon fervor in the pulpit, who mingled greatly with the people in their everyday transactions.” (Committee, 24)

After careful consideration and reviewing his reactions with the townspeople, it was agreed to call Rev. Thomas Clap of Scituate, Massachusetts, to be the next minister. He was a Harvard graduate of 1722, entering there when he was but fifteen years old. He was twenty-two when ordained August 3, 1726. Rev. Clap was a remarkable organizer but with strict ideas of laws and discipline, so much so he was “a terror to evil doers.” He worked hard to enlarge the membership of the church and brought about a change in admission practices so that all persons who had been inhabitants of the town for more than three years, obeyed the laws, and behaved themselves soberly, could become fixed members of the church and receive church privileges. He also started the practice of open reports of public scandal or wrong doing. Needless to say, during his pastorate, Sabbath rules were seldom broken, swearing hardly heard, and family prayer was the custom. Rev. Clap was interested in the children’s religious education. As he visited each family, he was careful to record the names and ages of all.

Windham’s population had increased and was the largest in Windham County and therefore had been designated to be the shire town to hold the County Court House. Tax records show that assessments for Windham country from 1710 to 1740 increased at the phenomenal rate of 864 per cent.

The highways and commons were pronounced sufficiently clear so that men no longer were required to cut brush. The first highway that had been made was between Norwich, Windham and Ponde-place. Another road connected with what is now Hampton and from there to the old Connecticut Path.

A second military company could be formed and Eleazer Cary was assigned as Captain. The town had its first regular physician, Jonathan Huntington, who was the son of Joseph Huntington. It was reported Dr. Huntington learned much of his medical knowledge from Hannah Bradford Ripley.

In 1726, it was voted to use the back room of Abbe’s dwelling as a gaol until a two room structure, measuring 31’ x 18’, could be built. A court house stood on a corner of the Breen by 1729 and was considered to be an attractive building. Dams were built and the Iron Work’s Bridge was erected in Willimantic.

Business also increased. Thomas Snell started a blacksmith shop. Richard Abbe opened his “stately mansion” for public entertainment, Nehemiah Ripley and Joseph Genning started a tannery and made shoes. Thomas Dyer, who arrived in Windham in 1715 at the age of twenty-two, was also a shoemaker and farmer. He was to become the head of one of the most prominent and wealthy families of the town.

Rev. Clap married the youngest daughter of the late Rev. Whiting on November 23, 1727, when she was but fifteen years old. In 1736 she died leaving two young daughters. Three years later Rev. Clap left Windham to become the fifth rector of Yale College, a position he soon made equivalent to the modern presidency. He was credited for inspiring many young men of Windham to become graduates of Yale.

During Rev. Clap's pastorate at Windham, two hundred nineteen persons were admitted to membership and there were four hundred seventy-five baptized. Eight-nine members were dismissed to form the third daughter church at Scotland in 1735. When Rev. Clap left Windham, the people no longer under his strict and watchful eye "acted like boys let out of school." Even though they admired Rev. Clap for his strict discipline, they chose someone entirely opposite in nature the next minister.

Rev. Stephen White of New Haven was known as being a mild and gentle young man. He was born in Middletown, June 8, 1718, the eldest son of John White. On December 24, 1740, he was ordained and soon after his moving to Windham, married Mary, a daughter of Major Thomas Dyer who was a commander in the Fifth Regiment of Connecticut. In the various wars England had with France and Spain over American territory, Windham supplied arms, supplies, and men. Some fought with the British in Canada, New England, the Ohio Valley, and the West Indian seas.

"The Great Awakening" took place during Rev. White's first year in town and increased the membership by one hundred persons. The revivals in 1741-42, renewed emphasis upon the basics of religion or insured salvation by achieving membership in an orthodox church. People suspended business and gave themselves to religious services. Itinerant preachers, like Edwards and Whitefield, went from town to town. One these preachers was the son of Ralph Wheelock, a first settle in Windham. It was stated Rev. Eleazer Wheelock preached over 465 sermons in one year. In later years he became a teacher and moved his Indian school to Hanover, New Hampshire, where it developed into Dartmouth College.

Religious meetings changed from being sober and dignified to a state of frenzied enthusiasm with groaning, shrieking and violent demonstrations. Rulers of the church and state attempted to suppress this action by restricting liberty of speech to settled pastors. This brought about a split in the church and separate churches were organized. As people were still required to pay for the organized church and its minister, it meant double taxation of the members of the Separatist Church plus fines, whippings, and imprisonment for not attending to the regular church duties or for not paying their taxes.

There were so many prisoners from the surrounding area, it became necessary to build a second floor on the jail. By 1753, a new building had to be erected "between the brow of the hill against Mr. Joseph Huntington's and Mr. Elias Franklin's currying shop." (Larned, 459) Rev. Clap, who was now at Yale, expelled from college any student who attended Separatist meetings.

Separatist churches formed in practically all Connecticut towns. When the one formed in Windham in 1747, Rev. White persuaded the townspeople "not to drive things." Without much resistance the Separatists began to fall way. Its minister became a Baptist, some members joined the Separatist churches in Mansfield or Scotland, and others returned to the organized church.

In December of 1745, Rev. White was called upon to conduct funeral services for a poor, unfortunate girl. She had been convicted of the murder of her child which she had left in the woods to perish in order to conceal its birth. She was hanged December 18, on a gallows southwest of the Green. It was the first public execution in Windham County.

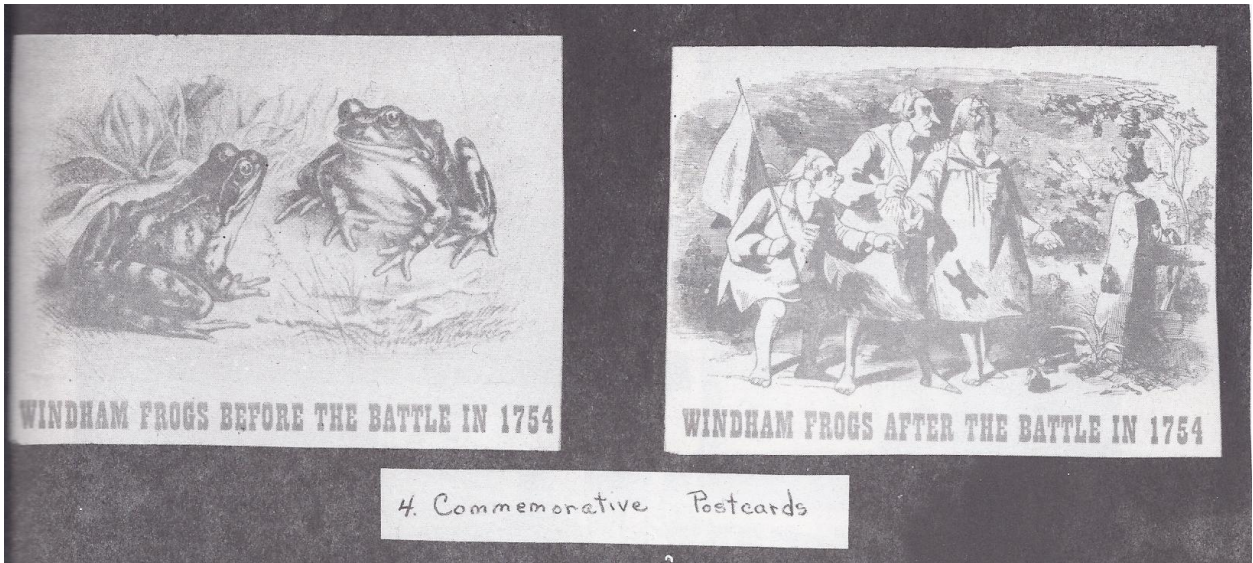
About this same time Colonel Eliphalet Dyer and Colonel Jedediah Elderkin, both graduates of Yale, were admitted to the bar and opened a law offices in Windham. These native sons contributed greatly to community life, both judicial and military.

On July 18, 1753, a meeting was held for the purpose of forming a company for the colonization of the Susquehanna Valley in what is now Pennsylvania. Since a tract of Connecticut was to run westward to the Pacific Ocean, they appealed to the General Assembly for permission to colonize and to buy land from the Indians. Jonathan Skinner, Eliphalet Dyer, John Smith and Captain Robert Dixon were appointed to view the land and purchase rights from the natives. Captain John Fitch, Jedediah Elderkin, and Samuel Gray were to act as treasurer. Shares in the company were sold to residents of Windham and adjacent towns. Interest in the new venture mounted and soon shares were more costly and new subscribers were from various parts of Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. Hostility between France and England over the claims to American territory being great at this time, the Susquehanna Company was forced to postpone the occupation of their purchase until a latter time.

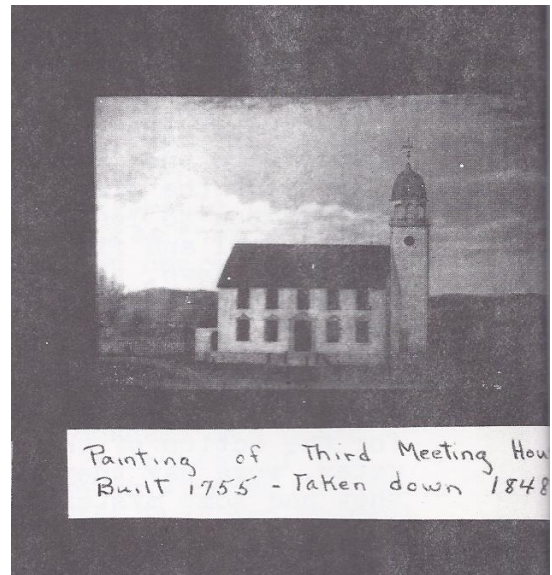
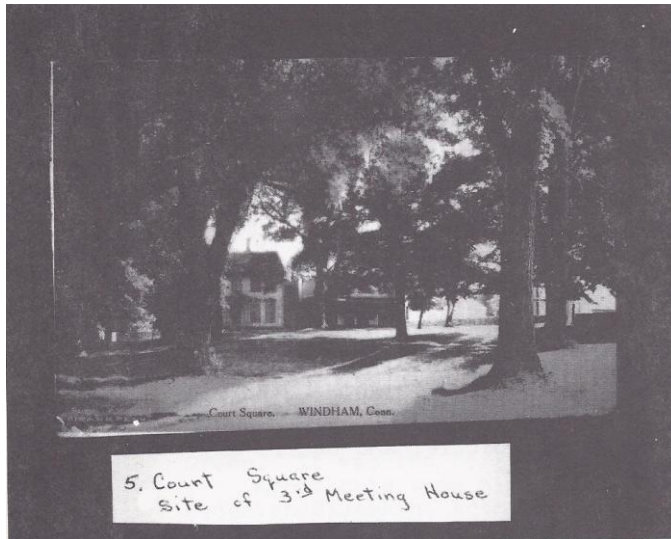
The French and Indian Was, between 1754 and 1760, gave anxious moments to residents in Windham. Some of the citizens were called to military duty. “Windham’s prominence in the recently formed Susquehanna Company gave her especial cause for anxiety ... Thus troubled and perturbed, the residents of Windham Green were aroused from their slumber one sultry summer night by sounds wholly unlike anything every before heard or reported even by the oldest inhabitants.” (Larned, 561)

It was reported that Jake, Mr. White’s negro-man, was the first to hear the sounds and give the alarm. Residents rushed from their beds in their nightshirts, the men grabbing their firearms, the women and children crying and screaming. It was the darkest of nights and the sounds grew louder and louder. They seemed “to fill the Heavens and shake the earth.” Some thought the French and Indians were about to invade the village and they thought they heard voices calling, “We’ll have Colonel Dyer” and “Elderkin too.” Dyer and Elderkin were at that time in Crown Point, New York, leading the local militia against the French and Indians.

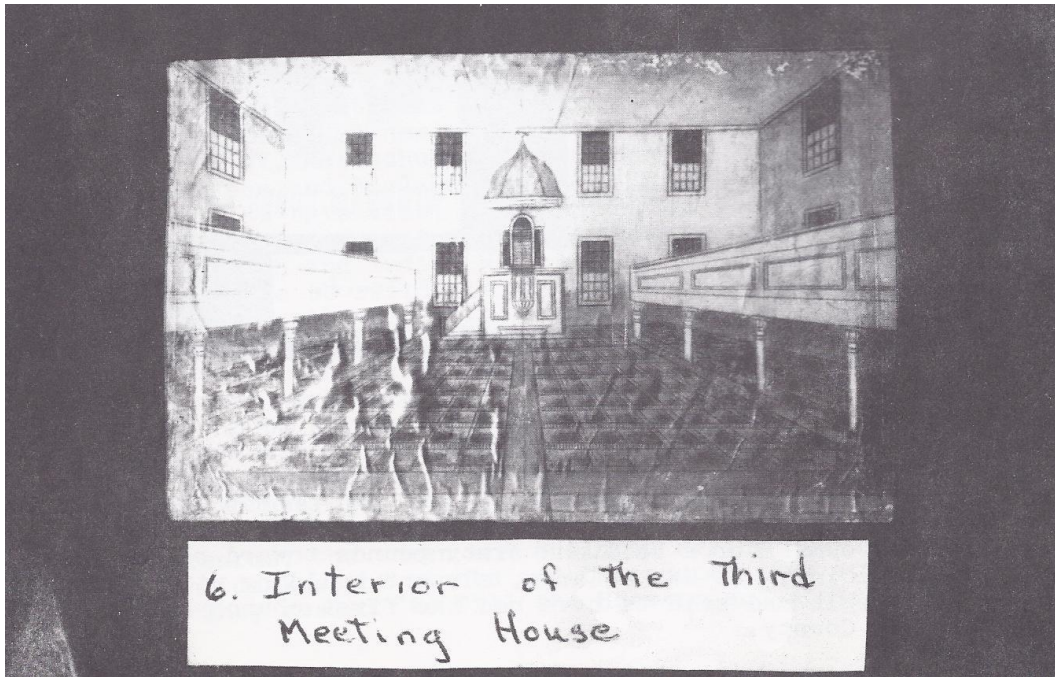
Others were sure it was the Day of Judgment and the sounds were the “Trump of Doom.” Thus in fear and terror, they spend the night. No doubt Rev. White must have been called upon to lead them in prayer. Three men went up Mullin Hill and fired “volley after volley” into the darkness. At dawn, they crept over this hill. They were greeted by the sight of thousands of dead bodies of frogs beside the water of Follett’s Pond (ever since known as Frog Pond). News of this event traveled far and wide and the Windhamites and the frogs were remembered in jokes, stories, and songs for years after. No satisfactory explanation has been given for the action of the frogs. Some say they were in need of water, some say they fought a great battle, and others say they had some mysterious ailment.



The third church building, planned in 1753, was completed in 1755. It was built on Windham Green in the area known as Court Square or Weir's Court, under the supervision of Dr. Jonathan Huntington, Nathaniel Wales, and Thomas Welch. Mr. Jonathan Bingham who had died in 1751, willed the church twenty pounds for a bell and sixty pounds toward paying for the building. It was a large, elegant building with a beautiful steeple and said to have had the first church bell in Windham County.

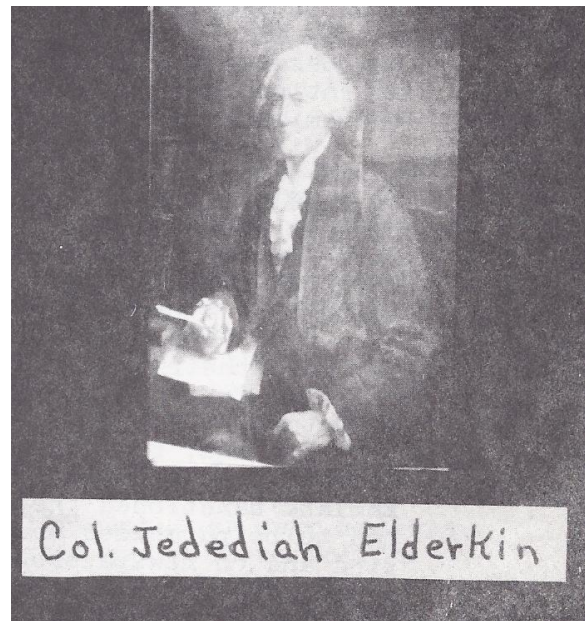
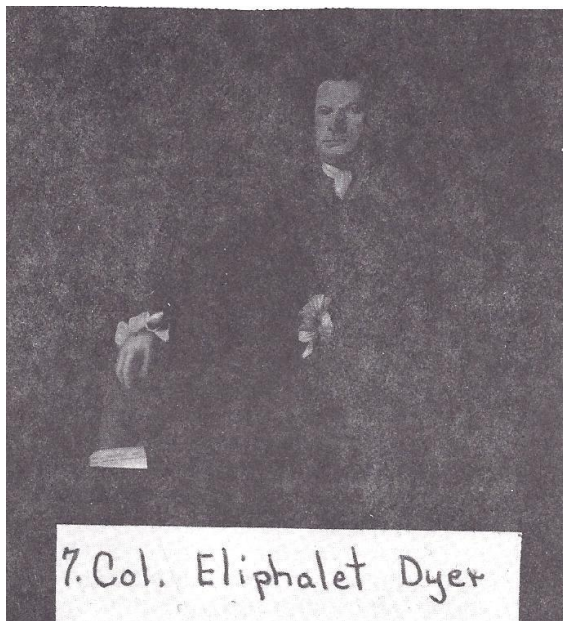


Men and women again were given separate sections except in some instances by a special town vote a husband and wife could sit together. Servants and slaves occupied the gallery.



According to the first census taken in Connecticut, there were forty slaves in the town of Windham. It recorded 2,406 whites living in Windham in 1756. The tax rate list of 1759 showed Windham as 26,952 pounds, 2 shilling, and 4 pence. Windham rivaled only Lebanon for population and wealth in Windham County. Norwich at this time was the second largest city in Connecticut, New Haven was first.

In 1760, there were twelve places licensed to sell liquor in the town, March Fitch owning one of them. Windham had four military companies by this time. Silk industries were encouraged by the colony government and offered a bounty on the raising of mulberry trees and for raw silk. "Half an ounce of mulberry seed was distributed to each parish." (Clark, 34) Jedediah Elderkin planted mulberry trees in South Windham and made a course silk used for handkerchiefs and vests. He was also actively engaged in the practice of law.



Another prominent lawyer, Eliphalet Dyer went to England for the Susquehanna Company to gain permission from the Crown to settle in "Wyoming Valley". This area was also claimed by Pennsylvania Colony, but a group of pioneers, including Captain John Durkee, Thomas Dyer, Vine Elderkin, Nathaniel Wales, and Nathan Denison, left Windham and began the struggle for the valley's possession. Other people from the East went as well and the town saw many emigrant groups pass through the village on their way to the new territory. Even though the Susquehanna Company did not have the King's approval or the backing of the government of Connecticut, so many settlers made their way west it necessitated the improvement of highways and the building of bridges. In 1778 the new settlement was attacked. Many were massacred and the remnant, almost entirely women and children, made their way home. Mrs. John Abbott and Mrs. Thomas Fuller each with nine children, begged their way back. Mrs. Stephen Fuller and her daughter were fortunate to be able to ride back on a horse. Their long journey of over four hundred miles through wilderness and rough terrain shows the hardiness of these early pioneer women.

James Flint, Ebenezer Backus, and Ebenezer Devotion, Jr. had established an extensive trade dealing with West India goods. The products of the town increased, especially wool, hemp, flax, wheat, tobacco, cheese, and butter. There was such a state of prosperity that Windham became known for its "lavishness of its hospitality" and for "general jollity".

The church became less prosperous as trade and industry increased. It has fewer members and its hold over the public affairs decreased. Many of its early leaders had died. The French and Indian War and Wyoming Valley settlement in the Susquehanna Territory depleted their resources, diverted attention from religious things and marked the beginning the emigration from Windham.

With the end of the French and Indian War, Great Britain tried to bring the colonies under her strict rules by trying to regulate trade. This action caused problems for many businesses in Windham. Eliphalet Dyer was concerned with the large number of British troops in the Colonies. He stated that the troops were "a rod and a check" on the settlers instead of a protective force, and that if the colonies did not unite "they may bid farewell to liberty, burn their chart and make their boast of thralldom." Dyer was not alone in his thinking for when the British troops arrived in Boston, the selectmen refused them quarters.

England, being heavily in debt from her years at war, started to tax the colonies. On March 22, 1765, the King of England sanctioned the Stamp Act which meant English stamps had to be purchased and placed on business papers of every kind and on newspapers. The restrictive trade rules, a tax on molasses and sugar, restrictions on manufactured goods, and the finally the Stamp Act, was more than the colonists could bear. Men from the area went to meet the stampmaster for Connecticut, Jared Ingersoll. They met him in Wethersfield and forced him to resign his post. On their return to Windham Green they celebrated the event by hanging Ingersoll in effigy amid great merriment. Slogans such as "Liberty and Equality" and "Down with the Stamp Act" appearing in various places.

People could not or would not use the stamps. Land could not be bought, debts collected, wills made or marriage licenses issued without the stamps. Finally the Stamp Act was repealed but another tax was issued. This imposed duties on tea, glass, and paints. At a meeting December 7, 1767, it was agreed not to import or use any product which would give revenue to the British. Nathaniel Wales, Jr., Samuel Gray, and Dr. Joshua Elderkin were to enlist the same proposal from other towns. It was said the stringent agreement was "signed by nearly every inhabitant and faithfully observed though at great loss and self-sacrifice.

The news of the Boston massacre, the destruction of tea in Boston Harbor and the subsequent closing of her ports aroused the sympathy of the Windham people. Two hundred and fifty-eight sheep were sent to Boston for relief of the poor along with a letter giving assurance of the support of the townspeople. Other towns in the area followed Windham's example and gave aid.

During the winter of 1774-75, military companies drilled, liberty poles were erected and ammunition was stored. The town how had 3,437 whites and 91 blacks with a unity of purpose. The grand list was listed at 32,222 pounds, 10 shillings, and 7 pence. There were few Tories in the area. One known to have a sense of honor and loyalty to the Crown was Eleazer Fitch. He had served in the French and Indian War under a commission of King George and did not want to turn against the crown or his former comrades. His position as high-sheriff of Windham County, his business and family ties, and regard for his countrymen made open opposition impossible. He therefore held himself aloof and did not affiliate with either loyalists or patriots. His high position and popularity saved him from harassment.

When news of Lexington spread through town, Windham sent four military companies for a total of 159 men to Bunker Hill. Hezakah Huntington manufactured and repaired firearms. Colonel Elderkin and Nathaniel Wales, Jr. ran a power mill at the Falls in Willimantic. At one time it blew up causing one death and several were injured. Timothy Larrabee made saltpeter along with John Brown who also manufactured potash.

The family of each soldier outfitted him with clothing and provisions and took over the tasks that he had performed when at home. The townspeople collected scales, clock weights, or anything metal that could be melted into bullets. Slaves were granted their freedom if they volunteered for military service.

Samuel Huntington and Colonel Eliphalet Dyer were members of the Continental Congress. Huntington was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and at one time president of the Continental Congress. Windham jail was crowded with Tories and Prisoners of War.

Four British seamen were sentenced to the jail after their capture on Long Island Sound, June 10, 1776. They were imprisoned until November when they made good their escape. According to some sources they were allowed to roam the prison yard and frequent a nearby tavern. Another account states they bribed someone to release them. In any event, either as a bribe or as a parting gift of gratitude, they left a carving of the image of Bacchus, the God of Wine, to Mercy Carey, a tavern-keeper on the Green. The four seamen made their way to Norwich, secured a canoe and attempted to reach an English ship. Their canoe capsized and only one was rescued. He was again taken prisoner but not returned to Windham Gaol.



The carving, which had been made from a pine log and carved with jack-knives, was used as a sign mounted on a pole in front of Mrs. Carey's inn. (Later Mrs. Carey married the sheriff, Eleazer Fitch and "Bacchus" was removed to the Fitch Tavern and hung from a limb of a large elm tree in front of the building for the next fifty years. After several changes in ownership "Bacchus" fell to the ground during a severe windstorm in 1856 and ended up in Mr. Curtis' woodshed. Two young boys discovered it and asked their father, Mr. Cummings to purchase it. He did, for the sum of twenty-five cents. It was restored and later bought by Abel E. Brooks. It was used as a dispenser for ale in Brook's bar in Hartford and later used as a window ornament in a store in New York. It finally made its journey home to Windham through the efforts of Deacon H. Clinton Lathrop when Mr. Brooks deeded the carving to the Windham Free Library Association on June 22, 1905.)

The winter of 1777-78 was very discouraging because of the great hardships both in the army camps and at home. There was a scarcity of grain, meat, salt, and clothing due to providing for the army and the loss of men to work the land. Sickness and death were commonplace, yet in the face of these difficulties, Windham continued steadfast in the purpose of the Revolution. Year after year, they taxed themselves to pay for provisions and to help care for the families of the soldiers. Sick and weary soldiers passing through town were given comfort and aid.

However, the "religious interests suffered severely by the loss of men, diminished means, public distractions, and increasing skepticism." (Larned II, 192) In 1780, membership was reduced when the "North Windham District" church was formed in what is now the south part of Chaplin. About a dozen members were dismissed. Sixteen years later their minister, Rev. John Storrs died. The members disbanded and thirteen returned to the Windham Church.

The following years, 1780-83, were not as difficult for the residents of Windham. French troops and supplies had arrived to aid the colonists. Windham did not have any battles fought in the area, but it was on a main thoroughfare for soldiers. Gates and his division marched through town on their withdrawal from Newport. French Huzzars were quartered at Windham for a week, and Marquis DeChastellux and Duke DeLauzern dined during that time at one of the local taverns. In June 1781, Rochambeau and his magnificent army marched into town and set up camp for a few days. Dr. Joshua Elderkin and other public officials went with them when they left for West Point. General George Washington was said to have stopped at Colonel Dyer's

mansion on his way to the Lebanon War Office. Many of Washington's top officers had their homes here.

The official end of the Revolutionary War was announced on April 19, 1783. "Of festivities and rejoicings upon the reception of this announcement we hear little. The joy of the citizens of Windham was perhaps too deep for noisy demonstration. It had been a long, hard, deadly struggle. Many precious lives had been sacrificed. There had been great expenditures of money and forces; there were hard problems still to face; and so the rejoicings were mostly expressed by religious solemnities. Public services were held in the meeting house on the Green, and Mr. Cogswell preached a celebration sermon." (Larned II, 203) In the galleries and pews were the many vacant places of sons, husbands, and fathers who would never return.

The reconstruction period following the War was difficult. Tories and their sympathizers were not welcome in town. Colonel Fitch, though not forced from Windham, found it difficult to remain. Many still loyal to England sought shelter in Nova Scotia.

The returning soldiers, paid in Continental money, found it was practically worthless. Colonel Ebenezer Gray after seven years of service was ruined physically and financially. Hezekiah Huntington and Henry DeWitt, who had devoted their time and resources to manufacturing arms and ammunition were reduced to poverty. Nehemiah Tinker and his family suffered the same fate. The Windham jail now became overflowing as a debtor's prison. Even Joshua Elderkin spent many months in jail because the government was unable to pay him for his support during the War. "Hezekiah Ripley, Shubael Abbe, Samuel Gray, Jr., and Hezakiah Manning, appointed by Windham for the examination and settlement of was accounts, has meanwhile agreed to pay the balance due by the town." (Larned II, 210)

Eliphalet Dyer and Jedediah Elderkin represented the town at a convention in Hartford to ratify the Constitution and cast their vote for Washington as president of the United States. The next year President Washington traveled through the neighboring area. He proclaimed November 26 of that year to be a National Thanksgiving Day.

Trade and commerce began to pick up and Windham became a prosperous and busy town. Zephaniah Swift opened his law office. Jabez Clark, Samuel Gray, Jr. Colonel Ebenezer Gray and Timothy Larrabee were also lawyers. Industry and farming were resumed and Elisha Abbe started a trading business with the West Indies. His ship was called "The Windham" and its figurehead was a huge frog. Colonel Elderkin enlarged his mulberry orchard and manufactures silk. Colonel Dyer started a flouring works in South Windham and a gristmill at Frog Pond. His son, Dr. Benjamin Dyer, started a drug store said to have "the largest assortment of drugs, dye-stuffs, paints, spices, etc., to be found in Eastern Connecticut." Other practicing physicians in town were Dr. Samuel Lee, Dr. Thomas Gray, and Dr. John Clark.

On March 12, 1791, John Byrne set up a printing press in the lower room of the court house and published "The Phenix" Windham County's first newspaper. It was distributed by postriders to Hampton, Pomfret, Woodstock, Ashford, and Mansfield. "The Phenix, Windham Herald" soon became the instrument for Judge Zephaniah Swift to give his views on the union of church and state. Swift was opposed to the law which fined a man for absence from church and of the custom of taxing everyone for the required support of an established church. He also wrote about the laws of a state and his publications were used in the education of lawyers. A few years later Byrne became postmaster when the post office was opened at Windham Green.

With the renewed interest in business and travel, the importance of highways received much consideration. Taverns were doing a thriving business. While Windham prospered in one way,

she declined in another. Rev. White, in a sermon preached in December 1790. stated the following:

“In those days there were scarce any that were not professors of religion, and but few infants not baptized. No families that were prayerless. Profane swearing was but little known, and open violations of the Sabbath not practiced as is common now. And there were no Deists among us. The people as a body were fearers of the Lord and observers of Sabbath and its duties. But the present day is peculiar for men’s throwing off the fear of the Lord. Declensions in religion have been increasing for about thirty years past such as profaneness, disregard of the Sabbath, neglect of family religion, unrighteousness, intemperance, imbibing of modern errors and heresies and the crying prevalence of infidelity against the clearest light.” (Larned II, 221)

Rev. White died January 9, 1793 after fifty-three years of serving as minister to Windham’s First Church. He was remembered for his quiet and gentle disposition, consistent Christian Life, and faithful service. His funeral service was attended by a great many people and lasted “til the dusk of evening.” The sermon was preached by a former pupil of his, Rev. Moses C. Welch. Mrs. White outlived her husband another 10 years. They had had thirteen children, of whom three at least did not live to grow up. The church had lost greatly in numbers and influence, having only one hundred and one members at the time of Rev. White’s death.

Rev. Elizah Waterman of Bozrah, arrived in Windham a few months after Rev. White’s death and was ordained October 1, 1794. He was a graduate of Yale and the son of Nehemiah Waterman, a magistrate and “ardent patriot during the Revolution. Rev. Elizah Waterman married Lucy Abbe, daughter of one of Windham’s most prominent families. He was full of energy and zeal. He boldly preached against intemperance, revelry, Sabbath breaking, and the infidelity of the leading men in town. He served as visitor of the schools, secured a school library, and introduced public catechizing of children. He revised and copied the church records which he found to be very imperfect and in a dilapidated condition.

The struggles between the church establishment, with its strict religious creeds and power, and the new ideas of civil liberties and rights of man brought about much ill feeling in Windham. People openly refused to pay taxes for the support of Mr. Waterman and on February 12, 1805, “it became necessary for general peace and his (Rev. Waterman) usefulness that the connection should be dissolved.” (Means, 33) Many were saddened by this turn of events. Twelve men and seventy-seven women were admitted to the church during his pastorate of eleven years.

Windham was still the center of activity, being one of the leading towns in Connecticut. It was known as a political and business center and frequently visited by the leading men of the times. It had a fine array of stores, commercial enterprises, experimental manufactureres, and numerous taverns. Judge Swift had written his famous “Digest of the Lawns of Connecticut” and has served as secretary on an important foreign missions. Colonel Elderkin’s silk factory was sold to Clark and Gray. John Burgess introduced a “new fashioned four-wheel vehicle” called a wagon. The Windham Turnpike Company organized in 1799, had roads from Planfield to Coventry and from Franklin to Stafford built. Business was stimulated by the improvement of roads, bridges, and the opening of turnpikes. Several businesses traded directly with the foreign countries. New Mechanical inventions stepped up manufacturing.

Windham was still the most populated town in Windham County even though some people were leaving to make settlements elsewhere. The census of 1800 showed 2,644 persons living in town with a rate lit of \$64,272.20, the highest amount of taxable property listed for the county.

CHAPTER III

The Second Hundred Years 1800 - 1900

The first hundred years of growth had seen Windham become the foremost inland town east of the Connecticut River. Whereas Norwich and New London exceeded her in wealth and numbers, Windham surpassed even them in “influential association with the head centers of government.” The stage coach brought many travelers into town and around the Green was a bustle of commercial activity.

The Yankee Peddler and the Tin Peddler brought various goods to the townspeople such as pins, needles, thread, thimbles, washboards, brooms, etc., and also built up their stock with the products available in the area.

Doctors and their patients were concerned about the inoculation against smallpox demonstrated by Edward Jenner in 1796. It was not until 1800 that it had been proven successful in Vienna during an epidemic, that some people accepted his theory. Even then many were apprehensive about vaccination as was the town of Mansfield when they voted against admitting small pox inoculation to be introduced into the town under any circumstances whatever. Four years later, in 1804, a doctor obtained liberty to inoculate against the disease. In Windham, William Robinson and Samuel Bleight offered to inoculate the inhabitants of the town in 1800, declaring it to be a perfect security against the dreaded smallpox. Other medical news was the composition of “Lee’s Windham Bilious Pills” made by Dr. Samuel Lee, Jr. and said to cure anything. They were one of the first patent medicines to come before the public and were widely accepted.

The “Bees” which had been so helpful in the previous years when friends and neighbors joined together for some work detail such as husking corn, wool-picking, apple-paring, spinning, quilting, construction of buildings, or meat-cutting, now had become more social. More time was given to eating, drinking, dancing and making merry. The abundance and cheapness of liquor lead to excess in drinking. Profanity, Sabbath-breaking, and loose living were increasing. Many were concerned over this apparent deterioration of morals and attempted reformation. The previous revivals of 1796 and 1798 had helped some at the time. Other denominations were gaining members but through the Windham County Association of Ministers, the established churches and censors of public morals. In 1800 there was a split in the Association. Rev. Waterman was appointed to be on a committee “to effect a more formal consociation according to the provisions of the Saybrook Platform.” Only seven churches adopted the plan at the time and were formally consociated.

Rev. Waterman had made a vigorous campaign against the “evils” in the community and some people were not pleased with his methods. Several inhabitants were determined to oppose the system that gave such power to a minister. In 1800, Tim Larrabee, Zephaniah Swift, John Fitch, and Samuel Lee, Jr. wrote requesting the services of an Episcopal minister. They did not succeed in this first attempt to form their church but they did escape paying taxes for Rev. Waterman’s support which damaged the church financially.

As stated in the previous chapter, conflict of interests and ideas between Rev. Waterman and some members of the community brought about an end to his pastorate in Windham. Three years passed after his resignation in 1805 during which time there was no settled pastor for the church.

It was during this time that the Aquaduct Company was formed by Jabez Clark, Benjamin Dyer, Elisha White, John Taintor, Charles Taintor, John Staniford, Jr., Benjamin Brewster, Samuel Gray, John Byrne, and Henry Webb. The act establishing the company was passed by the General Assembly in 1807. The company was formed for the purpose of conveying water to subterranean wooden pipes from a spring on Jennings Lane “to various houses to the height of land south of the meeting house.

Passage of the Federal Embargo Act in 1807, proved very unpopular to many in town as it interfered with the trade they had built up in various parts of the world. It also caused conflict between the local Jeffersonians and the local Federalists. Colonel Dyer had died during that year but Swift, Perkins, Clark, Gray and other prominent men upheld the Federalist Party which was opposed to the impending war with Britain. Peter Webb, Elisha Abbe, and others, whose commercial ventures were in jeopardy from British invaders on the high seas, hotly supported federal government action. Windham sailors had been taken from their ships and made to serve in the British Navy. “The Windham” had been seized and the cargo confiscated.

Increasing difficulties with England about overseas trading cut down the supply of foreign goods and raised the price of domestic fabrics. In 1806, the carding machine had been invented which saved time and labor by picking, breaking, carding and oiling wool. The cotton gin made it profitable to make cloth from cotton. Clark and Gray owned a carding machine at the Falls of the Willimantic River.

The invention of machinery and the introduction of manufacturing opened up new avenues of growth. Clark and Gray started a paper mill, and on the Natchaug River the Taintor brothers, George Abbe, and Edmund Badger made three grades of writing paper at their mill. Amos D. Allen made furniture in South Windham and his tall clock cases were highly praised. Allen, along with his associate Jesse Spafford, procured a patent for a planing-knife. Ripley and Baldwin set up a carriage-making shop on the Green near the meeting house. The wagon that John Burgess had introduced earlier was still not widely accepted. Roger Huntington owned the first wagon in town and he had George Webb and Thomas Gray drive it to Leicester in September, 1809, for machinery. People along the way flocked to the roadside to see them pass. They were amazed that the horse was not dead or even tired from pulling the wagon. Women and children were busy also. Women earned money knitting and weaving at home and then selling their products to the village stores. Mary B. Young had a millinery and fancy dry goods store as did Mrs. Carey. The district schools were maintained and improved upon and instruction of the pupil was to be writing, arithmetic, sewing and catechism. Teachers were to pass an examination before being hired and then paid a low price for their services. A Windham Academy was mentioned as having “Master Abbott”, Roger Southworth, Socrates Balcom, and others as instructors. “Manners and dancing” was taught by dancing masters that came into town.

Religion was at a low ebb when Rev. William Andrews was ordained August 8, 1808. He was born in Ellington in 1781, and was a recent graduate of Middlebury College of Vermont. He was deeply disturbed by the lack of religious sincerity and the Sabbath-breaking among the people of the town. He was to be “an uncommonly good sermonizer” and to have possessed a good logical mind. It was during Rev. Andrew’s stay in Windham that the severe blizzard of 1811 buried most of New England. It snowed from December 24th to the 26th and was called the Great Christmas Blizzard.

In 1812, after only four years, Rev. Andrews asked to be released because he was so “pained and grieved” by the actions of his parishioners. He was denied his dismissal because “ministers

were not to leave their people because they were wicked!” The council agreed to his dismissal the following year and he moved to Danbury and later to Cornwall. His withdrawal was explained as “incompatibility”. The people of Windham were disturbed by this act and stipulated that if the same situation occurred again it should be referred to three judges of the Superior Court.

Three years passed in which there was no settled pastor. During this time men were summoned to military duty to help in the war against Britain. They were ordered to report to Mr. Staniford’s Tavern along with their guns and ammunition. Military exercises were renewed with drills taking place on “The Plains”. Young men were given sixteen dollars for joining the army and promised an additional three month’s pay and one hundred sixty acres of land for five years service. Henry Dyer became a Captain in the U.S. Infantry. The war intensified party spirit and renewed interest in Politics. It also spurred on industry. Spafford started a mill that made cloth used by the army. The opening of various mills gave employment to men, women, and children.

Peace was announced February 16, 1815, by loud peals of the bell in the meeting house. There was much rejoicing for the next few days with further ringing, the firing of a cannon, and other demonstrations. Many of the Windham men had had an easy enlistment, mostly serving only guard duty at New London and Stonington. The townspeople had not suffered as their men saw little action and business had prospered. No doubt several enjoyed dancing the newly introduced waltz at the parties that were held.

For the new three months there was no church service held and when Rev. Cornelius Bradford Everest answered the call in May, 1815, he found everything pertaining to religion at a low state including his salary. He had “agreed to accept such sums as should be raised” (Means, 37) and was distressed when each year the sum declined. Rev. Everest was a native of Cornwall and a graduate of Williams College. He was a “wise and good” preacher and tried to uplift moral standards. He had an invigorating and healthy influence and the “standard of Christian character and obligation” were greatly improved. Some citizens were removed from the church when they showed no repentance for their disorderly conduct. The Revival in his first year of ministry brought in several new members and a total of thirty-two individuals joined the church during Rev. Everest’s first two years. Sunday School may have been started during his pastorate as Norwich established the first classes in Connecticut in 1816. Hartford followed in 1818 and soon the system spread to other parts of the state. In 1826 the General Association of Congregational Churches recommended that every church should establish a Sunday School.

With the adoption of the state constitution in 1818, the system of the established church rule ended. People were no longer compelled to pay taxes for support of the church and its minister and all religious bodies were placed upon a common basis of voluntary support. Peter Webb and Zaccheus Waldo had been delegates to the convention in Hartford. At a town meeting held to vote on the adoption, there were 182 for and 127 against the state constitution.

The following year Windham lost its status as shire town. Brooklyn was chosen as a central place for the County Court House and County Jail. Windham’s lawyers, Samuel Perkins, John Baldwin, and Jabez Clark were unable to convince the other towns to let the Court remain in Windham.

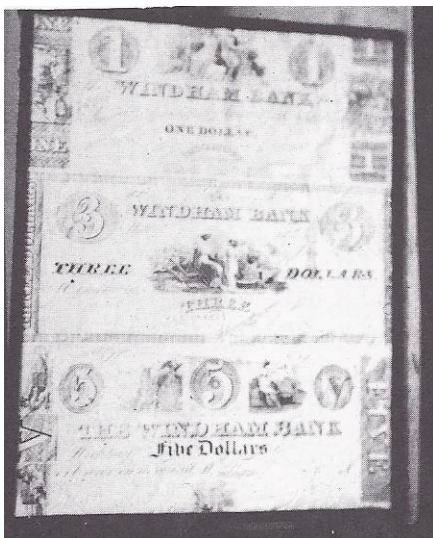
Rev. Everest remained in Windham for a total of twelve years but due to insufficient salary he was compelled to ask for and receive dismissal in 1827. The next year thirteen members were dismissed to form a church in Willimantic. This area was being developed because the falls of the rivers furnished water power to operate the mills being built near the banks.

The next minister was Rev. Richard F. Cleveland, son of a Norwich Deacon. Rev. Cleveland, a Yale graduate, came to Windham on the provision that his salary would be paid quarterly and that if it should prove insufficient the contract could be annulled. Soon after he arrived he went to Philadelphia and brought back his bride. They were remembered as very agreeable young people.

Rev. Cleveland proved to be diligent and efficient. A Revival in 1829 helped bring interest to the church. In his three years of service, thirty-one persons were brought into the church. Two sons were born in Windham and if Rev. Cleveland had stayed in town, Windham would have been the birthplace of another son, Grover Cleveland, who later became President of the United States. Lack of sufficient salary forced Rev. Cleveland to sever his connection with Windham's Congregational Church in 1832.

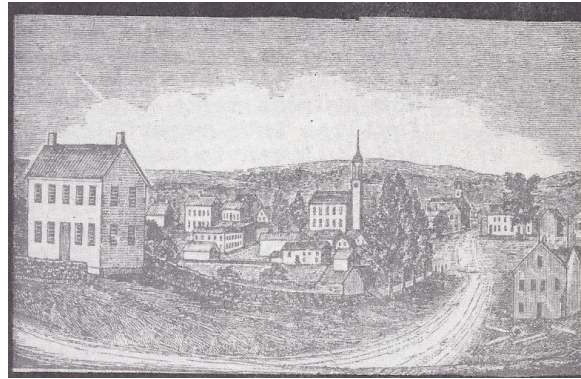
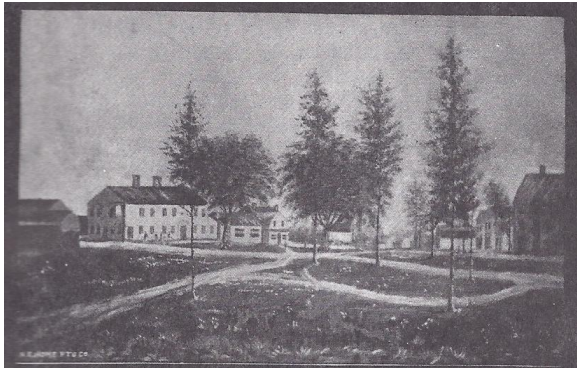
The silk industry in town suffered a set-back when a blight hit the Mulberry trees in 1830. Another business started that was to have a wide attention. George Spafford, James Phelps, and Charles Smith improved and built a Fourdrinier, a machine used in making paper. They made the first Fourdrinier in North America having it case at the foundry in Stafford. The twenty mile cartage was made by ox cart between Stafford and South Windham. In 1830, the mill also made the first cylinder dryer to be used in paper mills and later George Spafford invented a rotary cutter. Phelps and Spafford supplied numerous paper mills with machinery in various states, but as making the machines was costly and there was a financial crash in 1837, they decided to sell their interest to Charles Smith and Harvey Winchester. Since then it expanded and orders for machines came not only from different parts of the United States, but from Canada, Cuba, Mexico, England, and other foreign countries.

The first fire engine in Windham County was purchased June 18, 1825 for the sum of \$180. George W. Webb, Henry Webb, and Eliphalet Ripley were chosen fire wardens and given the responsibility to form a fire company. Windham Bank was incorporated in 1832 with John Baldwin, president; J.A. White, cashier; and Thomas Gray, attorney. Windham bank notes were issued with pictures of Colonel Dyer and Colonel Elderkin on either side and a picture of fighting frogs in the center.



An Episcopal Society was formed in 1832 and services were held in the Robinson home until the house of worship was built the following year. The next year Willimantic was incorporated as a borough and voting was held in the Windham Center Congregational Church until the townhouse was built in 1835. Scotland and Willimantic residents did not want to travel to the

polling place in Windham Center so for a time voting was done by turns, one year at each place. This also proved to be inconvenient and the polls remained at Windham until 1862 when they were moved to Willimantic.



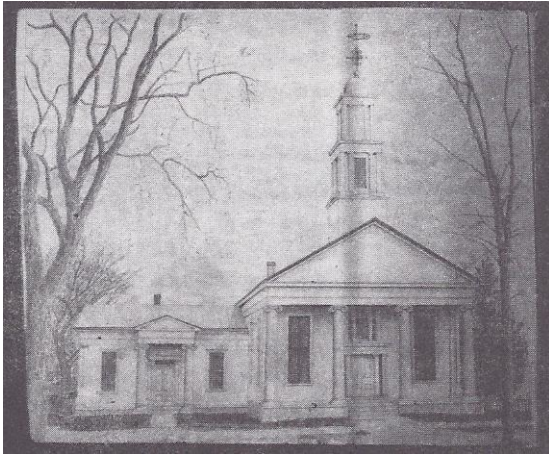
The blight which had damaged the Mulberry trees made seedlings extremely valuable. In 1832, bounty was given from the state for growing the trees and on reeled silk. One North Windham man received \$100 a piece when he sold two trees of one year's growth. In 1840, the Mulberry trees were considered worthless and farmers destroyed their seedlings. A violent storm in 1844 destroyed most of the remaining Mulberry trees in the area.

The church had been without a settled pastor for five years and when Rev. John Ellery Tyler was ordained in October, 1837, the church had only seventy-five members of which only eighteen were men. Rev. Tyler, son of Rev. Bennet Tyler, was a graduate of Dartmouth. He was said to have read through the New Testament in Greek before he was twelve years of age. He found "a season of depression in the church as regards the state of religion." (Means, 43) Not one member had been added in the previous five years and the church was weak financially. Soon after Rev. Tyler's arrival, he married Mary Williams of Northampton and lived in the old Colonel Elderkin house. His preaching was scholarly and he became a favorite with the young people. He was described as having the air of a student, with slender build and his hair worn somewhat long. Sermons were preached both morning and afternoon. Rev. Tyler was anti slavery and some of his sermons carried that theme. He built up the church membership without causing conflict in spite of the fact there was both an Episcopal and a Baptist church in Windham. People were interested in Missionary work. Rev. Tyler's brother and wife went to South Africa in Zulu-land and Mary Byrne, a member of the church, went to China when she married Rev. Brewster.

At this time Edwin Fitch was gaining prominence as an architect, designing and building houses, mills, and churches. George H. Cushman excelled in miniature portraits and watercolors. Samuel Waldo was already well-known as an able portrait painter who had gone to London to study with Benjamin West and on returning to America opened a studio in New York.

Whaling was at its peak and would be luring to young adventurous men. The lure of new lands to the West prompted families into resettling. The railroad lines through Norwich and Willimantic helped in the traffic of people and products to and from Windham and soon ended the use of the Stagecoach and the teaming industry. The Windham Teaming Company had handled freight traffic between Windham, Providence, and Norwich. Henry Brainard and Grant Swift ran a six-horse team to Providence and Charles Huntington, Ephraim Herrick, and Martin Harris had the run to Norwich. Willimantic was the site of several different mills and in 1842 had their own bank. The dancing instructors were teaching a new dance called the polka.

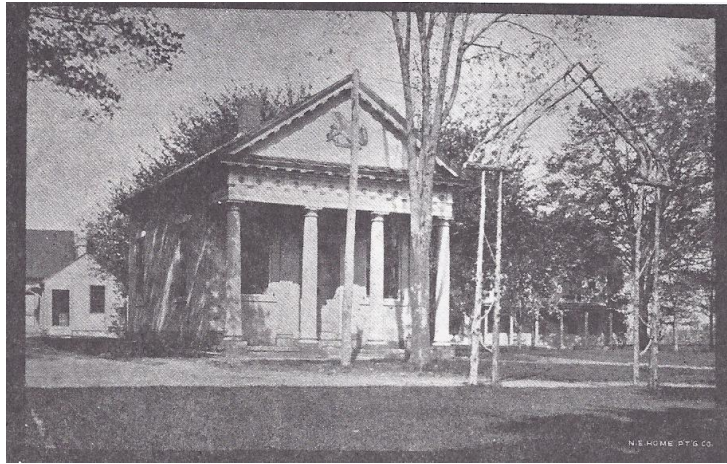
The church building that was built in 1755, was now considered out of repair and out of date. It was decided to pull it down and build another. The old building had high square pews and a high pulpit. The broad vestibule had stairs which led up to a smaller room opening out into the singers gallery. They did not have an organ but they did use a bass-viol and flute with a chorister to lead the singing. The year before it was torn down there was a Revival and a year after the new church was built was another Revival. The old building stood back a little from the Green on the southwest site. The new church was opposite the Green and share the corner with the store of William Swift.



At the One Hundred Fiftieth Anniversary service held in 1850, there were six members present who had attended the One Hundredth Anniversary in 1800. Rev. Tyler terminated his ministry in 1851 because of ill health. He was able to preach part-time after his recuperation at East Windsor.

Rev. George I. Stearns came here at the age of twenty-seven. He was born in West Killingly and was a graduate of Amherst and of East Windsor Seminary. He married Amelia D. Jones, a graduate of Mt. Holyoke Seminary. He found that Rev. Tyler had built up the church membership to be united and strong. Rev. Stearns was an active and energetic man and worked diligently for the church and in the schools. He was especially fond of science and outdoor life. During his stay he prepared a complete Church Manual.

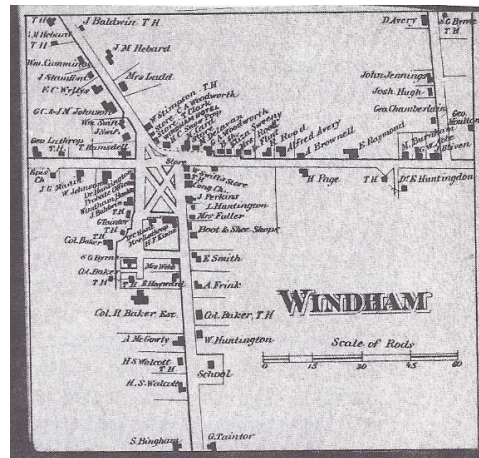
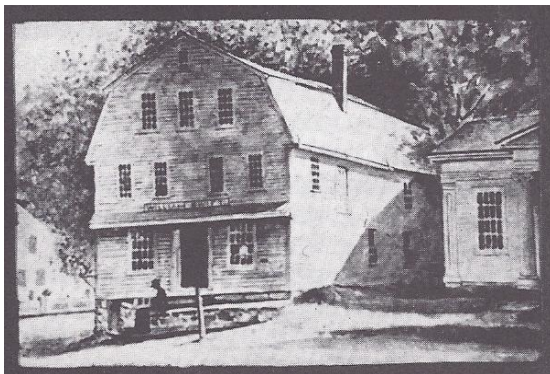
Two years after Rev. Stearns arrived there was excitement on the Green when in 1854 the Windham Bank was robbed of \$7,000 in cash and \$15,000 in securities. The teller, James Parsons, who slept in the building, was bound and gagged. He soon freed himself and gave alarm. The robbers had taken a railroad hand car and made their escape by way of Norwich. They were captured on a steamer leaving Allyn's Point. Most of the money was recovered and the affair "caused the biggest scare in Windham since the Frog fright."



Other events at the time of Rev. Stearns' pastorate were a Revival in 1858, the advent of horse-drawn street cars in rapidly developing Willimantic, Scotland becoming a separate town, and the news of gold being discovered in California.

In the 1850's, the Connecticut Temperance Society and many clergymen strongly supported prohibition and control of liquor sales. Strong ministerial participation in politics was revived and called "pulpit politics".

A group concerned about the growing Catholic and foreign population was formed during this time and called themselves the "Know Nothing". They operated first as a secret order with secret signs, passwords, grips, and so forth. Meetings in Windham were held in the hall above William Swifts' store. The "Know Nothings" lost their power later when they side-stepped the issue of slavery and the public opinion changed toward immigrants.



In 1860, Abraham Lincoln toured Connecticut and visited Norwich. People who voted for him cast their ballots in Windham Center for the last time as the polling place shortly afterwards moved to Willimantic.

The Civil War began in 1861 when Fort Sumter was attacked on March 4, just weeks after Lincoln had become the sixteenth president of the United States. Slavery in Connecticut had ended earlier. Some Negroes were given their freedom for serving in the Revolution War. Others gained their freedom in 1784 when an emancipation act was passed in the state giving them their freedom when they reached the age of twenty-five. Anti-Slavery Societies were formed in the 1830's and many played an active role in the "Underground Railroad" which many

slaves escape from their Southern masters. Most slaves hoped to reach the safety of Canada. In 1848, Connecticut passed a law prohibiting slavery in the state.

The news of the attack on Fort Sumter excited the towns-people and the next day was proclaimed "Battle Sunday" through out the state. Many men and young boys fourteen and fifteen yours of age enlisted in the army. People pledged to do their utmost for the cause of the war. Dr. DeWitt Clinton Lathrop was commissioned a surgeon in the Eighth Connecticut Regiment. After only about six month's service he died serving troops in North Carolina. They said he had "labored with a zeal and self-forgetfulness that wore out his strength and actually cost him his life." (Chronicle, 1967, 18) His body was returned home and buried in Windham Cemetery. On his tombstone are the words "Faithful Unto Death".

When the body of General Nathaniel Lyon, the first Union General to perish in battle, passed through Willimantic on its way to Eastford many from Windham joined the procession and were among were among the ten to fifteen thousand persons said to have attended the funeral.

In 1863, President Lincoln emancipated the slaves and one of the biggest and most costly battles was fought at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The next year Atlanta was captured by the Union Army and on April 9, 1865, General Lee surrendered at Appomattox, ending the Civil War. The joy at the news of Lee's surrender was short-lived when five days later President Lincoln was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth.

The Civil War had caused a boom in business. Factories and railroads were busy and prosperous. Farmers found an increase in demand for their products and were helped by the use of new machinery.

Windham was grieved during the early War Years by the death of Rev. Stearns in January, 1862. He had been ill for some time and had offered to resign. His office and salary were continued and when he was unable to preach during the last year of his life, neighboring ministers and professors supplied the pulpit without charge. Rev. Stearns had had a wearing and difficult burden during his years as pastor due to the matter of the discipline of a man who had been suspended from church.

For the remainder of the Civil War Era, Rev. Samuel Hopley served as pastor and was a loyal supporter of the Union even though he was an Englishman by birth. Towards the end of the war he served on the Christian Commission for several weeks during which time neighboring ministers filled the pulpit by turns. Rev. Hopley remained here for two years before being called to the City Missionary in Norwich.

Rev. Hiram Day, the next minister, was fifty-three years old when he came to Windham in 1866. He had had three pastorates in Connecticut before coming to this church. He established the practice of stated missionary collections and missionary concerts. A year elapsed after Rev. Day's resignation before Rev. Adelbert F. Keith came in 1870. He had just completed his studies at Hartford Seminary and was looked upon as a "genial, kindly shepard". He held outside meetings and also had prayer meetings in private homes. When he first came to Windham there were ninety members. A Revival in 1870 helped to increase membership so that in a few years they numbered one hundred and one. Rev. Keith resigned in 1874.

From June, 1875 to November 1880, Rev. Frank Thompson served as pastor. He was born in New York and was a graduate of Williams College and Andover Seminary. He also studied at Hartford. He has served as pastor in the Sandwich Islands and Hilo, Hawaii. He was eager and enthusiastic. A Revival during his second year here added thirty-one persons raising the membership to one hundred twenty-four. Everyone liked Rev. Thompson and he was anxious to

be helpful to all. The church enjoyed an “atmosphere of congeniality and sociability” and he succeeded in raising his salary to a grand amount of \$1300. Fourteen more joined the church before he left to be a Chaplain for the American Seamen’s Friend Society at Valparaiso, Chile.

Windham Center became more of a quiet little village as Willimantic became the center of business. The bank on the Green moved to a new place in Willimantic in 1879. The mills were expanding and the houses in the Oaks were built to accommodate the workers. The telephone had been invented and in 1882 the first ones were installed in Willimantic. The Telephone Company grew rapidly as more people demanded its services. Storrs College was founded when in 1881, Charles and Augustus Storrs gave money and land to the state for an agricultural school.

The church went five years without a pastor and five years with Rev. Williams S. Kelsey as minister. On the night of May 5, 1886, a fire started in the upper rooms of William Swift’s store following a Masonic meeting. It quickly spread to consume the store and damaged the church beyond repair. The men who answered the fire call tried desperately to save the church building which had only been built thirty-seven years before. By June of 1887, a new church had been built and dedicated free of debt by the united efforts and generosity of the people of the town and surrounding area. It had cost \$12,000 for the new meeting house. The building had a kitchen with a sink in the basement but water had to be carried in. A dumb-waiter connected the kitchen to the serving room above. Heat and kerosene lamps were installed. Deacon Swift deeded the land where his store had been to the Ecclesiastical Society. He reopened his business across the road.



The next year was a time of revival interest and besides the regular preaching there was also mid-week services. South Windham was organized as a branch of the home church and had separate services and an independent set of officers. Rev. Kelsey was sixty-two members added to the church during his time as minister.

The year was well remembered for the “Blizzard of ‘88”. It started snowing March 11 and continued for three days. A fifty mile gale made drifts up to twenty feet high in some places. Communications were at a stand-still and many deaths were attributed to the storm.

Rev. Kelsey resigned in 1889 and Rev. Fred Maynard Wiswall was called to fill the vacancy the next year. He was a graduate of Dartmouth College and of Hartford Seminary. Rev. Wiswall was a diligent worker and very friendly and pleasant but he was plagued by ill health and left after only two years.

The year Rev. Wiswall left Windham was in the two hundredth year of the town. A town meeting held in Willimantic was called to decide whether to provide for a celebration of the bi-

centennial anniversary. It was decided to abandon the idea. Many were disappointed and the residents of Windham Center resolved to do something about it. They met at the School Hall in the Windham Center School to make their plans and were enthusiastic and full of energy. There were numerous officers and committee members appointed. The celebration was held Wednesday, June 8, 1892.



At the Willimantic entrance to the Green was a red, white and blue arch with a banner reading, "May 1692 – Welcome – May 1692". Houses were decorated with stars and stripes and bunting displayed. A speaker's platform was erected on the Green and a huge frog stood at the gateway. A goddess of liberty was in view fashioned after the Statue of Liberty unveiled just six years previously. Bacchus also made an appearance perched on a branch of an elm tree in front of Staniford's Tavern, being loaned for the occasion by Mr. Brooks.

At sunrise, the date of celebration started with the firing of a canon and the ringing of churchbells. The morning program followed with the Nathan Hale Drum Corps of Norwich and Hopkins and Allen's band also from Norwich. The band led the procession from Colonel Dyer's mansion to the speaker's platform where a Scripture selection and prayer was given by Rev. S. J. Horton of Cheshire, formerly of Windham. The Chairman, Guilford Smith, gave the welcoming address followed by Thomas Snell Weaver with a review of the first century, a poem by Miss Josephine M. Robbins, and various other speakers and musical selections.

At noon there was a dinner and social hour. Two thousand or more people were said to have been fed. Speakers and invited guests, one of whom was Miss Ellen F. Larned, were served a banquet in the chapel with Grace being said by Rev. George Stearns, son of a former pastor.

The afternoon schedule included a review of the second century given by Allen Bennet Lincoln, a poem by Rev. Theron Brown, a review of the life and character of the town by Amos Hatheway, grandson of Rev. Everest, and "an imaginary walk and conversation with John Cates" presented by an actor with the Boston Museum Company, Charles Smith Abbe a native some of Windham. The old Windham Bank building was converted into a museum of relics and was visited all day long by a crowd of people. The committee later published A Memorial Volume of the Bi-Centennial Celebration.

That September Rev. Frederick H. Means became pastor of the church. He was born in Dorchester, Massachusetts, the son of Rev. James H. Means. He graduated from Harvard University and Yale Divinity School and was ordained to the Congregational ministry at Windham on May 2, 1893. He was a friendly and energetic man and performed a mission for a

time to the outlying towns when he was the only resident pastor in the area. In 1897 when a whooping cough epidemic occurred in the area he no doubt gave comfort and sympathy to many.



The automobile makes an appearance at this time when Pope Manufacturing Company of Hartford begins production. The rise of labor unions made many changes in industry and stress with political parties. Prohibition was also an issue to be debated.

Just a month short of ten years since the “Blizzard of ‘88”, came another blizzard that buried the town under a blanket of snow. Within days of this event came news of the Unites States battleship, Maine, being blown up in Havana Harbor. A month later President McKinley called for volunteers and Spain and the United States declared war on one another⁵. The Spanish-American War continued until the end of that year when the Treaty of Paris was signed on December 10, 1898.

On December 10, two years later, the church celebrated its two hundredth anniversary. Rev. Means had compiled a history of the church for the event and had it printed and bound. There were ten members present that had attended the One Hundred Fiftieth Anniversary held in 1850. They were Deacons William Swift and Joseph B. Spencer, Miss Julia Swift, Mrs. Elizabeth Follett, Mrs. Julia N. Arnold, Mrs. Charlotte G. Lathrop, Mr. John W. Follett, Mrs. Joseph B. Spencer, Mr. B. L. Woodworth, and Mr. Andrew Sawyer. The anniversary exercises started Sunday, December 9, when Rev. Means “preached a historical sermon on the words from 1 Sam’l 7:12 and Acts 25:15.” (Means, 5) The following day was cold and blustering but with fair skies. The church had been decorated by Mrs. Julia Arnold and the Ladies’ Aid Society received the visitors and had prepared a display case of historical books, pictures, and other artifacts. Exercises were held both afternoon and evening with supper served during intermission to about one hundred fifty people. Deacon William Swift read accounts of the observances of the one hundredth and the one hundred fiftieth anniversaries. Scriptures, prayers, and greetings were given by ministers of various churches. Rev. Means gave a historical narrative of the past two centuries, Miss Ellen Larned spoke of Rev. Elijah Waterman, and Mrs. Charles S. Abbe read a report on the Windham Deacons written by Miss Julia Swift. The Lord’s Supper was administered by visiting pastors with the ministers of the four daughter churches serving as deacons.

In the past hundred years Windham had changed. From only having four ministers the first century, the church had had twelve in the second hundred years with intervals between pastors that amounted to a total of twenty years or more without any settled pastor.

CHAPTER IV

The Past Seventy-Five Years

The Twentieth Century heralded a new way of life for the residents of Windham. The steam engine, railroads, telegraph, telephone, farm tractors, gramophones, pianola, and the automobile changed people's life style. The State of Connecticut had found a need to pass a law in 1900 governing the speed at which automobiles should be driven. It was the first such law in the United States. The price of an automobile was high and they were considered to be a rich man's toy. The earthquake in San Francisco in 1906 changed public opinion of them when they were used in transporting the injured to hospitals, the aged to safety, and for delivering dynamite, messages, and supplies. Automobiles were regarded thereafter as a blessing rather than a nuisance. A Pope-Hartford auto cost \$2,750 in 1907. Methods of travel were changing in other areas also. The first United States Navy submarine was constructed at the electric Boat in Groton, Connecticut and Orville and Wilbur Wright succeeded in their attempts of air flight in 1902 with their demonstration at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina.

About this time area residents could view the Liberty Bell as it paused at the Willimantic Railroad Station on its tour of the country. On August 23, 1902, people again flocked to the Railroad Station to greet President Theodore Roosevelt. About eight thousand people were in attendance and saw him as he road down the Main Street where he gave a short address before boarding the train again. Roosevelt had become President the previous year when McKinley succumbed to bullet wounds inflicted at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York.

Windham Center had now become mainly a residential district and was growing in popularity as a summer resort for several people from the congested cities, one of whom was Julian Alden Weir, a famous portrait and landscape artist. After studying several years in Europe, he opened a studio in New York City where he met Anna Baker of Windham. She was the daughter of Charles Taintor Baker and the family was among the ranks of those that were wealthy enough to make frequent trips to Europe.

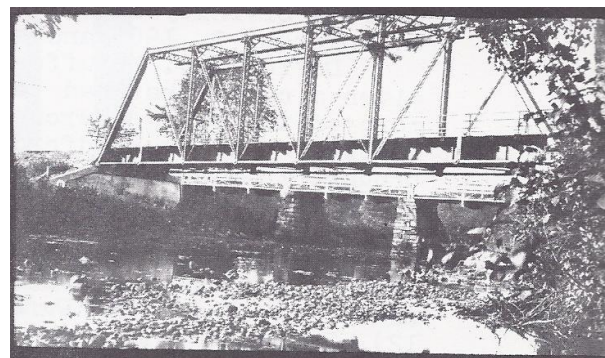


They usually spent only part of their summers at their home in Windham. This place had been in the Baker family for one hundred fifty years and each generation had added to the original structure so that it was quite large. It was stated that a ball in honor of Lafayette was once given in the great ballroom. J. Alden Weir and Anna Baker were married in 1883, but after the birth of their fourth child, Anna died. Mr. Weir then left the three children with the Bakers. Soon after he erected a stained glass window in the memory of his wife and their little son, having first designed it on canvas. The window was set in place in the Church of Ascension in

New York where they had been married. The canvas eventually went to St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Windham.

Several years later J. Alden Weir married Anna's sister, Ella Baker. They spent every other summer in Windham where Weir painted many pictures of the local scenery and entertained famous artists such as Albert Pinkham Ryder, John Henry Twachtman, and John Singer Sargent. A fellow artist, Emil Carlsen, who was known for his still lifes and marine paintings, lived across the road from the Weir house for many summers and also made paintings of the local area.

One year after his return to Windham, Weir was dismayed that the picturesque old covered bridge over the Shetucket River had been replaced by a red iron bridge. He decided to use the scene for a painting and one day while working on his landscape a local farmer stopped to ask him how much he would receive for the painting. Weir, as the story goes, replied, "Fifty dollars." And then held his breath in case the farmer said he would take it. Weir's paintings usually sold for several thousand dollars. The farmer, not realizing his opportunity to own an original Weir landscape, answered something to the effect that Weir must get rich charging fifty dollars a painting. This landscape titled "The Red Bridge" was later placed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Other landscapes of the area are "Ploughing for Buckwheat", "The Border of the Farm", "The Upland Pasture", "Windham Village" placed in the City Art Museum in St. Louis, "Obweebetuck", "Snow in Windham", and "The Building of the Dam".

In 1913, Weir was hailed as the foremost of the living American landscape painters at a dinner where more than one hundred artists gathered to do him honor. J. Alden Weir died in New York City on December 8, 1919.

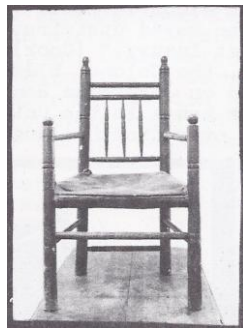
National news in the early part of the century was of the Isthmian Canal Act of 1902. This act authorized the financing and the building of a canal across the Isthmus of Panama. Smith, Winchester, and Company would find this avenue of transportation of their machines much easier than the arrangements they made for unloading, transporting overland, and then reloading on another ship on the Pacific side to bring their cargo to the West Coast of the United States. It was several years before the Canal became a reality as Yellow Fever was a serious problem that hampered construction of the project. With the eradication of the disease, work continued and in 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt visited the area marking the first time an American President left the country. In 1914, the Panama Canal was officially opened.

During these early years people of the area were probably reading Jack London's Call of the Wild, which was first published in the Saturday Evening Post, Autobiography of Helen Keller, or perhaps Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm. News in the motion picture industry was of the first film to have a plot called The Great Train Robbery and The Passion Play, a religious movie which

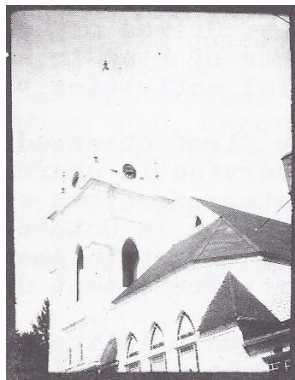
one of the longest motion pictures, running thirty-six minutes when others averaged only three or four.

In June of 1903, the immense forest fires in Maine and the Adirondacks caused smoke to be visible in the air of Windham and irritating to the eyes of the residents. Rev. Means left Windham that year and later went to Maine to become Pastor at Madison. He later became the New England Secretary for the Missionary Education Movement. He was replaced by Rev. Charles Brown McDuffee, born in Charleston, New York and a graduate of Yale Divinity School. Rev. McDuffee was ordained in Windham on November 3, 1903 and served as pastor for five years.

During Rev. McDuffee's stay in Windham, attention was given a chair that has been used as a pulpit chair in one or more early churches. It was said to have belonged to Governor William Bradford of Plymouth, Massachusetts fame, and brought to Windham by his granddaughter, Mrs. Joshua Ripley. The Ripley's were one of the first settlers of the town, coming here from Norwich and previously of Hingham, Massachusetts. "When Rev. McDuffee was refused acquisition of this chair, Charles Crandal, a pattern maker of South Windham, made an exact copy for Mr. McDuffee, even to the worm holes." (Cook, 12) The worm holes were the distinguishing difference between the two chairs, making identification of the original possible since the copy had straight holes that were made with a drill.



Rev. McDuffee went from Windham to Three Rivers, Massachusetts and later became pastor of the First Church of Cliftondale, Massachusetts in 1908. There were other changes as well that year when the covered bridge over the Shetucket River was replaced with an iron bridge. A clock was installed in the tower of the church and struck on the hour announcing the time to the villagers.



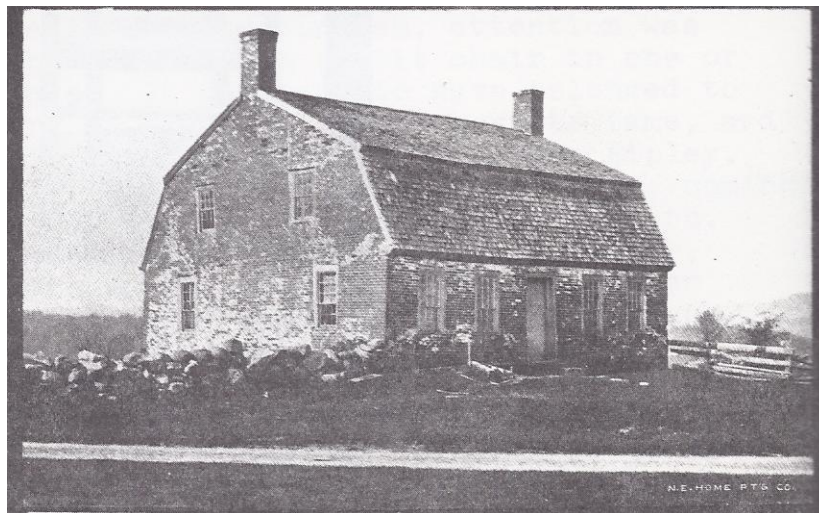
Rev. Harry Grimes, born in Wisconsin and a graduate of Yale Divinity School, was ordained at Windham on November 17, 1908. While here, Rev. Grimes organized a non-sectarian boy's club called the Knights of King Arthur. This was the first time there special activities planned just for the younger group.

Mother's Day was first observed in Philadelphia in 1907 with a special service in church and the custom spread so that four years later exercises were held in every state the second Sunday in May. In October, 1908, the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America was established in Philadelphia and thirty Protestant denominations were represented.

Automobiles were again in the news when the Great Around the World Automobile Race was held. On February 12, 1908, six cars left New York City for Paris by way of Alaska and Siberia. On July 30, only two cars arrived in Paris. The Americans were declared the winner as the Germans had shipped their car by rail to Seattle. In October, Henry Ford introduced his "Model T" at a price of \$850 making it possible for more people to be automobile owners.

It was predicted that in 1910, Halley's Comet was to cause dire results when the earth would pass through the tail of the comet. Some, fearing the end of the world, sought comfort in the church. There had been a Revival the previous year and this had helped the growth and membership. Predictions of disaster were unfounded except for Samuel L. Clemens known as Mark Twain. He had been born on the comet's previous visit and died on the year of its return.

Rev. Grimes left for South Braintree, Massachusetts in 1912. In 1915 electricity was installed in the church building. Later "an electric stove and refrigerator was added and the kitchen moved upstairs. Running water and toilets were the next luxury." (Cook) At the time the church was being remodeled, the Colonel Elderkin house was being torn down. It stood on Jerusalem Road and was said to have been the first brick house in the United States, the bricks having been brought over from Holland.



Popular music of the time was by George M. Cohan, Victor Hubert and Irving Berlin. John McCormack, an Irish tenor, was well known for his songs such as "Mother Machree" and "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling". The spreading fad of ragtime and various dances with animal names like the fox trot, turkey trot and the bunny hop, were scandalous to conservative people and were abhorred by the members of the press and pulpit.

On April 14, 1912, the steamship "Titanic" struck an iceberg and sank. About 1502 people lost their lives as there were insufficient lifeboats. Tragedy struck closer to home when many fell victim to the dread disease of scarlet fever and diphtheria during an epidemic.

Rev. Maurice Raymond Plumb replaced Rev. Grimes in 1912. He was born in Bridgeport and educated at Carleton College, Yale University, and Yale Divinity School. He was ordained at Plymouth, Connecticut, where he remained a year before coming to Windham. Rev. Plumb married Helen E. Larrabee of Windham the next year and they later had three sons.

During Rev. Plumb's first year the town owned high school in Willimantic was destroyed by fire on April 26, 1913. Students in the area attended the Normal School, or the Town Building. A new building was erected, and though not completely finished, was ready for occupancy the following school year.

For entertainment the people of the area could journey to Willimantic where the Loomer Opera House provided stage plays and the Gem Theatre showed several reels of silent movies. The Elks started their Annual Fair in 1913 with exhibits of farm products, handicrafts, and various means of entertainment and continued to do so every Autumn until 1952.

A drought in the spring of 1915 worried the residents when their wells and springs began to run dry. Another worry was the war raging in Europe. Serbia, Russia, France, Belgium, Great Britain, Japan and Italy were at war with Austria, Germany, Turkey and Bulgaria. A German submarine torpedoed and sank the Lusitania, an English passenger ship, on May 7, 1915. One hundred fourteen American citizens lost their lives and indignation over the incident was aroused in the United States. In time two hundred twenty-six other Americans lost their lives at the hands of the Germans and neutrality on the part of our country was no longer possible. On April 6, 1917, war was declared on Germany. The National Guard was called to service and a Connecticut State Guard was formed. This Home Guard kept in check the activities of German sympathizers, aided Liberty Loan drives, and gave confidence to the people. Because of the war only six graduates attended exercises at the University of Connecticut. Daylight savings was begun for the first time in the United States and people were asked to observe two "wheatless", two "porkless", and one "meatless" day a week. Sugar was rationed at two pounds per person per month. On June 8, 1918, the sun rationed its light when an eclipse was partly visible in the area. In October an influenza epidemic struck, baffling doctors and overtaxing emergency hospitals and morgues set up especially for the disaster.

The end of hostilities in Europe came at 11:00 a.m. on the 11th day of the 11th month, when the Germans asked for a stop of the conflict. The news was received here at 3:30 a.m. and church bells and fire bells rang. Factories, schools, and retail stores closed the day in celebration of the event. "At the close of World War I, Connecticut was given the flag that floated over the Capital in Washington during the war, as an honor award for the greatest excess above quota subscriptions of any state in the Union." (Mills, 388) The Treaty of Versailles was signed June 28, 1919.

The returning soldiers to the area noticed some changes, the greatest being in the Jordan Block in Willimantic. Fire had broken out at 2:15 a.m. on November 23, 1916, in the Bijou Theatre Building. Firemen were hampered by the cold and the blaze was visible for miles. Two days after the fire, the walls fell, injuring several people. It was decided to destroy the remaining structure and at 4:40 p.m., sixty pounds of dynamite in twelve boxes was set off. It was a catastrophic event. Scores of spectators were injured and much property damaged. The blast sent fifteen to the hospital and the explosion was heard in Coventry, Mansfield and the Windhams. Giles Alford, who was standing across the railroad tracks on the C.V. freight platform, was killed. A piece of granite almost a foot square was hurled through a railroad car filled with passengers. Rubble was scattered all over.

In 1919, the Prohibition Amendment was ratified and became effective the following year. The scarcity of grain during the war years prompted government action but enforcement of the law was difficult. Prohibition was later repealed in 1933.

Rev. Arthur W. Clifford arrived in Windham in 1920, a year after Rev. Plumb left for Edgewood Church in Cranston, Rhode Island where he remained for twenty-one years. Rev.

Clifford was born in Boston, Massachusetts, and educated at Crozer Theological Seminary and Newton Theological Seminary. His previous pastorates were in Baptist Churches in Ashland, Massachusetts; Dover, New Hampshire; and Natick, Massachusetts. He was married to Elva Buck from Cambridge, Massachusetts, and had two sons. He entered the Congregational fellowship in his second year at Windham. During his first winter here, severe snowstorms made it impossible to drive automobiles for nearly six weeks. Horse-drawn sleds had to be used until the roads were passible.

Travel was not easy at any season by automobile. Highways were not numbered or paved. The equipment given with new cars reflected the hardships to be encountered. There were chains for all four wheels and a shovel with a collapsible handle. It was no deterrent to the sale of automobiles however, as it was stated that one out of every four families in the United States was involved in an automobile transaction in 1920. Rev. Clifford was the first minister of the church to drive an automobile. He startled his “proper” parishioners also by playing baseball and by hoeing his garden without jacket.

Other shocking evens were the knee-length skirts for women and of their gaining strength for Women’s Suffrage. The “Flapper Age” and the “Roaring Twenties” were terms used to describe this era. The novel Main Street, a satire of an American small town written by Sinclair Lewis, created a sensation. He continued writing about small town life and psychology in his next novel Babbitt.

In 1922, the Windham Grammar School was built. This replaced the consolidated school on South Street. The new brick building on North Street consisted of four classrooms and an auditorium to serve grades one through eight.

Scandal on a national level was revealed that the Federal Oil reserves in the Wyoming Teapot dome had been leased for exploitation by private corporations. Other news of corruption in government spread rapidly. President Harding was said to be dismayed bat the betrayal of his friends. He died of a stroke and was succeeded by Calvin Coolidge. On December 6, 1923, there was a broadcast of President Coolidge’s message to both houses of Congress. This was the first radio transmission of a presidential communication. Other firsts that year were a trans-continental air flight and a process invented to produce sound with motion pictures.

In 1924, Rev. Clifford departed to accept the call to Pilgrim Church in North Weymouth, Massachusetts. His successor was Rev. James Gus Graham, a graduate of Yale Divinity School and Hartford Theological Seminary. He had been ordained in East Haven Congregational Church where he stayed two years before coming to Windham. He remained here for three years, leaving in 1927 to be Chaplain and teacher at Mercersberg Academy in Pennsylvania.

Popular music at this time was by Richard Rogers, Lorenz Hart, and Jerome Kerr. The Charleston was the new fad in dancing. The first talking motion picture, “The Jazz Singer” starring all Jolson, was released. It was the first time the sound track was actually on the film. Charles A. Lindberg was in the news for his non-stop solo flight in his airplane, “The Spirit of St. Louis”. He flew from New York City to Paris in thirty-three and one-half hours. The same year Babe Ruth set his record of sixty home runs in one season.

In 1928, Rev. Edward Forbes smiley became minister of the church. He was born in Farmington, Connecticut, and graduated from Union Theological Seminary. His previous

pastorate was at the Winchester Congregational Church in Massachusetts where he had been ordained.

For the next two years business expanded, including the illegal liquor business, but the “Good Times” came to an end with the stock market crash in 1929 and ushered in the Great Depression. Suddenly some wealthy people were penniless. Businesses cut back production, laid off workers, and reduced payrolls. Unemployment soared and millions were at starvation levels. By 1932, the literature and music reflected the desperate state of affairs, a popular song being “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime”. Over seventeen thousand ex-service men camped near the Capital in Washington, D.C. demanding payment of their soldier’s bonus certificates. Federal troops under General Douglas MacArthur had to disperse the crowd. The next year President Franklin Delano Roosevelt gave his inauguration address with the famous words “The only thing to fear is fear itself.” In his fireside chats, broadcast over the radio, he explained his methods of reconstruction with such government projects as the C.C.C, T.V.A, I.R.A, and W.P.A. which were organized to provide work for the unemployed.

By 1940 the New Deal measures had established the Federal Government as the overall manager of the national economy. Increased production and rising employment brought about by World War II eventually brought the Great Depression to an end.

On the local scene, the Windham Community Memorial Hospital was dedicated in 1933 and St. Joseph’s Hospital closed its doors. The new hospital had room for seventy-five patients. Infantile paralysis was the dreaded disease and national interest was aroused to find methods to alleviate the suffering caused by it.

In 1936, suffering of another form came about with the worst floods in years. Bricktop was washed out when water rose three and one-half feet in five hours. The railroads were damaged and telephone service was disrupted. Two years later the same thing happened but this time with hurricane force winds. On a Wednesday afternoon, September 21, 1938, the storm swept through the area. It had been raining since the previous Saturday and flood conditions existed causing the closing of schools which was fortunate as no one expected such forceful winds. All electric power was out and people had to use candles or oil lamps. Trees fell, chimneys toppled, and buildings were damaged. The Bricktop area was evacuated as water rose about the second story windows. Brooks and streams swelled and dams broke. Indian Hollow Brook, normally three feet was thirty feet. Weatherbee’s Dam on Lover’s Lane snapped making the road impassable. The dam at Anderson’s Pond let go causing a twenty foot gorge in the road. Cattle struggled to get to higher ground and people did whatever they could to find shelter. One member of the church, a seventy-five year old woman vacationing at Misquamicut was swept away by a tidal wave that hit her home at the shore. It took weeks to clean up the debris, fix the roads, repair or rebuild bridges, and restore the smashed and twisted railroad lines. The scars of the storm remained for years.

Soon after another wind hit but of a different nature. The popular novel Gone with the Wind written by Margaret Mitchell, made record sales. The movie version starring Clark Gable and Vivien Leigh too three hours and forty-five minutes of show time. Also in the entertainment area, Benny Goodman was known as the King of Swing and the big band era was begun.

The “Thirties” had seen a rise in the production of synthetic plastics and in 1939 nylon stockings first went on sale. The year marked the end of the ten year industrial depression as new products and material were put on the market.

In 1941, President Roosevelt introduced the “Four Freedoms”, freedom of speech and worship, freedom from fear and from want. Freedom from illness was possible in some cases by

the development of penicillin. It did not help the "Iron Man" of baseball, Lou Gehrig, as he died June 2, in New York City. He was the famous first baseman for the New York Yankees.

The national was stunned when on a mild Sunday afternoon, December 7, 1941, people heard on the radio of the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese. The United States declared war on Japan the following day and shortly thereafter on the other Axis Nations of Germany and Italy. Young men and women from the area joined the service and many at home worked in defense plants. A famous phrase put to music was "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition".

DeWitt McClellan Lackman, a famous portrait painter from New York, had an air raid shelter built at his home here on Plains Road. It was said DeWitt Lackman had been asked to paint a portrait of President Roosevelt but had refused when he learned he would be painting at the same sitting with several other artists.

A ban was placed on the retail sale of new passenger cars on January 1, 1942 and rationing was started for rubber, gasoline, sugar, coffee, cheese, canned goods, butter, eggs, and meat. Three pairs of shoes were allotted per person per year. Nylons disappeared. People grew "victory gardens" and observed meatless Mondays and Fridays. They bought war bonds and joined civilian defense organizations. One group acted as air raid wardens and checked homes during blackout to make sure that no light was visible. Practically everyone took their turn as an airplane warning watcher. Special places were designated to have telephone connections with a central post and the airplane spotters reported the type of aircraft seen in the area.

The news on the radio and in the newspapers reported the action on both fronts. Families and friends of the young men were concerned when on May 6, 1942, Corregidor fell to the Japanese. In June they heard of the victory at Midway and in August that the Marines had occupied Guadalcanal. Later that year disaster happened near home when the Coconut Grove Nightclub in Boston burned November 28, causing four hundred eighty-seven deaths.