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"TRADITION IS BUT A METEOR, WHICH, IF IT ONCE FALLS, CAN NEVER BE REKINDLED."



VOL. I.

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CONCORD :

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Checked



not profess to be pious, there is less open wickedness and an increasing attention to propriety and decorum.

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### GILFORD.

Taken from Gilmanton; incorporated June 16, 1812.— Elder Richard Martin was settled here in 1798 over the first Freewill Baptist society. This church now numbers 159.— We find it stated by Farmer that there “was a society of Congregationalists” here in 1823, but we find no clue to its history. Gilford academy was incorporated in 1820.

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### GILMANTON.\*

#### FIRST CHURCH.

The first settlers of Gilmanton were chiefly families desirous of having the institutions of the gospel. They came from Exeter and vicinity, or from the northeastern towns in Ms., and brought with them the spirit of enterprise, education, morality and religion. The township was originally granted by George I. in the year in which he died, 1727, to 215 proprietors, 24 of whom bore the name of Gilman, and seven were ministers. It was provided in the charter that “a Meeting-house should be built for the public worship of God within four years,” and that “a proprietor’s share be reserved for the first minister of the gospel that shall be settled and ordained, and another for a parsonage.” The Indian and French wars and other causes delaying the settlement of the town, the proprietors voted, as inducement to settlers, that the shares should be laid out so as to be convenient “for a parish,” and also engaged “as soon as there should be ten families settled in Gilmanton to employ a minister to preach to them.”

The first family came into town Dec. 26, 1763, and, in less than one year and eight months, or on the 1st of August, 1765, Rev. Wm. Parsons, having been employed by the proprietors, moved into town. He came on horseback with his family, and his furniture was brought on the first ox-cart which had ever entered the town. He was employed annually for ten years, preaching in private houses and school houses in different parts of the town, as neither a Meeting-

\* Sketch by Rev. R. M. Sargent.

house had been built nor a church been organized. He was a useful and exemplary minister, and by his preaching and other efforts aided in giving an intelligent, moral and religious character to the inhabitants, and his influence is perceptible even at the present time. He also taught the schools of the early settlers, even till he was quite advanced in age. He was son of Rev. Joseph Parsons of Salisbury, Ms.; settled at South Hampton, 1753; dismissed 1762; came to Gilman- ton 1763; died 1796, aged 80.

In May, 1774, Rev. Isaac Smith, who had previously spent a few Sabbaths in town, commenced preaching as a regular supply, having been hired for one year. In August, however, the town gave him a call to settle, his salary to be £50 the first year, and to increase £5 each year till it was £75; and he was to have £75 settlement, also the lands set apart for the first settled minister, and the use of the other ministerial lands, 30 acres of which were cleared, or to be cleared for him; his salary was also to continue in case of his sickness, and he was to reserve three Sabbaths of each year for rest, or visiting friends. While the call was under consideration, a committee visited him from Ipswich, Ms., with a call, as he had previously preached there for a little time. But a decided deacon told them firmly that the people of Gilmanton were united in Mr. Smith, and could not let him go. Mr. Smith was ordained Nov. 30, 1774. Rev. Dr. McClintock of Greenland preached the sermon, and Rev. Messrs. Walker of Concord, Foster of Canterbury, Stearns of Epping, Upham of Deerfield, Woodman of Dunbarton, and Dr. Belknap of Dover performed the other services.— Also by concurrence of the same council a Congregational church was gathered consisting of only 5 members, to which however 17 were added during the succeeding year. In 1777 £20 was expended in clearing the parsonage land, and £75 was given to Rev. Mr. Smith to aid him in building his house. For several years the inhabitants were very harmonious in regard to Rev. Mr. Smith's salary, but as meetings of other denominations began to multiply, a disposition was manifested to throw off the town's obligations to the "*standing order.*" First, a proposal was made to have assessors and a collector of the minister tax separate from the selectmen and constables, who made and collected the other taxes. Then an effort was made to divide the avails of the ministerial lands among the different societies. This at first failed, but afterwards succeeded.

From 1810 to 1815 no ministerial tax was made out, and no other way was open to Rev. Mr. Smith to obtain lawful



and just compensation for his services except to commence a suit against the town. When the people met to consider the matter they appointed a committee to try to make a settlement with Rev. Mr. Smith, and it was finally agreed to pay him \$1402, which for the sake of peace he accepted, and relinquished all claims upon the town. The salary had previously been raised by the town, and all who did not belong to any other society were considered as belonging to this, and were taxed accordingly. But all who were regular members of the Baptist society were not taxed, from the first settlement, and all who became members of other societies when they arose, were excused from being taxed to pay the salary of the minister of the town. But after this Rev. Mr. Smith was sustained by voluntary subscription. An Act of Incorporation for the "First Congregational Society" was obtained, and the town *as such* ceased to have any further responsibility respecting the settlement or support of the ministry. Also it had not been usual previously to tax the minister, but in 1812 and again in 1816 it was voted to tax the property of Rev. Mr. Smith, and since that time the ministers have paid their taxes, the same as other citizens.

Rev. Mr. Smith died in 1817 after an illness of only three days, in the 73d year of his age, and the 43d of his ministry. His funeral was attended by a large concourse of the citizens of this and neighboring towns. Rev. Mr. Carpenter of Chichester preached the sermon, and several other ministers were present. In the burying ground near where he lived and the Meeting-house in which he preached, the church erected an appropriate monument to his memory, and the people generally after his death acknowledged the worth of him to whom they had denied his just dues while he was living. During his ministry 114 had joined the church, the number of baptisms by him was 312, of marriages 396, and funerals 1141. He was a skillful linguist, "reading Latin and Greek almost as readily as English;" he did much for the cause of education, drafted the excellent constitution of the academy, and fitted several young men for college. • As a theologian he was sound and discriminating, agreeing substantially with Dr. Bellamy, with whom he studied theology. As a preacher he was animated, vivacious, clear and pointed. In the earlier part of his ministry his sermons were written in full, but later in life he preached for the most part extemporaneously. As a pastor he was faithful and beloved by the friends of good order. He had the happy "faculty of saying the right things at the right time, so that they would be remembered." The church, deeply affected by the loss of their



faithful minister, were led to increased prayer, effort and reliance upon God ; a gracious revival was enjoyed, and the seed, long and earnestly sown, sprung up at last. Rev. Jesse Stratton, a graduate of Middlebury college, 1814, recently from Andover seminary, labored for a time with the people, and some 45 were prepared for a public profession.

Rev. Luke A. Spofford, having preached as a candidate, and induced the church to adopt a new doctrinal creed, was ordained June 9, 1819. The revival of the previous year had awakened a religious interest, and tended to make the exercises peculiarly solemn and memorable. The sermon was by Rev. Asa Rand of Gorham, Me. The other services were conducted by Rev. Messrs. Wells of Deerfield, Bodwell of Sanbornton, McFarland, D.D. of Concord, Carpenter of Chichester, Ainsworth of Jaffrey, Corser of Loudon, Burnham of Pembroke, and Patrick of Canterbury. Rev. Mr. Spofford labored with much care for the spiritual purity of the church, and the good of the whole people, and a gracious revival was enjoyed in 1823. But the field of his labors being very large and the demands of the people very great, he resigned his charge in 1825.

January 1st of that year Rev. Daniel Lancaster commenced supplying the pulpit ; and April 11th the church gave him a call to settle, which he declined. June 9th, Rev. Mr. Spofford was dismissed, after six years pastorate, and in July the call was renewed to Rev. Mr. Lancaster, and he returning from Massachusetts accepted and was ordained Sept. 21, 1825. Rev. Mr. Cooke of Acworth preached, and Rev. Messrs. Bodwell, Prentice, Spofford, Cross, George, and Cnant, performed the other services. Feb. 26, 1826, 25 members obtained letters of dismissal and recommendation for the purpose of forming a new church at the Academy village, the center of the town, three miles west of the First church, and Oct. 12, 1830, 13 more members were dismissed to be formed into a church at the Iron Works village, three miles east. The formation of these two churches and societies in the villages where they were absolutely required, left the First church and society much reduced, as there was scarcely any village near its Meeting-house. And though revivals were enjoyed in 1826-7, and again in 1831, yet, the society being unable to afford an adequate support to a minister, Rev. Mr. Lancaster asked a dismissal July 15th, 1832, which was acceded to by the church on the 22d, and he was dismissed on the 25th of the same month. He was pastor of the First church for six years, though for two years he preached half of the time at the Iron Works village, and two



other years half of the time at the Center village. During his ministry 85 were added to the church; there were 118 baptisms, and over 100 funerals.

Since Rev. Mr. Lancaster's dismissal the First church and society have been destitute of a pastor, but have had occasional and sometimes stated supplies. Rev. F. P. Smith, son of their first minister, preached for them through the year 1834. Rev. Josiah Carpenter in 1837, Rev. Dana B. Bradford, and various other members of the theological seminary, supplied them for several years. Rev. Wm. Cogswell, D.D. while President of the theological seminary, supplied them on the Sabbath till the illness preceding his death, which occurred April 18, 1850. Rev. James Hobart of Berlin, Vt., commonly known as "father Hobart," and Rev. J. C. Page, formerly of Raymond, while residing in town, also Rev. J. W. Jones, a local preacher of the Methodist church, have supplied their pulpit for several seasons. No additions have been made to the church since 1844. Whole number received in all is 311. They own a parsonage and land adjoining, obtained during the ministry of Rev. Mr. Spofford. The deacons have been Stephen Dudley and John Sanborn, (elected in 1776,) Winslow Page and Benjamin Page, (1803,) Joseph French, (1819,) Moses Page, (1826,) and Theophilus Gilman, (1828.) In September, 1774, the frame of the first Meeting-house was raised, but the house was not prepared to be used for worship till the following season. It was 60 feet by 45, with a porch at each end, with galleries on three sides, a broad aisle six feet wide, and an aisle crossing this, running from end to end, four feet wide, and with narrower aisles passing around to accommodate the wall pews. It was not entirely finished, glazed and plastered, till 1790. In 1807 it was repaired and clapboarded, but it was many years before a stove was introduced, and then with considerable reluctance on the part of some. The people must have been a hardier race than the present, to sit thus unwarmed through long services. This house stood till 1839 when it was taken down, and a small and comfortable house was erected and dedicated in 1840 on or near the same place.

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### GILMANTON CENTER.

Rev. R. M. SARGENT.

The Center Congregational Society in Gilmanton was formed March 16, 1825, Hon. William Badger (afterwards



Governor,) being the first moderator, and N. Crosby clerk ; and preaching was secured a part of that year. The Center church in Gilmanton, located at the Academy village and about at the center of the town, was organized March 8, 1826, by a council consisting of Rev. Messrs. Lancaster, Bodwell, Patrick and Norwood. Mr. Bodwell preached the sermon, and Mr. Patrick presented the articles of faith and covenant. The original number of members was 25.

July 12, 1826, Mr. Heman Rood, having in the previous spring received a unanimous call, was ordained as the pastor. The sermon was preached by Rev. Justin Edwards of Andover. Services were held in the unfinished Meeting-house. He remained about three years and a half, when, receiving a call to settle in New Milford, Conn., he was dismissed March 3, 1830. For the succeeding two years this society was supplied with preaching half the time by Rev. D. Lancaster of the first church ; and from August 1832 to December 1835, he preached as stated supply the whole time. Nov. 15, 1835, a unanimous call was given to him, and, December 16 of the same year, he was installed as pastor of this church. Rev. Mr. Lancaster remained pastor a little over sixteen years, having labored with the several churches of this town upwards of twenty six years. He was dismissed Jan. 26, 1852.

The society immediately made efforts to secure a supply of the pulpit, and March 15, 1852, a unanimous call was extended to Mr. R. M. Sargent, a licentiate of Andover, to become their pastor, and he was ordained April 27 of the same year. Special revivals have been enjoyed by this church in 1831 and '32, when 28 were added ; in the autumn of 1834, and the early part of 1836, when 76, as the fruit of both these revivals, were added ; in 1838, when 52 were received ; in 1843 and again in 1850 were seasons of refreshing, more especially among the pupils of the academy.—During the year 1854, eight have united with the church by profession, and there have been four infant baptisms during the same year. The whole number who have been received to the church is 289. The present number of members is 135, 52 males and 83 females. Of these, however, more than thirty are non-resident—several of them now being ministers, either settled or acting as stated supplies, and who joined this church when members of the theological seminary in this village—and have never removed their church relation. The deacons have been Joseph French, Dr. (afterwards Rev.) J. C. Page, Tilton French, Andrew Mack, A. M. and Thomas Adams. The Meeting-house was commenced in 1826, imme-



diately after the organization of the church, and was dedicated Sept. 20, 1827. It is a neat and commodious edifice, cost \$3500. In 1854 it was repainted within and without, some improvements were made, and an organ and new pulpit furniture were purchased. A commodious parsonage house was prepared four years since. The salary is raised entirely by subscription. The other religious societies in town are, the First Congregational church at East Gilmanton, three miles east of the Center, the Congregational and Freewill Baptist churches at the Iron Works village, six miles east, the Calvinist Baptist at lower Gilmanton, four miles south east, the Methodist and the Friends near the academy village, the First Freewill Baptist and the Christian Baptist in Upper Gilmanton, four miles west, and the Freewill Baptist church worshipping in the Province Road Meeting-house five miles north east of the academy. Also, the people from one section of the town attend the Congregational and other churches at Meredith Bridge, and from other borders of the town attend the churches at Union Bridge and Loudon Ridge. Population in 1850, 3282. The congregation worshipping with the center church is composed of the people of the village and vicinity, and the majority of the students of the academy. The resident families belonging regularly to the congregation number a little over 70. The number of students varies with different terms. The academy received its excellent charter in 1794, and its object is declared to be to "promote virtue, and piety and knowledge," and all the students are required to attend some place of public worship. Number of men furnished by this town for the ministry in different denominations, 13. [See Rev. D. Lancaster's History of Gilmanton.]

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### GILMANTON IRON WORKS.

REV. RUFUS CHILDS.

Soon after the settlement of the town of Gilmanton, a Congregational church was organized and provision made for the public worship of God and a permanent ministry.— For many years, believers from every direction assembled together with one accord, and worshiped God in one place. In process of time villages grew and population multiplied, to such a degree, that it became expedient to form churches and erect Meeting-houses in other parts of the town. Oct. 12, 1830, thirteen individuals, four males and nine females,



having obtained dismissal from the first church, were organized into a separate church, called the *Gilmanton Iron Works Congregational Church*. Several important additions were made to the church, soon after its organization.

On the 28th of September 1831, Mr. Charles G. Safford was ordained pastor of the church. But his term of service was short. On account of ill health, he was dismissed in just five years from the day of his ordination. But his labors here were greatly blessed. Additions to the church were frequent, and there were two revivals of considerable interest, one of which continued for several months, in which some forty individuals expressed a hope in Christ.—For the two years subsequent to Mr. Safford's dismissal, the church was without a pastor; but the pulpit was supplied by different individuals, some of whom were connected with the theological seminary in town. In the early part of the year 1838 a general revival of religion was enjoyed in the parish, as the fruits of which, 55 individuals were added to the church at one time. The following statements are in the records of the church: "Among those who, after very pungent convictions of sin, at last entertained hope in the mercy of God, were the notoriously profane, Sabbath breakers, unbelievers, and scoffers at religion. Heads of families were brought in, with their children. The aged, middle aged, and the young, were partakers of the grace of God. Besides these, some—who had in times past obtained pardon of their sins, but had not given God thanks, and had kept it secret from the world—now came out confessing their ingratitude and guilt, and renewedly dedicating themselves to God."

Jan. 30, 1839, Mr. S. S. N. Greeley was ordained over the church as their pastor. He was received among them with joy and gratitude. His labors were blessed to the church, and several additions were made to it while under his pastoral care. After about four years from the time of his settlement he asked for a dissolution of the pastoral relation, which, on the ground of his request, was granted. For nearly two years the church was again destitute of a pastor, and was again furnished with preaching, a portion of the time, from the theological seminary. Rev. William Cogswell, D.D., supplied the pulpit for a few months.—Through his agency, Mr. Rufus Childs was introduced to the people, received and accepted a call to settle among them, and was ordained pastor of the church Nov. 6, 1844. There has been nothing particularly marked in the history



of the church since that time. There have been seasons of more than ordinary religious interest,—some conversions and additions to the church, but there has been no general revival of religion since the year 1838. The church and society are in a harmonious state, and in an able and prosperous condition, if we regard numbers, talent, and means of supporting gospel institutions among them. The whole number of members of the church from the beginning is 172; the infant baptisms have been 37. The present number of members is 113. It is one of the important towns in the State, and upon the churches within its borders a great weight of responsibility rests.

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### LACONIA.

Rev. JOHN K. YOUNG.

The village formerly called Meredith Bridge, which is partly in Gilford and partly in Laconia, was for many years, from the time of its settlement, destitute of the regular and stated ministrations of the gospel. As a consequence, immorality and irreligion prevailed to a great extent among the inhabitants. An interest in the spiritual welfare of the place at length arose in the minds of the friends of Home Missions; and the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge in Massachusetts, and the New Hampshire Missionary Society directed their missionaries to labor in this field. Among these were the Rev. I. Turner, who first established himself as a missionary here, in the summer of 1813; Rev. Jotham Sewall, Rev. Henry Sewall, Mr. Nathan Fisk afterward professor of Greek language in Amherst college, Ms. and Rev. Francis Norwood. Three missionaries had preceded these men but failed of gathering a congregation.

Rev. Mr. Norwood came here in June 1824, and on July 26, of the same year, a Congregational church was organized consisting of nine members, no one of whom had previously made a public profession of religion. The ministers who officiated on the occasion, were Rev. A. Bodwell, Rev. Jonathan Curtis and Rev. L. A. Spofford. Mr. Norwood having supplied the pulpit for one year, was ordained and installed as "pastor and teacher," July 5, 1825. He continued his useful and successful labors here amid many hindrances, until May 30, 1830, when the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, failing to render further aid, he was dismissed, leaving a church with 35 members.