

“History of the First Baptist Church of Swansea, Massachusetts”

By Rev. Arial Fisher, Pastor

*The Baptist Memorial and Monthly Record*, 1845

Part I. Embracing about 50 years

As this is the first Baptist Church formed in Massachusetts, and as the circumstances of its origin were in many respects peculiar, it seems desirable that its history should be embodied and handed down to posterity. As this church has, as will be seen, a connexion with the Baptist church in Swansea, in the Principality of Wales, it will be necessary to go back to a period before the organization of that church.

It is supposed that there were many friends of Christ in Wales from the earliest times; but after the Reformation they greatly increased. About 200 years ago, the Lord raised up several men of great power, who preached with much success. These men were persecuted, being shut up in prison, fined, and in many other ways harassed and impeded in their holy work; but many people were turned to the Lord. About this time the Baptists began to form themselves into distinct churches. Before that they were mostly connected with others. Among the men whom the Lord raised up as his witnesses in Wales, was Rev. John Myles, the founder of this church. Mr. Myles began his ministry in the south part of Wales, about 1645; and became eminent in that country.\* He appears to have preached, in various places with much success till 1649, when he was instrumental in raising up a church in Swansea, in South Wales. This took place during the first year of the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell. Whilst the government was in his hands, all dissenters were indulged in full enjoyment of liberty of conscience. The result of this liberty was, that religion prevailed. This church was greatly prospered, so that in 10 or 12 years, between 200 and 300 souls were added to it. There were several branches where worship was maintained. To meet the calls of the church, several ministers were raised up. A regular discipline was maintained, and a correspondence was carried on with churches in London, Dublin, and several other places. The letters addressed to the church in Swansea, are recorded in our book of church records. Mr. Myles, the pastor, had a high standing among the churches and ministers. The author of the History of the Welsh Baptists says, "He was one of the greatest advocates for close communion in the Principality in his times, and the leading minister of the Baptist denomination in Wales."† He made special efforts to extend his views of the terms of communion with much success. A letter on this subject is said to be on the records of the Baptist church in Abergavenny. There is also another letter directed to that church still on the same records. "In 1651, he was sent as the representative of all the Baptist churches in Wales, to the Baptist Ministers' Meeting at Glaziers' Hall, London, with a letter, giving an account of the peace, union, and increase of the Baptist churches." From advice received there, many new churches were formed in Wales, greatly by his instrumentality. Under Cromwell he seems to have accepted a support from government, and his place was registered as thus supported. When after the death

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\* History of Welsh Baptists, p. 33.

† Page 38.

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of Cromwell, Charles II. ascended the throne, all ministers in the churches supported by public funds, were required to conform to the established religion. This was the Episcopal, and all others were in effect silenced. The result of this cruel order, made by one of the vilest kings that ever sat on a throne, drove 2000 of the best ministers out of their places, because they could not conscientiously conform. Among these nonconformist ministers was the founder of this church. As he was a conspicuous man he was probably more cruelly persecuted than some others, so that he came to the determination to leave his country, and fly to the new world. This was a time of terror, and ministers were obliged to fly where they could, while the churches were scattered. In this state of things, some of the church at Swansea came over with their pastor; and with them they brought their records. The names of those added from 1649 to 1660, are recorded in the book with their places of residence, and the time of their entering the church. There seems to be 48, who were members when the record began in 1650; these, or a part of them, were probably constituent members. Why these records should have been brought over cannot now be told. The number of members that came with Mr. Myles, was small, so that this church appears to be only a branch of that in Wales. These records might be of more use to the old church, as they contain much information in relation to its proceedings from 1649 to 1660.

Our venerable historian, Backus, says that extracts from these records were sent over to Mr. Thomas, of Leominster, for his use, and were in all probability used by him in his history of the Welsh Baptists.+ Of this, we of course, have no certain knowledge. It has been supposed that these records were written in Welsh, but I should think that could not be true. I can suppose no possible reason why these records should now be in English. Mr. Benedict says that these records were in Welsh, but as far as I can find, Backus does not say so, and the strong presumption is that they were originally written in English, probably by Mr. Myles.

Those persons who came over with Mr. M., were Nicholas Tanner, Obadiah Bowen, John Thomas and others: but one only of them is among the signers to the covenant of this church when it was first formed. Others of these names are found on the early records of the town. Some might at first have been scattered, who afterwards came into the church. The name of Thomas was long in this body as it was in the church at Swansea, in Wales. The act of Uniformity, which ejected Mr. M., passed in 1662, and Mr. Myles came to this country in 1663. Of the circumstances of his departure from Wales, or of his arrival in this country, we are in entire darkness. The first knowledge we have of him in America, finds him in Rehoboth. Here he found such as were either favorable to baptist sentiments, or were actually Baptists, besides those he brought with him. These materials he gathered together and constituted them into a church. This body was formed at the house of John Bulterworth, the number was seven, their names were John Myles, pastor, James Brown, Nicholas Tanner, Joseph Carpenter, John Butterworth, Eldad Kingsley, and Benjamin Alby. Although the sentiments of the Baptists had never been jwpular, yet they had long occupied the attention of men, and whenever they had not been actually crushed by the strong arm of power, they gained adherents. Under the

government of Cromwell they had been permitted to enjoy that liberty of conscience for which they had long sighed the result was that great numbers became favorable to their sentiments. This leaven found its way into New-England, and occasioned great uneasiness to the government and the churches.

There was an attempt to form a Baptist church at Weymouth, in 1639; but the design was defeated by the interference of the magistrates, and those who were concerned in the attempt were scattered. As Rehoboth was settled from Weymouth this leaven might have been extended there, as higher notions of religious liberty prevailed in that town from the very beginning, than in most other places. Mr. John Brown, a principal man in town and an Assistant in the Plymouth Colony, was utterly opposed to all coercion in matters of religion. It seems that Mr. Newman, the first Congregationalist minister, though on the whole a good man, was somewhat irascible and rather domineering. Such a temper was little fitted to smother the fire that of itself was just ready to burst forth. Some of his disciplinary proceedings were unpleasant to

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\* History of the Baptists, Vol. I, p. 424.

+ Backus's Church History, Vol. 3, p. 143..

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Obadiah Holmes and eight others, who withdrew and set up a meeting by themselves, in 1649. At first they might not have thought of becoming Baptists, but, being separated from those about them, and being contiguous to Providence, they were led to become such, and soon were baptized and became members of Mr. Clarke's church at Newport. Mr. Newman and his church then excommunicated them. (See History of Rehoboth, p. 205. Benedict, vol. 1, p. 425; also Backus, pp. 352, 354.)

The proceedings of these dissenters drew upon them the displeasure of the prevailing denomination and the government. Under this displeasure the concern was crushed, but left an influence which is felt to this day. It was in 1651, that Mr. Clarke, of Newport, and Mr. Holmes, with Mr. Crandal, were taken up for preaching and worshipping God with some of their brethren in Lynn, and were condemned by the Court at Boston to suffer the penalty of fines or whippings. On this sentence Obadiah Holmes received thirty lashes with a three-corded whip, inflicted to the utmost severity. (See Benedict, vol. 1, pp. 364, 380. History of Rehoboth, pp. 206-207. Backus, vol. 1.)

Soon after this, Mr. Holmes went from Rehoboth to Newport, and became pastor of the First Baptist Church, as successor to Mr. Clarke, in 1652. Several of those who had associated with him in Rehoboth went with him to Newport. He lived to be 76 years old, and died Oct. 16, 1682, and was buried in his own field, leaving eight children that were highly respectable and useful in life. (See Benedict as above, History of Rehoboth, p. 207. Bayles' History of Plymouth Colony). Those who remained, it appears were ready to receive Mr. Myles and his brethren. Of the seven who were constituent members of this church, Nicholas Tanner only came with Mr. Myles, the rest, for aught that appears to the contrary, were in Rehoboth when he arrived. James Brown was son to John Brown,

a man conspicuous in his day. The son as well as the father, was many years an Assistant in the Plymouth Colony, and was highly useful in various circumstances. The place of John Butterworth's residence at the time the church was formed at it, is supposed to have been near the cove in Seekonk. As soon as it was known that this body was organized, and were maintaining the ordinances of religion, "the orthodox churches of the colony solicited the Court to interpose its influence against them, and the members of this little church were fined, each five pounds for setting up a public meeting without the knowledge and approbation of the Court, to the disturbance of the peace of the place; ordered to desist from their meeting for the space of a month, and advised to remove their meeting to some other place where they might not prejudice any other church." (Benedict, vol. 1, p. 425.)

Upon this order and advice, Mr. Myles and his church removed to New-Meadow Neck, a place south of Rehoboth, which is now Barrington. This place was not then embraced in any town. At first it is probable that they only removed their meeting, as permission was afterward given to Mr. Myles to purchase land and reside in Rehoboth, (See Bayles' History of Plymouth Colony) and at last some of the members owned property in that town. They appear to have erected a meeting house not long after they began to hold meetings without the bounds of Rehoboth. This house stood a few rods south of the south line of Rehoboth, on the road leading to the house of the late Mr. Squire Allen, about 15 or 20 rods from the main road leading from Warren to Seekonk and Providence. This site of the first meeting house of this church is about three miles from Warren north-west; about 2 1/2 [?] miles from the present meeting house about west. The house that stood on this spot was, in all probability small and cheap, and was placed there so as to get out of Rehoboth. From its location as it appears now, no one would think it ever had been or would be the place for a meeting house. It seems probable that after the meeting house was located, the members of the church and others friendly to the interest located themselves in the same neighborhood: and this probability is strengthened by the fact that there are the appearances of cellars in several places in this vicinity now entirely vacated. Mr. Myles' house was about a mile and a half north east, near Myles' Bridge, at what is now Barneyville. It has been supposed that the first meeting house of this church was located at Kelly's bridge opposite Warren. So Mr. Backus and others have stated it, but I have reasons for believing they were wholly mistaken about it. The light which has led me to state what I have above, is derived from a manuscript book owned by the Hon. Levi Haile, of Warren, which gives a full record of the proceedings of the town for about fifty years from its incorporation,

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with many notes not found in the town records, of great value. The proceedings are also much more full. By these records, it appears that from 1675 to 1680, the question was agitated whether the meeting house should be removed to Kelly's Bridge or Ferry, as it then was. A vote was passed at one time to do it, but without any reconsideration of that vote, about 1679, a vote was passed to erect a new meeting house at the lower end of New Meadow Neck, which vote was carried into effect. After having ascertained that

these movements had been made, I found that a tradition existed amongst some of the people of this place that a meeting house once stood somewhere in the neighborhood where I have located it. At length I found a man who showed me the very spot that had been pointed out to him by an uncle long since dead, where a meeting house once stood. This to my mind settled the question where the first meeting house of this church was built. This spot is now near the west end of Swansea. As this was the first Baptist meeting house of the first Baptist church in Massachusetts, I have been careful to find out and give the true history of it. This house was probably erected before the grant of a town.

In the year 1667, the Plymouth Court, according to the encouragement previously given, granted to the first founders of this church, with others, a grant of a town to be called Swansea.

It is proper here to insert the original, grant as contained in the first book of town records, page 2d.

A true copy of the grant of this Township of New Swansea, lying on Record at the Court of New Plymouth.

1667

Whereas, Liberty hath been formerly granted by the Court of the Jurisdiction, of New Plymouth, unto Captain Thomas Willet and his neighbors of Wonnanoiset, to become a Township there if they should see good, and that lately the said Capt. Willet, and Mr. Myles, and others their neighbors have requested of the Court that they may be a Township there or near there about, and likewise to have granted unto them such parcels of land as might be accommodate thereunto not disposed of to other townships; this Court have framed unto them all such lands that lyeth between the salt water bay and covering Taunton River, viz, all the land between the salt water and river, and the bounds of Taunton and Rehoboth not prejudicing any man's particular interest, and forasmuch as Rehoboth hath meadow land within the line of Wonnanoiset and Wannamoiset hath lands within the line of Rehoboth, lying near the south line of Rehoboth; if the two Townships cannot agree about them amongst themselves the Court reserves it within their power to determine any such controversy.

1667} The Court hath appointed Capt. Thomas Willett, Mr. Paine, Sen., Mr. Brown, John Allen, and John Butterworth, to have the trust of admittance of Town inhabitants in said Town, and to have the disposal of the land therein, and ordering the other affairs of said Town.

The Court do allow and approve that the Township granted unto Capt. Thomas Willett, and others his neighbors at Wannamoiset, and parts adjacent, shall henceforth be called and: known by the name of Swansea.

The entries above are a copy taken out of the Court Records at Plymouth  
NATHANIAL CLARKE, Sect'y

In 1645, Mr. John Brown had purchased Wannamoiset Neck, which had been laid off to him and his heirs. At the time of the grant of this town, Mr. Brown was dead, but his son James and others who were heirs, were alive and had possession of that part of the

new town. The rest was under the supervision of a committee. At the head of this committee was Capt. Willett.

In commencing the business of the newly granted town, the following things were settled as a foundation on which to act, as found, in town records, 1st vol. p. 3 and 4.

"Whereas, Capt. Thomas Willett, shortly after the grant of this township made the three following proposals unto those who were with him, by the Court at Plymouth empowered for the admission of inhabitants, and of granting of lots, viz.

"1. That no erroneous person be admitted into the township as an inhabitant, or sojourner.

"2. That no man of any evil behavior, as contentious persons, &c, be admitted.

"3. That none may be admitted thtt may become a charge to the place."

"The church here gathered and assembling, did thereupon make the following address unto, the said Capt. Willett, and his associates, the trustees aforesaid.

"We being engaged with you, (according

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to our capacity) in the carrying on of & township, according tp the grant given us by the Honored Court, and desiring to lay such a foundation thereof as may effectually tend to God's glory, our future peace and comfort, and the real benefit of such as shall hereafter join with us herein, as also to prevent all future jealousies and causes of dissatisfaction or disturbance in so good a work, do in relation to the three proposals made by our much honored Capt. Willett, humbly present to your serious consideration (before we further proceed therein) that the said proposals may be consented to and subscribed by all and every town man under the following explications.

"That the first proposal relating to nonadmission of erroneous persons may be only understood under the explications following, viz: of such as hold damnable heresies inconsistent with the faith of the gospel, as to deny the Trinity or any person therein, the Deity, or sinless humanity of Christ, or the union of both natures in him, or his full satisfaction to the divine justice by his active and passive obedience for all his elect, or his resurrection, ascension to heaven, intercession, or his second personable coming to judgment; or else to deny the truth or divine authority of any part of the canonical scriptures, or the resurrection of the dead, or to maintain any merit of works, consubstantiation, transubstantiation, giving divine adoration to any creature or any other anti-christian doctrine, thereby directly opposing the priestly prophetic or kingly office of Christ, or any part thereof; or

"Secondly, such as hold such opinions as are inconsistent with the well-being of the place, as to deny the magistrates power to punish evil doers as well as to encourage these that do well; or to deny the first day of the week to be observed by divine institution as the Lord's or Christian Sabbath, or to deny the giving of honor to whom honor is due, or to offer those civil respects that are usually performed according to the laudable custom of our nation, each to other as bowing the knee, or body &c. Or else to deny the office,

use, or authority of the ministry or a comfortable maintenance to be due to them from such as partake of their teaching, or to speak reproachfully of any of the churches of Christ in the country, or or any such other churches as are of the same common faith: with us and them.

"We desire also that it may be understood, and declared, that this, is not understood of any holding any opinion different from others in any disputable point yet in controversy among the godly learned, the belief of these not essentially necessary to salvation, such as pedo-baptism, anti-pedobaptism, church discipline or the like; but that the minister or ministers of the said town may take their liberty to baptize infants or grown persons as the Lord shall persuade their consciences! and so also the inhabitants to take the liberty to bring thfeir children to baptism or forbear.

"That the second proposal relating to the non-reception of any of evil behavior, such as contentious persons, &c. may be only understood of those truly so called and not of those who are different in judgment in the particulars last mentioned, and may be therefore accounted contentious by some, though they are in all fundamentals of faith, orthodox in judgment, and excepting common infirmities blameless in conversation.

"That the proposal relating to the non-admission of such as may become a charge to the town, be only understood so as that it may not hinder any godly man from coming among us whilst there is accommodation that may satisfy him if some responsible townsman will be bound to save the town harmless.

"These humble tenders of our desires we hope you will without offence receive, excusing us herein, considering that God's glory, the future peace and well-being, not only of us and of our posterity who shall settle here, but also of those several good and peaceably minded, men whom you all already know are liked, though with very inconsiderable outward accomodation to come among us, are very much concerned herein. Our humble prayers both for ourselves and you is that our God.would be pleased to cause us to aim more and more at his glory, and less to our own earthly concernment, that so we may improve the favors that hath been handed to us by our honored nursing fathers to the advancement of the glory of God, the interest of our Lord Jesns Christ, and to the common benefit both of the Township and Colony, wherein he hath providentially disposed of us to serve our generation.

"Your brethren to serve you in Christ.

"Signed in behalf and in the name of  
the church meeting at Swansea, by  
JOHN MYLES, Pastor,  
JOHN BUTTERWORTH."

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These explications made by the church were agreed to by Capt. Willett and his associates, as trustees, and unanimously adopted with the three proposals, themselves by

the town, in Feb. 20, 1669, and became the foundation on which the town was established. To that document fifty-five put their names as found in the Town Records, vol. 1, page 5th Thomas Willett and John Myles stood first.

This church was so intimately connected with the founding of this town that the above documents seemed an indispensable part of its history. Several of the persons concerned in the founding of this town of Swansea were not Baptists, although the greatest number of them were. Mr. John Brown, who was the first owner of Wannamoiset Neck it is probable was not a Baptist; but he was a man of great liberality for his day. He came over from Leyden to Plymouth about 1633 or 4, or perhaps earlier, from there he soon came to Rehoboth, and was of great use to the town and colony. He discharged the duties of several important offices in both with great wisdom, integrity, and success. He was possessed of much land and other property. He died at Wannamoiset in 1662, having the name of an able and a good man, greatly lamented. He was father to James Brown, an important man both in church and state in Swansea. (History of Rehoboth, pp. 52, 53.) Capt. Thos. Willett was not a Baptist, but he too was far more liberal in his feelings than many of the time in which he lived. He was one of the most important men in the settlement. He was also a principal man of Plymouth Colony, and the first English Mayor of the city of New-York, so he was one of the last of the Leyden company who came to this country, having arrived about 1629. He was then 18 or 19 years old, and had been bred a merchant. As the greater part of his life had been spent in Holland, he had acquired an intimate knowledge of the manners and customs and language of the Dutch; a circumstance which made him so acceptable to the Dutch of New York. On his arrival at Plymouth, he was sent to Kennebeck to superintend their business as agent. There he continued six or seven years, when he came back to Plymouth and married, when it is thought he resided for a time from 1641 to 1646, at Dorchester, near Huston, where some of his children were born. Afterwards he lived in Plymouth, and in 1647 became successor to Miles Standish in the command of the military company at Plymouth. In 1651 he was elected one of the Governor's Assistants, and was annually continued in that office till 1665, when the pressure of other duties obliged him to decline, and James Brown, of Swansea, was chosen his successor. In February, 1660, we find Mr. W. an inhabitant of Rehoboth; and obtaining liberty of the town to take up large tracts of land in its vicinity. Under the power of the Colony he did take up and purchase of Alexander, the elder son of King Massasoit, Rehoboth and Taunton. North Purchase, now composing several towns.

On the surrender of New York to the English under Col. Nichols, in August, 1664, by the Dutch Governor, Stuyvesant, Capt. W. attended the Commissioners of Appeals, Nichols, Carr, Cartwright, and Maverick, to that city, and rendered them great service, by his acquaintance with the customs, usages, and language of the Dutch, in organizing the new government. He performed his duties here to the entire satisfaction of all concerned; and his services were so highly appreciated, and he rendered himself so popular with the people, that after the organization of the government, he was elected the first English Mayor of the city of New-York. He was elected a second time to that office, and chosen umpire to determine the disputed boundary between New-York and New-Haven. While Capt. W. was at New-York, he retained his standing in Rehoboth, to which place he returned before 1667. In this year his name appears the first on the list of individuals to

whom liberty was granted to become a township by the name of Swansea, and Mr. Myles the next, and they have been considered the fathers of the town. He continued to reside on his farm in Swansea during the remaining part of his life.

Capt. Willett married Mary Brown, supposed to be daughter of Mr. John Brown the elder, and sister of James Brown, one of the first members of this church, July 6, 1636. He had eight children, who were respectable in life. Several of his descendants have distinguished themselves in the history of their county.

Capt. Willet died in Swansea, Aug. 4, 1674, at the age of sixty-three. He was buried at the head of Bullock's Cove, in what is now Seekonk, where a rough stone still stands to mark the spot, on which is

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legible the following brief and rudely carved inscription.

MDCLXXIV.

Here lyeth the body of the worthy THOMAS WILLETT, Esq.,  
who died Aug. ye iv. in ye lxivth year of his age.  
Who was ye first Mayor of New-York,  
and twice did sustain ye place.

N. B. This inscription is in the old English letter.

The grant of this town of Swansea that the Baptists might have a resting place, shows that Plymouth Colony was much more liberal or tolerant than the Massachusetts. It was an era to Baptists in this new world, they had to be sure a footing in Rhode Island, but they had been kept out of all the other New England Colonies. We now find our fathers of this church with their pastor, Mr. Myles, free from oppression. On the incorporation of the town, the church entered into a covenant with each other, as appears by the covenant itself on record. Whether they had a covenant before is not known. In the above covenant they accommodated themselves to their circumstances. As has already been said, Mr. Myles in Wales was a strong advocate for what is called close or restricted communion, but, in this covenant, that doctrine is treated as very bad. It appears that in early times, our fathers were satisfied if they could but live and were willing to go with pedobaptists if they would let them. In Swansea a few, as is probable, were found who were kind towards them.

Either the church did not keep records up to 1717, or they are not in our book of records and are mislaid or lost, so that for that period we must feel our way as we can.\* The names of the first members of the church are afterward found in the Town Records as occupying important offices, showing that they were among the principal men in the town. Nicholas Tanner was in active business 30 or 40 years. James Brown was long active as a deputy, selectman, townsman, &c. in the town, and several years an Assistant in the Colony; John Butterworth was, as appears from town records, Deacon, and much

employed; so was Benjamin Alby, and Eldad Kingsley, who was the ancestor of all of that name in this quarter, and tradition says he was the first man killed in King Philip's Indian War, while he was going from meeting on a day of fasting in reference to the fears of that war. At the time of the incorporation of the Town, New-Meadow Neck, embracing the Lands on Palmer's River, was, as is highly probable, the most important part of the town. There was at that time, or soon after, settlements at Wannamoiset Neck, New-Meadow Neck. Kickamuit, and Mattapoiset, or as it is now called, Gardner's Neck.

The principal Baptist families were settled on New Meadows neck. Mr. Myles' house was just back of the present residence of Mr. Eleaza Smith. Deac. Butterworth, Nicholas Tanner, Benjamin Alby, and Eldad Kingsley were settled not far from him. The meeting house in which our fathers first worshipped, was in that quarter. Soon after the organization of the town, it was proposed to Mr. M. that he should keep a school, for which he should receive forty pounds a year, provided he had nothing for his ministerial services except the collections. (See Baylies' History of Plymouth Colony, Art. Swansea.) He kept the school for a time, and received collections at stated times. The school was probably kept in the different neighborhoods in town, as this arrangement was observed long after, as appears by the Town Records. (See Town Records, Vol. 1, p. 25.) This, however, did not long continue, as some did not care about a school, and others thought that it was wrong or useless to do any thing for the minister. Mr Myles seems to have been next in importance to Capt. Willett, and was reckoned in the first rank. From this standing, he had several portions of lands assigned to him. Whether he paid for these lands, cannot, as I suppose, be now known; though I am inclined to think he did. There were also lots laid out for pastors and teachers of the first rank. How Mr. Myles was supported after leaving the school, is not now known. Something was probably done for him, but not much. But whether this was by subscription, or by collection, or from the town treasury, is beyond our knowledge. The last is not however, likely. Whether the church increased, or remained stationary, or diminished, is a question which will not be likely to be answered.

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\* Backus says these records were destroyed by Dea. Richard Harding, as he was interested with the proprietors in retaining the Pastor's and Teachers' lands.

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In June, 1675, the Indian war commenced by disturbances from the Indians under king Philip, of Mount Hope. While the people were gone to meeting, on the 20th of the month, several provoking things were done, and in one case, an Indian was so insolent in taking things in a house without liberty, as to provoke the man to fire upon him and wound him. A messenger was, immediately, sent to Governor Winslow, at Plymouth, advising him of their danger. The governor made the most speedy preparation to afford protection for the unprotected inhabitants of Swansea, and this region. Several companies were called out and ordered on almost at once. A request was also immediately sent to Boston, for aid, which was at once responded to. In the meantime, the people were requested by the governor of Plymouth colony, to observe the next Thursday asa day of fasting and prayer.

While this church were observing the fast, the Indians were preparing to attack them on their return; fired upon them, and killed one and wounded others; and while two men were on their way for a surgeon, they were fired upon and killed. The same day six were killed at Mattapoiset, now Gardners neck.\* According to tradition, the first killed on his way from meeting was Eldad Kingsley. By this time the people in Swansea and Rehoboth were collected in garrisoned houses. About this time, the forces from Plymouth and Massachusetts had reached Swansea, and entrenched themselves at Mr. Myles' house, June 28; but as they reached there before night, twelve men, unwilling to lose any time, went over Myles' bridge, which was less than one quarter of a mile, to make observation, when they found eight or ten Indians, who fired upon them, and killed Wm. Hammond, and wounded corporal Belcher, killing his horse under him. This was a melancholy affair; but they brought away the dead and wounded with them, re-crossed the river, and fortified themselves with the army in the garrison house for the night. Next day they went on towards Mount Hope, over the bridge, and at Kickamuit they found the heads of eight Englishmen that the Indians had murdered, set upon poles by the side of the way. These they took down and buried. They went on to Mount Hope, but Philip had fled to the east side of Taunton river. Thus it will be seen that this town, and this church first felt the calamities of that war which spread such devastation over much of New England. It is said that one half of Swansea was burned. (History Rehoboth, pp. 85, 86. Church His. of Ph. War, edited by S. J. Drake, p. 34.) This war was, of course, a painful period. Mr. James Brown is said to have been very active in this war, and to have been very useful. Notwithstanding Swansea was so much affected by this war, I do not find in the Town Records a syllable respecting it.

Mr. Myles was obliged to have a great part in it, as his house was made a garrison. It appears that he was at expense, or that he advanced money, as money was afterwards refunded or paid, to him by the town.

Although we have nothing to enlighten us in relation to the particular state and progress of the church at this period, yet from the nature of the case, all must have been gloomy. Mr. Myles preached much of three years previous to 1679 at Boston, to good effect, and for a time there was a prospect of his removing there. This was a time of trial to our brethren at Boston, and Mr. M. was the means, with others, of increasing that church, so that they were on the point of becoming two bands. (See Winch. Hist. Dis., p. 16, and Backus.) It is probable that he had little for his support, as an enemy represents that he was starved to leave Swansea for Boston. Whether this church was supplied in Mr. Myles' absence is doubtful. About this time there was a question by the town whether the meeting house should be removed, and a vote was passed to remove it to the lower end of New Meadow neck, or what is now Tyler's Point.. This vote seems, however, never to have been carried into effect. (See the Haile Records, p. 28.) An acre of land was granted on the west side of Tyler's Point, to build a house for Mr. M., and John Allen, John Butterworth, and Hugh Cole were appointed a committee to hire a carpenter to build the house. (See H. Records, pp. 28, 29.)

While Mr. Myles was at Boston, Mr. John Allen, and Mr. John Brown were chosen to draw up a letter in the behalf of church and town, to be sent to Mr. John Myles, pastor of the church, and minister of the town, manifesting our desires of his return to us. Thomas

Easterbrook was chosen to convey the town's letter to Mr. Myles, at Boston." (Haile Rec, p. 36.)

\* Hub. Nar. p. 59, and Huch. Vol. 1, p. 5, as quoted by History of Rehoboth, p. 83.

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Roger Kinnicut is paid for the frame of Mr. M's house, (p. 35.) It appears that the plan of removing the first meeting house was abandoned, as, at a meeting legally warned, and the "Town being met together this, 30th day of September, 1679, it is voted and ordered that a meeting house of forty feet in length, and twenty-two feet in breadth, and sixteen feet between joints, be forthwith built, and a committee be chosen for the letting out of said work, and finishing the same, viz: John Allen, Hugh Cole, William Ingraham." (Haile Records, p. 41.) "March 29, 1680, it was voted that the meeting house be set up at the lower end of New Meadow neck, and that the committee for said house appoint the individual place." Oct. 9th, 1681 "That the committee first chosen for the building and finishing the meeting house, take care for the completing the same." (Haile Rec, p. 50.) The house for Mr. M. was built before the new meeting house, as in 1679, 25th, Feb., "It is voted and ordered that Mr. John Myles shall have the house built for him, to indemnify him for debts due him in the time of the Indian war, in full of his demands against them, and accepted by him." (See above, p. 42.) From the above record it appears that the place of public meeting was changed from its first place to the lower end of New Meadow neck, and that the minister went there too. It would seem that the town and the church recovered from the shock produced by the Indian war, and that the prospects of the church in 1680 and onward, were promising. There was then no other meeting in the town, embracing Warren, Barrington and Somerset. The population in the whole had doubtless become considerable, as their troublesome neighbors, the Indians, were gone. The place of the meeting house at Kelley's bridge was more central than any other point in the town, and was then called the place of trade. Near that spot the town of Warren has risen up.

In 1683, Feb. 3, Mr. Myles closed his labors on earth. He appears to have been a man of talents, and of respectable education. As a preacher he was more than ordinary, and in the very trying circumstances in which he was placed, he evinced that he was able to meet and overcome the difficulties of this life. He left a character that will be honored as long as Palmer River shall run. His ministry was thirty-eight years; his age is not known, but he was probably between sixty and seventy years old. It is presumed that no man knows where his body was laid, but likely in the grave yard nigh where his meeting house stood. I have been over the graves there, but no remembrance of him was to be seen. His wife was Ann Humphrey, but that is all we know of her. He had three children, John, Susannah, and Samuel, and probably more. John was a grown man when Swansea was founded. He had, as is probable, sons that had lands in Rehoboth (See Hist. of R., p. 129.) Of the daughter we know only the name. Samuel, as appears by his will and otherwise, was in college at Cambridge, at the time of his father's death. In 1684, he graduated and went to England, and after becoming A. M. at Oxford, he took Episcopal

orders, and came back to America, and settled as minister of Kings Chapel, Boston, in 1689, and died 1729.

Mr. Myles was so much esteemed that he preached part of the time for the Congregationalists in Rehoboth, notwithstanding the opposition to the Baptists at that time. (Hist. of Rehob., pp. 61, 62.) Mr. M. was once carried before the magistrate, when he presented to him Job 19-25, on which he was dismissed. Although we cannot speak with certainty, yet it is probable he was possessed of a pretty good property. From the death of Mr. Myles, thirty-four more years passed without records, and less of the history of this church is known, than during the life of Mr. M. But what can be found we will proceed to lay before our readers.

It would be interesting to know how large the church was in 1680, and who they were, but that we cannot know. The next that we know of the church, is, that in a little more than two years, Captain Samuel Luther was ordained their pastor. His ordination took place, July 22, 1685, by the assistance of Elders Emblen and Hull, of Boston. The names of some of the first members are on the Town Records for several years after the ordination of Elder Luther, especially Nicholas Tanner. They were evidently men of great stamina. Elder Luther's name is on the Town Records, and Proprietors Records from the incorporation of the town; and indeed his name is on the Rehoboth Records before that. In Swansea he sustained nearly every office the town or the proprietors had to bestow. He was called Sergeant for some time, and afterwards Captain. He was many years Selectman,

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Townsmen, Moderator, and on the most important committees on many subjects. Several years he was Deputy to the Legislature.

In the settlement of the Shawwomet and North purchase lands, he seems to have been principal. This, as appears, was a complicated business. After he became pastor of the church, his name is not frequently found on the Town Records, but it is in some important concerns. His long continuance in public business shows that he was capable of doing business, and that he was able to exert a great and permanent influence over men's minds. It is likely, though that is not known, that he was active in religious meetings and affairs. There is a strong presumption that he was a preacher at the death of Mr. Myles, and labored for the church till his ordination, as well as after. It was not usual in early times, so far as I know, to ordain ministers so soon as now. He continued the pastor for near thirty-two years, and died Dec. 20th, 1716, aged 80, and was buried at Kickamuit burying ground, where a stone is erected over his remains.

His residence was in that part of the town, though he had land laid off to him in several other places. At the commencement of his ministry, the meeting house was at the lower end of New Meadow neck, and the people from all parts of this then great town, met there. But some time during his ministry, at what exact time is not yet known, that part of the town which is now Harrington, set up a meeting for themselves, probably

about 1700. There is a tradition that there was some agreement about this separation, and the people in that part of the town took the Congregationalist form of religion. During his ministry the meeting house was removed from Kelly's bridge to the corner, as it is called, between Captain Cornell's tavern house, and the road that goes north to Rehoboth. This removal was probably about the time of the separation from Harrington. There is evidence from the Haile Records that the meeting house was removed before 1701, but how much before, I have not been able to ascertain. (Haile Records, 125.) About 1690 another Baptist church was formed in the easterly part of the town, which of course diverted those in that quarter from this church. The terms of communion in that church were more restricted than in this, which, perhaps, was the cause of the setting up of that church. It is presumed that a portion of Rehoboth north of the meeting house, as removed, attended this meeting before the change of location. Whether Elder Luther received much from the people, or supported himself, we cannot tell. It is likely that he received something from the people, and furnished what was wanted from his own resources, as all the ministers of this church have done. In 1704, Mr. Ephraim Wheaton, who resided at Rehoboth, remote from the meeting house N. W., and several miles from Elder Luther, was settled as his colleague. In 1683, the town was warned by the Court of Sessions that they must have a minister, or be prosecuted. After some hesitation, to avoid trouble, the town voted and chose Elder Samuel Luther for the minister of Swansea. (Town Rec. Vol. 1st, p. 19.) The church seems to have been prosperous to a considerable extent, during the whole of Elder Luther's ministry. In this time it is supposed that all the first members left the stage, men of whom the world were not worthy.

It is handed down by tradition that the present meeting house of this church was erected on the spot where it now stands, the year after Elder Luther's death, that is, in 1717. It is a singular fact that there is no existing record of its being built. In the year 1718, the records of the church begin. By these it appears that in 1723, an order was passed by the church for raising money to complete the payment for building the meeting house. (See Church Records, p. 224 )

By this it is evident that the house had been then recently built; and as they were then often long in finishing what they had begun, it is likely that 1717 was the year in which it was erected. It is not probable that there is another meeting house in this county that is so old, nor a Baptist meeting house in America. It is 41 1/2 feet long and 33 feet wide, about 22 feet between joints, with wide galleries on three sides. Originally it was seated below and above. It was not plastered till 1802, and was open to the roof. The timber of which it is built, is strong, massy oak, strongly braced. Till 1802 there was no porch, the stairs went up at the corners, opposite the pulpit, inside. There were three doors, or rather six, as they were all double. Whether the house was accommodated with a fire at first or not is not known, but as long ago as the memory of those now alive extends, there was a place on the women's side for burning coal to

accommodate them in 1764. Afterwards, perhaps sixty years ago, another place for the same purpose was prepared on the men's side. Had the house been tight, the people must all have been suffocated, but as it was the air was rendered tolerable.

With these remarks respecting the meeting house, we will go back to the time of the death of Elder Luther.

As we have no records previous to that time we cannot tell how large the church was, but we have found on the records as incidentally inseried, 58 names, 47 of which are men. From the number known it is conjectured that the whole number was near 200. Most of them were in Swansea, and that part of Rehoboth that lies north and northerly from our present place of worship. It is to be understood, however, that Swansea, after Barrington was set off as a town, embraced most or all of Warren and Somerset. As has been said, Elder Luther lived at Kickamuit, which is now the easterly part of Warren, and there, there is reason to believe, many of the members resided. It is likely that nearly half of the members were in Rehoboth. That part which is now Oak Swamp, was evidently connected with this church for worship, and much of that part lying on Palmer's Rirer on towards Orlean's Factory. But as there was no other Baptist church or meeting far and wide, all of this denomination within forty or fifty miles in all directions in Massachusetts, came here to join. There were some it is known from Middleborough and Bellingham before 1718, afterwards from Haverhill and Taunton, and it is likely from many other places.

[End of Part I]

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“History of the First Baptist Church of Swansea, Mass.”

By Rev. Arial Fisher, Pastor

Part II Embracing about 60 years

Elder Ephraim Wheaton, who on the death of Elder Luther, was sole pastor, resided about three and a half miles from the meeting house, a little northwest from where Lucas Wheaton, one of his descendants, now resides, his house being entirely demolished. He appears to have been a man who exerted a great and good influence on the church and on others. His ministry was eminently successful, as is known from 1718, and we presume it was so before. In about five years from that date, he baptized fifty, who united with the church. Of this revival he gave an account in a letter to Mr. Thomas Hollis, of London, an eminent Baptist, who wrote him an answer, with a present of books. During his ministry the church was exceedingly prosperous, though he had become aged. He baptized in the seventeen years of his ministry, of which we have any record, about one hundred, who became members of this church. He was a man of respectable property, and left four sons settled on different portions of his lands. His posterity is numerous and respectable; one of them an eminent physician in Providence, more than 80 years old; and one of them is a minister from the U. States to a Foreign Court. Judge Wheaton, of Norton, the Rev. Henry Jackson, of New Bedford, the present Governor of Rhode Island, and the Wheatons at Warren, and some of those who reside near live old homestead, all descended from him. He continued to discharge the duties of the ministry to some extent

to near the close of his life, although part of the time he was assisted by a colleague. It is handed down in the family connexion, as Dr. Wheaton sometime since informed me, that he went into the field to catch a coltish horse, and on attempting to take it, he was kicked in the lower part of his bowels and went to his house; as he went over the threshold he said he should never go out of it again, alive; and so it proved. He lived but a short time, and departed this life April 26, 1734, in the 75th year of his age. He was in his latter years quite corpulent. He was buried in the grave yard a short distance north of Dr. Samuel Bullock's residence in Rehoboth. A decent stone is erected over his grave.

Not long after the death of Elder Luther, Elder Wheaton desired the church to appoint some brethren to assist in conference meetings, especially as he lived at such a distance from the centre; and Deacon Harding and John Devotion were appointed to render the assistance needed. But this seems not to have been considered sufficient, for in 1719, the church did regularly proceed and choose John Devotion for their Elder and Pastor, to preach the word to them as a colleague with Elder Wheaton. He received a nearly unanimous vote, about sixty. But he did not accept their choice, or enter on the work of preaching at all. He was employed in keeping a town school near or quite thirty years, and was an efficient member of the church. Elder W. seems to have continued to feel the need of help, and some provision was made, but only temporary. Mr. Comer\* preached here about three months, and then left for Newport, in 1725. In 1729, arrangements were made with Rev. John Callender to settle with this church, and he accepted the proposals made to him. The sum offered him is not stated, but they insured him an honorable support. He preached to this people about two years without ordination, and married the daughter of Deacon Richard Harding, and then went to Newport and became pastor of the First Baptist Church in that place, being ordained Oct. 18, 1731. He was the author of the celebrated Century Sermon, containing, the most authentic information respecting the early history of Rhode Island. He was a man of public education, and died aged forty-two. He was eminent in his day. After, his removal from this place, Elder Wheaton was again alone till a short time before his death, when Mr. Sannel Maxwell was employed as an assistant, and April 18, 1733, was ordained the pastor of the church with Mr. W. It appears by the records, that Elder Henry Sweeting was a member of this church for some years before 1730, and resided in the place. He was not, however, so far as appears, employed here as a preacher, for what reason is unknown. He might have been unable to preach. It is evident that he was a man of considerable property and standing. In 1725, he made a present to the church of four pounds, to be committed

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\* Mr. Comer preached here his first sermon May 9, 1725; a little short of twenty-one.

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to the deacons, three to Deacon Harding, and one to Deacon Thorn as, to be kept till it had been sufficiently increased to make it enough for the purchase of furniture for the Lord's table. We hear nothing further of it till 1734, Jan. 6, when Deacon Jonathan Kingsley received the three pounds from Deacon Harding, and laid it out according to the direction of the donor. Whether all the furniture now in possession of the church was

procured then or not, I am unable to say; there is one cup of silver, weighing about six ounces, avoirdupois; the rest is pewter. On the bottom of the silver cup are the letters H. S. in a line, with a crown below them, and under that the letter C.

In 1718, John Thomas and Richard Harding were elected Deacons of this church, and soon after ordained, with Nathaniel Luther, who, as appears, was chosen before. One of them, Richard Harding, took offence, probably in relation to the church lands, which he attempted to take from the church, as will be more fully shown hereafter, and was put out of his office, and probably out of the church, though of that there is no certain record. The other two died in the discharge of their holy trust.

During Elder W's ministry, by the request of the First Baptist Church in Newport, a large committee was sent to assist them in adjusting some differences which had arisen among them. Of this whole transaction there are full records on the church book. From the number sent, it would seem that this church then contained much strength. Two ministers, two deacons, and eleven brethren, went as a committee, and did what they could to set things aright in that church.

In 1731, the members of this church, living in that part of Rehoboth called Oak Swamp, petitioned the church for liberty to worship by themselves, and ultimately to become a church. This petition was granted, and on Jan. 20 1732, they were regularly constituted into a Baptist church in fellowship with this church. For this purpose sixteen brethren and eighteen sisters were dismissed from this body. How many more there were we cannot say. Elder Comer, and probably his wife, were united in this movement, so that there might have been forty or more at the outset. Elder Corner was installed their pastor Jan. 26, the next Wednesday after; and about this time they erected a meeting house, so that their prospects must have been very flattering. Elder C. was a man of gifts and respectable education, united with great seriousness and pious feeling. Mr. Wheaton, though more than seventy years old, preached at his installation, and gave the right hand of fellowship. Not long after the organization of the church, nine more were dismissed to join this new body, three brethren and six sisters. The removal of so many members must have made quite a draft from the old church, but they were numerous and strong still. After the organization of the Rehoboth church, there was still left, as is nearly certain one hundred and fifty, and perhaps more.

In the covenant of this church, as it was when first adopted, there was one paragraph protesting against all separations from such as were hopeful members of Chiist, and expressing a willingness and desire to hold communion with all such. By this article they seem to have expected that the churches in the Colony would have been willing to acknowledge them as a church of Christ, and so to have treated them; but in that they were disappointed. After a length of time, if not from the beginning, the neighboring churches refused to acknowledge them as a church of Christ, rejecting some of their members who desired to enjoy privileges with them, and took into their bosom excluded, disorderly members of this body. During Elder Wheaton's ministry, but at what exact date is not known, an important alteration was made in that part to which we have referred. The fact that Pedobaptists were seeking their injury, instead of wishing their fellowship, led this church to question whether they were acting on right principles. In order to be set

right, they called a council from the churches in Providence, Newport, and Boston, which resulted in the alteration then made. "These elders and messengers did declare, that from that forward, we should keep and maintain a strict and entire communion according to the rules of God's word, set up our stand there, which thing we then did, and by the grace of God given to us, have ever since been in the practice of, and for the reasons above written, do now declare, that we neither can nor will have church communion with any but such as are saints by being initiated into the church, being baptized according to the order of the gospel upon a profession of their repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and

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with our communion thus with each other, we hope through the mercy of God in Christ Jesus to usward, that we have and shall have continued unto us for ever, our fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, and with the Holy Ghost." To this document as amended, Elder Wheaton's name is signed, with seven others.

It appears by the Covenant as when first adopted and its alteration, that there was then a very different feeling toward Baptists by other denonjinations from what there is now. Then, while Baptists would gladly have communed with them, but they would not permit them to commune with them, but now, when Baptists do not think it consistent to commune with other denominations, they are almost angry with us because we cannot do it. We are led from, the facts in the case to half suspect that if it were not a convenient string to harp upon, that they would have no great hankering to commune with us now.

On the death of Mr. Wheaton, Mr. Maxwell became sole pastor. For some time he appears to have been quite successful in his ministry, so that in the six years that he was the pastor of this church, he baptized about fifty. In 1738 he became a Sabbatarian. As this was not the faith of this church, it was thought improper to continue him in the pastoral office. "After having the, subject under consideration for several months, April 15, 1739, being church meeting day, then, according to the church's agreement on March the first, the church came together, and after solemn prayer to God for his guidance and direction. Elder Maxwell called for a written vote to know, whether they would grant him his request; then, to dismiss him from the office of an elder; the church then brought in their votes, and when the votes were told by Mr. Maxwell and others, he was dismissed from his office in the church of Swansea by a major vote of the church for two reasons: 1. For his unsteadiness in his conduct. 2. For changing his opinion to keep the seventh day, contrary to the faith and constitution of this church. 3. In answer to his urgent request." N. B. The last reason appears to have been entered afterwards.

Mr. Maxwell was unsettled in his mind at Newport, before he came here. At one time he was about to preach, and then he gave it up; then he was about to join the Pedobaptists, and then he came back; and so he continued, to be fluctuating.

He was three or four years pastor of the church in Rehoboth, and lived to old age. Mr. Maxwell was thought a pious man, but, being unsteady in character, he occasioned much unhappiness in the churches with which he was connected.

During Mr. Maxwell's ministry, the brethren of this church residing at Bellingham, were permitted, in 1736, to hold meetings as a branch of this body, which they did. The year after, 1737, they were formed into a regular church; but the number that went forth from this church is nowhere stated; probably not more than a dozen. That was the second church that was formed from this body.

For two or three years, the church were without a pastor; but at length they succeeded in securing the labors of Elder Benjamin Harrington for their minister. He was from Canterbury, Conn. He first visited this place April 18, 1742, and after making another visit in May, he moved his family to this place, and on the first day of July, the church elected him their pastor. On the 29th of the same July, the congregation met, and concurred unanimously in the choice of the church. With the help of Rev. John Callender, of Newport, and delegates with him, he was installed August 15, 1742. He was a man of more than ordinary talents in preaching, so that the house was unusually full.

Many were added to the church under his ministry, but at length his character suffered from reports that he was guilty of unchaste conduct, which much sunk his influence. Whether there was ground for these suspicions or not cannot now be told, but the impression handed down from that time is, that he was guilty. At any rate, he left the place without having the thing properly cleared up. He afterwards returned, and was dismissed from his office "May 3, 1750, for two reasons: 1. For his misconduct. 2. For going away and leaving the church which he had taken the charge of." He labored for this people about six years, in that time he baptized about eighty, who became members of this church.

In 1725, Jonathan Kingsley and Benjamin Cole were elected to the office of deacons. These men served, for aught that appears to the contrary, long and honorably in the office they filled, and died in old age; Deacon Kingsley in 1760, Deacon Cole in 1748. They discharged very

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important trusts for the church in their day and generation. In the same year the above brethren were deacons Brother John Allen made a donation to the church of ten pounds, and Brother Francis Wilson five pounds, for general purposes. In 1738, ten pounds was given by Brother James Paddock, the use of it for the poor of the church.

In March, 1748 Mr. Jabez Wood, of Middleborough, a member of this church, having commenced preaching, was requested to supply the pulpit for the present although Mr. Harrington had gone from here, yet he had not been dismissed. Mr. Wood supplied the church about three years and a half before he was ordained. In this time it seems there was much question whether he was the man they needed. What was the principal reason

for this doubt cannot perhaps be now fully known; but some thought him unsound in doctrine, and some that he took undue measures to obtain the place. After considerable altercation, he was ordained September 5, 1751, and became pastor of the church. The ministers sent to attend his ordination, were Elders Marsh of Sutton, Upham, and Round. Up to this time this church had been prosperous. The ministers had for the most part been able men; and Calvinistic in their views of religion; But Mr. Wood was not Calvinistic, holding, at least in part, Arminian doctrine. His talents were moderate. He, was not chosen by a unanimous vote, either in church or congregation, so that there were those who held back. Mr. W. was grandson to Thomas Nelson, of Middleborough, who had become a member of this church before 1718.

He was so much dissatisfied with his settlement there, that he removed his standing from this church to Rehboth. Backus says he thought Mr. Wood used deceitful measures to get the place here, because there was a farm. This Thomas Nelson was the ancestor of the late Wm. Nelson, Samuel Nelson, Ebenezer Nelson, and Dr. Thomas Nelson, who died at Bristol, R. I., a few years since. Stephen S. Nelson, now resident of Amherst, and Ebenezer Nelson, the present pastor of the Central Baptist church in Middleborough. The three first named were brothers; and highly respectable ministers in their day. Others, besides Father Nelson, left this church and joined to others. At length, however, the church went on, and Mr. Wood continued his pastoral office till 1799 when he was dismissed. He was somewhat, successful in his work, for in about three or four years, between thirty and forty were added to the church under his ministry in which time he was settled.

In 1759, members that had gone out from this church to Swago, N. Y. or probably what is now called Oswego, were with others, formed into a church by the help of Elder Wood, and Deacon Robert Wheaton and Amos Thomas, delegates with him, and Ephraim Bullock and Coomer Bullock, were ordained as their ministers. This was the third church that went out from this.

October 4, 1764, twenty-four brethren, and sisters were dismissed to form a church at Warren, south of us, and they with others, were regularly organized in gospel order, and Rev. James Manning was settled as their pastor. All the circumstances of this secession were happy, as is evident from the records. The removal of so many valuable members, of course weakened us, but still the church went on, and to some extent prospered.

In consequence of the death of the former deacons, they were now without those necessary officers to supply this deficiency. August 6, 1752, Robert Wheaton and Thomas Peck were chosen to the office of deacons. Deacon Peck continued to discharge the duties of his office, till his death, 1770. He was also useful in expounding the scriptures, so that by the vote of the church, he carried on worship in the absence of the pastor, for a length of time. His wife was a woman of great worth; she was a long time a midwife, and survived her husband more than thirty years, to upwards of ninety. She assisted at the birth of about three thousand children, and was remarkably successful. Deacon Wheaton was highly esteemed, too, in his day. He lived to a great age, and died Nov. 22, 1780, aged 92. He was the son of Elder Wheaton.

Brother Benjamin Kingsley, a distinguished member of this church, died April 19, 1767, aged 67. He kept the records of the church for several years, which are valuable. Deacon Beck took the book on his election but he survived only three years, when his place as clerk and deacon was supplied by the choice of Nicholas Thomas, 1770.

In 1771, Deacon N. Thomas was removed from his sphere of usefulness on earth, to rest with God. The loss of him

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and Deacon Peck so recently, must have been greatly felt. The circumstance that they lived near the meeting house, was favorable to their usefulness while living, and to the loss felt when gone. Deacon Thomas remembered the church when he left it, by leaving his land on the north side of the great road leading from Providence to Fall River, to the use of the ministry, with some money, which his widow increased on her death, about twenty years after, by twenty pounds.

On Deacon Thomas's decease, Brother David Kingsley was elected clerk. This office he sustained near fifty years. He was also, in 1776, chosen Deacon, which office he held more than fifty years. He died Oct. 25, 1830, aged 92. In 1771, Thomas Kingsley was chosen deacon; he held this office till his death, in 1809, aged 83. In 1772, Aaron Barney was chosen deacon, but he soon moved away, and David Kingsley was chosen to supply his place.

In 1776, by the request of the First Baptist church in Sutton, Elder Wood, Deacon Thomas Kingsley, Jonathan Cole, Beriah Willis, and Stephen Bullock, went and made them a friendly visit. They found them with a pastor travelling in the truth and prospering. This church had from the first maintained a friendly connexion with the brethren at Sutton. It was not long, however, before they had trouble with their pastor, Jeremiah Barstow, and this church passed a vote that they would not even hold transient communion with him.

In those days, when Baptists were rare, such intercourse as is described above, was precious. We can now scarcely understand its value.

In 1778, three brethren and two sisters, members of this church, having removed their residence to Guilford, Vt., desired letters of dismissal to join with others in that place to organize a church. The church having satisfied themselves of the soundness of the faith and practice of the brethren about to be constituted into a church, dismissed the five members according to their request.

During Elder Woods' ministry, there was a difficulty with the church in Rehoboth, and this church did not commune with that for a time. Attempts were made to adjust the difficulty, and at length it was partially settled; but the roots sprang up in a growth of bitterness. At first, the church in Rehoboth had received an excluded member, which

gave great grief to this church. Ultimately the thing died away, and the remains of that church joined here. From 1750, onward, there was a considerable number joined this church from Freetown. These afterwards, as is probable, united with others in forming what is now Fall River church. A number of these were of the name of Boomer. ♦ the late Elder James Boomer, of Charlton, and his son, Job Burdon Boomer, for more than twenty years pastor of a church in Sutton, and another pastor of the south Baptist church in Wrentham, were descendants from those once members in this church. When on the north, within about three miles, in Rehoboth, there was a Baptist church, and within three miles, in Warren, on the south, was another, and on the east, a Six Principle Baptist church, within about two miles, it might be expected that the prospects of this church would become less promising, and so it was. When it is also considered that Mr. Wood was not a man of more than ordinary talent in any respect, and not much in favor of the great doctrines of grace, on which our churches rest, it is not strange that the church declined. After having served this church more than thirty years, in 1779 he vacated the place, and removed to Guilford, in Vermont, where he died in 1794. He sustained a good religious character, and did much good in this place. The number of members in the church when he left it, is not known, as no list of members has ever been kept, and the alterations, except by baptism, were never kept with any thing like accuracy. Mr. Wood baptized during his ministry, including a few by others before he was ordained, and after, about one hundred and thirty-one.

There may not be a more suitable place in this history, to note a few things which are connected with the affairs of the church, though they make no direct part of its history. It was the design of the early settlers of this colony, as well as several others, to require every town to be furnished with the ministry of the gospel at the expense of the inhabitants. The Massachusetts was more rigid in this thing than the Plymouth, so that when this colony was united to Massachusetts, this thing was more hardly [heartily?] urged than before. This town of Swansea having been settled mostly under the influence of Baptists, it was from its earliest settlement designed to be kept clear from every thing like coercion

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in religion. The principle on which it commenced, was that the ministration of the gospel was essential to the best interests of mankind; but it was held that this ministration should be sustained by the voluntary contributions of its friends. This principle has been maintained in the town from the first till now. There was an attempt made by the government, early in the 18th century, to compel the town to receive such a ministry as suited the government of the state. To prevent this, the church proposed to the town to receive Mr. Luther, and afterwards Mr. Wheaton, Mr. Maxwell, Mr. Harrington, and Mr. Wood as their ministers, that thereby they might escape the penalties of the law. At first the town hesitated, but at length this was thought the wisest course, and they were respectively elected ministers of the town. In taking this course, the ministers were brought to say in writing, that they did not consider the town under any obligation to do

any thing towards their support. Several of these documents are on the records of the town.

But the powers that be were not exactly satisfied with this, and a complaint was made in one or more cases against the town, and the Court of Sessions summoned them to answer to this complaint, and they appeared by their officers, before the Court at Bristol, where they showed that they had a minister according to law. Upon this they were dismissed on paying the cost. So the minister of the other Baptist church was one or more times received as the town minister on the same condition. Most were doubtless conscientious in this thing, while some found an excuse for covetousness and looseness in general. This plan of operation succeeded so effectually that no money was ever raised by the town for the support of ministers. After that part of Swansea, which is now Barrington, set up a meeting by themselves, they applied to the town for money to pay their minister, or liberty to be a town by themselves, but this application was rejected. They did, however, succeed in being constituted into a town in 1719,\* and managed their affairs in their own way. Those members who lived in the neighboring town of Reboboth, did not so easily escape. In 1729 Ephraim Wheaton, junior, son of Elder Wheaton, Obadiah Bowen, Azarikim Pierce, Jonathan Thurber, Jeremiah Ormsbee, Squire Wheeler, David Bullock, Samuel Goff, Joseph Bowen, James Hicks, Seth Gurney, Edmond Ingalls, Benj. Ingalls, Ephraim Martin, Mial Pierce, Samuel Thurber, Wm. Wheeler, Philip Wheeler, Gideon Hammond, Jeremiah Ormsbee, Jr., Ephraim Martin, Jr., John Jones, James Lewis, Thomas Horton, Richard Round, Jotham Carpenter, Samuel Bullock, Richard Bullock, with two Quakers, and two Episcopalians, were imprisoned in Bristol jail, most of them March 3d. They sent a petition to the governor for relief, to which he gave heed, and ordered the chief justice of the county court, Seth Williams, to look into the affair, and if he could do it, to let them have their liberty. He went to Bristol, but afforded little hope to the prisoners. Their circumstances were painful, and their friends paid the taxes, and they went home. While they were in jail, Mr. Comer, who was then at Newport, came and visited them, and preached to them in prison, March 11, 1729. Lest further complaints should be sent to England, the Massachusetts Legislature so altered their law, that the polls and estates of dissenters should be exempted from taxes to other ministers. But as if to harass their victims, this law was to extend only to 1733.+ While we call to recollection these sufferings of our fathers, we ought to be unfeignedly thankful that we have fallen upon better times.

Another thing which claims our attttion, is lands and other property belonging to the church. The origin of these funds was in the pastor's ami teacher's lands, laid out by the town of Swansea. The proprietors were divided into three ranks. Those in the first rank were to receive three acres as often as those in the second rank received two acres, and the third one acre. The pastor was reckoned in the first rank, and so was the teacher. As different parts of the town were surveyed off to the proprietors, the proper share was set off for ministerial lands. The lands so set oil amounted to several hundred acres, scattered over differ, nt parts of the town, sometimes in six acre lots, and in others larger ones. At first these were not very valuable, and produced either little or nothmg, but as the land

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\* At this time Massachusetts held the towns of Barrington, Warren, Bristol, Tiverton, and Little Compton, now in R. I., and the courts for this county were held at Bristol.

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in the town was taken up and became valuable, these lands increased in value. Lying as they did, in different places, they were liable to be trespassed upon, and were trespassed upon to a great extent. This church, as is probable, at first did not take possession of them. Their first ministers were proprietors in the first rank, and did not need the land, as they had all they wanted themselves. Their third minister, Mr. Wheaton, lived, as has been stated, in Rehoboth, and had extensive lands, which made it undesirable for him to be possessor of the pastor's and teacher's lands in Swansea.

These lands not taken up and occupied at first, the proprietors had kept possession of them, and in some cases, if not all, the lands were leased out by them. Deacon Harding occupied the present farm of the church, called the sixty acre lot, under the proprietors. There seems to have been some doubt whether the proprietors could hold these lands, even among themselves, as, March 10, 1720, at a regular meeting, they appointed a committee of five,\* to search and see if these lands have ever been legally appropriated to the support of the ministry. In case no such appropriation had been made, they would of course belong to the proprietors. This committee reported that they had examined the records, and found to their satisfaction that the proprietors had never alienated their lands to pastors and teachers: this report the proprietors accepted. Five of the proprietors protested against the acceptance of that report. Their names were Benj. Carpenter, Thomas Easterbrooks, John Winnecut, Doct. Job Easterbrooks, and Barnard Haile.

It is presumed by what followed, that many questioned the legality of this measure. Why deacon Harding and Mr. Butterworth, who were members of the church, should have untied in such a report, we cannot certainly know. Feb. 1721, the church appointed a committee to consult with the church in Barrington, on a division of these lands between this church and that, and also "to take all lawful methods for the confirming the same to each of the said churches, as shall be by said committee agreed upon." What may seem strange, two of the proprietors' committee were on this committee, - deacon Harding and J. Butterworth. This committee, as is probable, acted as they were directed, but how far we know not. Feb. 1, 1722, the church appointed these two brethren, with Hezekiah Luther, to meet a committee of the town, to separate the school lands from the ministerial lands. Previous to that it appears that they were together. From this date to 1729, things were stationary, so far as is known from the records; then the church noo doubt from kind motives, gave written assurances to deacon Harding that he should not be suddenly turned off from the farm on which he lived, provided it should prove to belong to the church. The next year, May 7, 1730, another committee was appointed, consisting of John Round, John Martin, Lemuel Millard, Isaac Wheaton, and John Kinglsey, to take possession of the pastor's and teacher's lands, to rent them, remove encumbrances, and render them profitable in the support of the ministry. It would appear that this committee was not idle, for in July following, three of the above committee, viz: John Round, John Martin, and John Kinglsey were appointed agents to take legal measures to eject Richard Harding from the farm which he then had in possession. The courts were then held in

Bristol, and there the said Harding was cited before the court of common pleas. The case was tried before the lower court, and decided in favor of the church, and being carried up to the supreme court, was decided in like manner, as will be seen by the following account of it, from the 233d page of the church Book of Records.

"The church having chosen a committee of five men, and impowered them to act for and in behalf of ye pastor and church in that matter about the pastor's and teacher's land, as may be seen page 231, the committee commenced an action of trespass and ejectment against Mr. Richard Harding, who lived on a sixty acre lot, laid out and recorded a pastor's lot; the said Harding having a lease from the proprietors of Swansea; the said action to be heard and tryed at the Inferior Court of Common Pleas, held at Bristol, for the county of Bristol, on the second Tuesday of July, 1730, and the case being heard and tryed, the church by their agents recovered judgment, the proprietors appeal to ye Supreme Court, to be held at Bristol, ye second Tuesday of September next, and there at said court, the case being heard and tryed, the church recovered

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\* This committee consisted of Joseph Butterworth, Richard Harding, Joseph Winslow, Pelatinn Morse, and Wm. Salisbury.

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judgment for the possession of the sixty acres of land sued for, and cost of suit; and accordingly on the third day of November next after, the Sheriff came and gave possession to said committee by turf and twig."

This decision of the court settled the question of title to the pastor's and teacher's lands. The church did, notwithstanding all the trouble and cost to which they had been subjected in getting possession of their just rights, agree to give to deacon Harding one hundred and twenty-five pounds as a compensation for his betterments, as estimated by men appointed for that purpose. There was farther action of the church in getting the school lands separated from the ministerial lands, and effecting a division between this church and that at Barrington. This church by agreement retained three-fifths, and Barrington had the other two-fifths. Ultimately the lands at Barrington were bought by this church for forty-five pounds, ten shillings. This took place in July, 1745. (See Records, pp. 245 and 246.)

There have been some members of the church who have been willing to add something to its funds. We have already said that Elder Henry Sweeting made a donation to the church for the purchase of communion furniture.

Brethren John Allen and Francis Wilson made donations to the church, the first of ten pounds, the latter five pounds. These donations were appropriated towards the payment of the one hundred and twenty-five pounds given deacon Harding for betterments.

About 1738, James Paddock gave ten pounds for the use of the poor of the church. This sum was ordered to be put out to interest, that the income might be used for the object for which it was given. This fund is not now in existence, but what has become of

it cannot be ascertained. In 1742 liberty was petitioned from the general court to sell the wild lands belonging to the church. This liberty was probably given, though there is no record of their sale. The object was, or should have been, to furnish a maintenance for the minister. But the avails were sometimes used for other purposes. The meeting house was repaired from the rents of the lands in 1740, and in 1752 the board of the council convened for the ordination of Mr. Wood, was paid out of the same means.

We have already had occasion to say that the lands for the minister's support were sometimes trespassed upon. This was done not only by men making no pretensions to religion, but by the members of the church, and this wrong was persisted in, as is evident from the action of the church in relation to them. It is painful to record such things, but the faithful historian is bound to tell the whole truth. Such deeds instead of being less sinful in men professing to be christians, are many fold worse. And in some other ways there has been a disposition manifested to pervert these sacred funds to other purposes than those for which they were given.

Jan. 7, 1748, liberty was given to the neighbors to set a school house on the ministerial land, on the east end of the piece now owned by Mr. Watson.

In 1755 the general court was petitioned to appoint some one to sign the deeds of lands sold by the church. It is likely that the petition was granted, though, that is not on record.

In October of that year a three cornered lot was sold, and the avails were appropriated to the purchase of one thousand chesnut rails to put on the farm.

May 6, 1756, the church voted that so much of the interest of the church's money be used as will pay Walter Haile for doctering sister Elizabeth Busher, in the year 1755.

In the year 1756, the church directed their agents to prosecute John Cole and others for trespass.

Sep. 7, 1758, there being some contention with some of the inhabitants of Warren, about a road across the church lands. Although the church considered this contention unreasonable, yet they purchased a strip of land for a road and gave it to them, to save any farther trouble.

Feb. 7, 1760, the interest on the eighty pounds was voted to Elder Wood, to buy his wood. This appears to be the first interest appropriated to the use of the minister. And this is the first account we have of the eighty pounds, it doubtless arose from sales of lands.

Feb. 5, 1761, the church voted to appropriate the interest on the money arising from the sales of lands, divided to Barrington, and afterwards bought by this church, and since sold, to pay the debt remaining due for repairing the meeting house.

July 7, 1763, the church voted to repair the parsonage house out of the same interest.

June 6, 1765, voted to sell seventeen rods off from the south end of the meeting

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house lot for four dollars, to Joseph Sanders, and the money to be put at interest. This sale was made as voted.

The interest of the eighty pounds was appropriated to the Elder four or five years, and he probably had it as long as he was the pastor of the church, though it is not recorded.

Many years ago the town presumed to vote to take the pastor's and teacher's lands into their hands and appointed a committee to rent them out and divide the avails of them equally between this church, Barrington church, and the east Baptist church in Swansea. A protest was entered against this proceeding, signed by the members of this church, and the congregation connected with them. In this protest the signers state that these lands were by a decision of court declared to belong to this church. Whether this protest convinced the town of their error or not, is not now known; but they never carried their vote into effect. Since that time the possession of the church has been peaceable.

March 2, 1780, the church voted that the interest on the eighty pounds be paid to Elder Charles Thompson, as he was then pastor of the church.

May 1, 1783, the church voted to sell their land on Sisson's Neck. In accordance with this order, that land was sold for one hundred and thirty-five dollars, to David Barton.

In the year 1784, the parsonage house having become very much out of order, it was thought advisable to take down the old kitchen and the chimney, and build the chimney anew, and put up a linter the whole length of the house, in which there might be a kitchen and some other necessary rooms. Brethren Andrew Cole, Benj. Martin, and David Kingsley were appointed to attend to that business. This committee attended to the business committed to them, as is understood from tradition, and from the appointment of a committee to settle with them, Dec. 1785. The expense was seventeen pounds, sixteen shillings, and six pence, nearly sixty dollars. This was advanced by a few brethren, and they were paid as the interest came due on certain moneys set apart for the repairing of the parsonage buildings. The church do not seem to have thought of giving a dollar out of their own purses.

Aug. 6, 1789, the notes of the church in the hands of their committee, amounting to two hundred and eighty-five pounds, twelve shillings, and nine pence, or nine hundred and fifty-two dollars, twelve and a half cents were put into the hands of Elisha Burr, that he might collect the interest, and pay over to Mr. Thompson.

Deacon Nicholas Thomas, who died 1771, left by will the land now owned by the church, lying on the north side of the road leading from Providence to Fall River, and the lot now owned by David Kingsley, which lies south of his house and barn. But with this

reserve: that his widow should occupy that part which is now the church's property, during her life, and that Scipio Brayton, a colored man, who had been a slave to deacon Thomas, should occupy the rest during his life, and have a cord and a half of wood a year besides. The land in the hands of the widow came into the hands of the church on her demise, in 1791, and the other part on the death of the colored man, in 1815. On the death of the widow Thomas, they received of her executor, Judge Stephen Bullock, twenty pounds bequeathed by her to the church, and fifteen pounds from the will of Deacon Thomas, which was to come to the church on the death of his widow, making in all thirty-five pounds, or one hundred and sixteen dollars, sixty-seven cents. The land and the interest on the money were voted to Elder Thompson. Thus it appears that in 1792, the church had, besides much more land than they now have, one thousand and sixty-eight dollars, sixty-seven cents.

Oct. 6, 1808, the buildings on the ministerial farm being out of repair, a committee was appointed to make such repairs as were necessary. This was after Mr. Northup had left them. The sum expended is not stated, but the expense was paid out of the interest on funded money.

Oct. 3, 1811, the church voted that Stephen Bullock dispose of wood on a part of the farm, the locust trees, and the old barn, and erect a new one.

Oct. 1, 1813, the barn being completed, a committee of the church settled with Stephen Bullock for building it. The cost is not stated. The barn is thirty feet long and twenty-two feet wide.

In 1825, the parsonage house was taken down, and a new house erected, thirty-four feet long, twenty-seven feet wide, and one story high, at a cost of five hundred dollars. Before this, the Cole farm, as it was called, adjoining this farm, was purchased for eight hundred and fifty dollars, and held several years, when it was sold for five hundred and twenty-five dollars.

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About two hundred dollars was lost that had been lent to deacon Thomas Kingsley. In 1836 a lot of wood was sold, with the avails of which the house was painted and repaired, and some other betterments were made. In the winter of 1843 a wood and chaise house was erected, at a cost of about sixty dollars. The fund in money is now about three hundred and thirty dollars. The farm with its appurtenances is worth about twenty-five hundred dollars. It is likely that with better management the church might now have been worth five thousand dollars or more.

[End of Part II]

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PART III Concluded

Mr. Wood left this church about 1779, the precise time not being on record. The church at that time was in a low state, and much reduced in numbers. This was in the heat of the revolutionary war, when the whole country was in perilous circumstances, and this people was not exempt. But those nearer the sea-shore felt the calamities of war more than those in the interior. Warren experienced great inconvenience from this cause as early as 1777, so that the Rev. Charles Thompson, who had been the pastor of that church five or six years, was under the necessity of leaving the place. The church, which had been prosperous under the Rev. James Manning, their first minister, till he removed to Providence, on the removal of the college to that town, in 1770, and under Mr. Thompson, who commenced his ministry there in the winter of 1770-71, till the calamities of the war scattered the church, for safety, and compelled the minister to quit the place. "On the 25th day of May, 1778, a party of British troops from R. I., made an excursion, and came to Warren, when after doing considerable damage to the inhabitants, burnt the meeting house and parsonage to the ground." See Rec. of Warren ch. p. 29, vol. 1.

The members of the church that remained not being in circumstances to maintain their worship in their scattered and depressed state, proposed to come up here and enjoy privileges with this church till they should be able to sustain a meeting in Warren as before; this proposal was accepted, and the brethren in that manner joined with this church. Mr. Thompson at this time was a chaplain in the American army. But he was at home at Warren at the time of the burning of the meeting house and the parsonage house, and was taken prisoner and carried to Newport, where he was kept about a month, when he was released, he knew not how. After he had temporarily resided at Ashford, Con., and preached for a time at several places, he was settled over this church in the fall of 1779. The date of his reception into this church as a member and pastor, is Oct. 7, 1779. The brethren at Warren had probably encouraged this settlement. Mr. Thompson now found himself among his former brethren, and entered upon the duties of his office in favorable circumstances. The accession of help from Warren, and the settlement of a minister so deservedly eminent, put new life into this church. The Lord evidently came with Mr. T., as he baptized one only three days after his election as pastor, and two more before the 1st of Jan., 1780. During that winter following there was a great revival of religion, which continued, more or less, through the year 1780. This has been called the year of the great revival, not only in this church, but throughout the country. Those that remain speak of that revival with great interest. Those baptized were of various ages, from youth to old age. The number baptized in 1780 was sixty-seven, and 1781 five more, making to the end of that year just seventy-five: of these thirty-five were men, and forty women. From twenty-five to thirty of these were from Warren, about half of the rest were from Rehoboth, with a few from other places, and the rest from Swansea. Among those baptized was the wife of the pastor, March 14, 1780. Besides those baptized by Elder T., there were seven others added to the church up to Jan., 1782. During the year 1780, the remains of Elder John Hix's church joined this church, in the same manner as the Warren brethren had done. This church was formed about 1762, and settled Elder John Hix their pastor at that time. It was raised up in consequence of the bad state of the church that had been formed under Elder Comer. Elder H. was a sound Calvinistic preacher, and the church at its organization was with him. But in 1771 a great revival

took place, in which he baptized sixty, and Rev. Ethan Winchester, who afterwards became a Restorationist, twenty more while he was sick, when new terms of communion were introduced, called open communion, which divided the church, and left Elder John Hix's part weak. His son, Jacob Hix, was ordained over the other party. The part that adhered to Elder John Hix

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were those who joined here, as above slated. The last member of that church was the late Joseph Pierce, who died July, 1840, upwards of eighty years old. He had been a consistent christian for sixty-nine years, and died in hope of eternal life. Taking the church as it was when Mr, Thompson became its pastor, those from Warren and Elder Hix's churches, and the newly added members, it was in 1781 large, and in some respects strong. There is no means of knowing the exact number, but there must have been nearly or quite two hundred, including the Warren and Rehoboth members. In the years 1782-3 only six were added to the church. For five or six years, to 1789, nearly six years, not one was added to the church. This must have been a dark time, and especially so, as in 1786 the Warren brethren went back, were reorganized, built them a meeting house, and enjoyed the preaching of the gospel, and as there were many other diminutions by death and otherwise. Those who went back to Warren, who had put themselves under the care of this church, were seventeen, and those dismissed as members were eleven, making twenty-eight. During the great revival the congregation in Swansea was large, but in 1784 to 1789 it was frequently small, and sometimes discouragingly small. In 1789 the Lord was pleased in great mercy again to appear to build up Zion. In that year fifty-four were baptized, which encouraged the hearts of the pastor and the church. The number that survive who joined in this revival is very small, and those in 1780 still less. Of those who came into the church in the revival of 1789, twenty were males, and thirty-four females. This was a very interesting revival of religion, and added greatly to the strength of the church, though it was not as powerful as that of 1780. It seems that a night succeeded this day of light and joy, as from Nov. 22, 1789 to Oct. 19, 1791, nearly two years, there was not a member added to the church, and then only one, when the darkness continued till Dec. 7, 1794, more than three years more, without one addition. There was then one solitary baptism of a man from Freetown, quite at a distance from this church. It was then nearly two years more before there was another baptism. In 1795 there was one addition, probably by letter, though that is not said. In the latter part of 1796, three were added by baptism. From this time to the commencement of 1801, twelve were baptized, and one by letter. Although there was something in this time to encourage, yet it was the day of small things. No doubt Mr. Thompson had many days of discouragement, but he persevered, and again the Lord appeared for his people. The year 1801 was a year of release, a year of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. In that year twenty-six were baptized and admitted to the church. The work of the Lord during this revival was not as extensive as those of 1780 and 1789, but it was a blessed work, and strengthened the hands of the Lord's people. The last baptism in this place by Mr. Thompson was Sept. 5, 1802. At the close of 1802 he closed his ministry, after having served this church a little more than twenty-three years. About 1800 and 1801 there were some in the church who embraced

the doctrine of the Universalists, which occasioned some uneasiness, and two or three were excluded for holding that doctrine. Mr. Thompson endeavored, while he was pastor of this church, to maintain a good discipline, and so kept wickedness in practice and dangerous errors in doctrine out of the house of God. During his ministry one hundred and seventy-six were baptized by him and added to the church, and at least fifteen more otherwise, and probably some more, in all about two hundred. As there is no means of knowing how large the church was when Mr. Thompson commenced his ministry in this place, so there are none of knowing exactly how many there was when he closed it. We think there might have been from seventy-five to one hundred; after the great revival of 1780 there were, as we have already said, probably near two hundred. In 1795, we are informed by father Backus, this church contained one hundred and thirty. After this about forty were added, which would not more than keep the number good seven years. That might have been something near the true number. Mr. Thompson lived on the ministerial farm, as his predecessors had done, and successors have. This he cultivated, from which he received a part of his support, but as this contributed but a part of his living, he kept a school for many years, from which he received something; a part of the time he kept a store, to save himself from want. He was voted and received the interest of the church fund, it sometimes amounting to more than one thousand dollars. He might have received something from the people who were permitted to

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hear the voice of this eloquent man of God, but that something was evidently small. After having spent the strength which God had given him for this people, he was compelled to seek another field, that he might procure something for himself and family. The Rev. Charles Thompson, of whom we are speaking, was a native of New Jersey, having been born at Elizabethtown, in that state, April 14, 1748. As Mr. Manning came from N. J. and commenced the college at Warren, which is now Brown University, at Providence, Mr. Thompson came with him, or after him, for the purpose of obtaining an education. He was in the first class in that institution, and graduated in 1769, giving the valedictory oration. This oration is still in existence, in his own hand writing. Before he graduated he had commenced preaching, and in the autumn of 1776 he was called to preach at Warren, as a candidate for settlement with them. March 27, 1771, the church voted to give him a call to become their pastor, which was concurred in by the society the next evening. "March 31, 1771, on Sabbath day, Mr. Thompson gave in his answer to the church and society at Warren, and accepted their call." (See Rec. of Warren ch., vol. I, p. 27.)

He early accepted the office of chaplain in the American army, in which office he officiated for two or three years with much acceptance. At the time of the burning of the meeting house in Warren, he was at home, where his family still continued.

After this he removed his family to Ashford, Con. and resided with Matthew Bolles, Esq., father of the late Lucius Bolles, D. D., one of the Secretaries of the Bap. Gen. Con. in the U. S. A. for a time; while there he preached in various places, and especially at Pomfret in that neighborhood. At that time, as has been before stated, this church was vacant when he was called to administer to them in holy things. While here, for twenty-three years, he faithfully performed the duties of a minister of Christ with much success. Finding his circumstances straitened, and finding that by many his labors were not

appreciated, he determined on removing to Charlton, in the county of Worcester, where he had a prospect of having a better support, with a prospect of being highly useful in devoting himself more entirely to his work. Early in 1803 he removed to that place, and purchased a small farm, where he hoped to spend his days, and find a competence for himself and his family.

But God had other designs respecting him. Very soon after his removal, and indeed before his removal, he was attacked with hemorrhage from his lungs, which terminated in a fatal consumption. He closed his early existence May 1, 1803, in hope of meeting his blessed Lord in that land where there is no weeping or sorrow. Not being able to pay but in part for the farm which he had purchased, his family was left in worse circumstances than they would have been if he had remained here. Being obliged to sell the farm, a sacrifice was made which swallowed up nearly all the little property he had. The ways of God with his ministers are often dark and mysterious. After the closing up of Mr. T.'s affairs at Charlton his wife returned to Warren, her native place. Her name was Sally Child, the daughter of Sylvester Child. They had five children, all of whom survived him. His widow lived till 1819, when she died in expectation of meeting with her departed companion, and all the redeemed of the Lord in heaven. Mr. Thompson was buried at Charlton, where a stone was erected as a memorial of a man of God.

The death of Mr T. was a great disappointment to the church at C., and was deeply injurious to that church. His loss to this church was incalculable, though by some not understood. But to many of those who survive, his name is as ointment poured forth. Mr. Thompson was tall in his person, spare, and of a fine figure. The expression of his countenance was indicative of talent and benignity. He was industrious, improving his time as if he knew its value. In his family he was kind but firm, in the church he was as in his family, and so he was everywhere. As a preacher he was no ordinary man; his voice had a great compass, and its tones were sweet and commanding. His feelings were tender and deep; often he wept over the people, and often he uttered his voice with thunder tones. His sermons were studied, and sometimes written, but never read in public; so far as the language was concerned, they were generally extemporaneous. He understood his deep responsibility, he knew the account he must give to the great Judge, he felt the worth of the soul, and with deep emotion he besought the sinner not to die. In language he was plain and forcible, he sought not enticing words, he chose such as would most effectually carry God's truth to the conscience. He feared not to declare the great truths of the bible, man's

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utter sinfulness and helplessness, the holiness of God's law, and the blessedness of the gospel. He clearly held up and maintained the government of God, and his election of his people to eternal life. He well understood that all his hopes of success depended on the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit. In short, in his preaching he never lost sight of the cross of Christ. And while he dwelt on such themes, he led his hearers to look at death, the resurrection, the final judgment, and heaven and hell. On the one hand he portrayed

the glories of heaven, and on the other, in melting but awful strains, he showed to the impenitent the agonies of the second death. Such preaching could not fail to lead the wicked to tremble, and in multitudes to flee from the wrath to come. The church he fed with the bread of God, so that under his ministry they were instructed and rendered holy. Such was the man who for twenty-three years went in and out before this people. Those who rejected his messages from God will have no ordinary account to give. As for several years he had scholars under his instructions, so he was conspicuous there. He was master of the things he taught, and he guided many a youth in the ways of science and of virtue. Such talents as his could not be hid, he was often called to preach on public occasions, and multitudes were benefited by his faithful labors, besides the people of his own particular charge. In the state of the Baptist churches at the time when he fell, well might it be said, "A great man is fallen in Israel."

The two deacons Kingsley, David and Thomas, were in office during the whole of Mr. Thompson's ministry. They were men unusually free from fault, and good men, but not very efficient men. Deacon David was the most useful man. He was always interested in the church, and always punctual. Although he was not a great man, yet he was worth a great deal to the church. He kept the records forty-five years. Some things he recorded very faithfully; the baptisms are kept accurately, as it seems, though it is possible that some were omitted. He recorded the labors the church had with its members, and it is not a very flattering picture of the state of the church. Taking all the cases of labor with deficient members, I should think between one and two hundred. The greatest number of cases were for neglect of attendance on the worship of God at the monthly meetings of the church, and on the Lord's day. Some were for disaffection, and but comparatively few for open immorality. It is apparent that the members were greatly influenced by their feelings. In a time of revival they were ready to attend every meeting, let what might come; but when the excitement of such an occasion was over, they left the minister to spend his strength on the walls. Such christians are like animals in a team that will draw when the team goes down hill, but hold back at the foot of every hill. Every church I suppose has quite a proportion of that kind of members; it is certain that this church has had them. The record is very deficient in the notice of such incidents as would enable any one to learn the actual history of the church. There is no record of Elder Thompson's leaving the church, or one thing about it, except that a committee was appointed to settle with him, Dec. 2, 1802, and that they did settle with him, (page 351.) nor is there any note by which we can tell when Mr. Northup, his successor, commenced his ministry in the place. There seems to have been a year between them, but whether they had preaching or not, or if they did, by whom, is left in darkness. But it is nearly certain that Mr. Northup commenced his ministry with this church in the spring of 1804. He was the pastor of this church four years. There was an awakening under his ministry, he having baptized in that time twenty-nine, and received eight others, with himself and wife. The principal revival was in 1805. Mr. Northup was a very different preacher from Mr. Thompson. His advantages for education had been small, but he had an easy method of communication, so that he pleased a certain portion as well as Mr. T., or even better. But the more intelligent part perceived a vast difference between him and Mr. T. Mr. Northup was not sound in his views of doctrine, verging towards arminianism. But where he actually stood I cannot tell. He probably rejected the doctrine of election, but maintained perseverance. It is not likely that he would ever have, been the pastor of this church had

he not been a farmer, who could live on the farm, for that was all the inducement this people offered. The meeting was probably as full under him as Mr. Thompson, but a part became so tired of him that they, could not rest, and they became the majority, and he left. But he took pains to make his friends think that he was abused,

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so that when he was gone they were dissatisfied and restless. This occasioned a great jar and division, that came near destroying the church. Mr. N. was a good manager of the farm, so that with the interest of the fund, and a small family, he got along comfortably. It is said by some that this was painful to a part of the church, but whether that was true or not I pretend not to say. I think it possible that it might be so, there are some in Swansea, and perhaps ever have been, who would be very well reconciled to have the minister poor. If, on Mr. T.'s leaving, this people had sought out a minister who had talents, and just views of his office, of the church, and the doctrines of the bible; and if they had been liberal in giving him a living, as they were well able to do, they might have been sustained, and strengthened, and perpetuated. But they did not think of adopting that enlarged, liberal policy, and the result has been melancholy.

Mr. Northup went from here to the north-west part of Reboboth, and was settled over what was then called Iron's church, where he preached several years, and died in 1812.

Mr. N. was a pious man, and to some extent useful, but he seemed not fitted to satisfy all in this church.

After Mr. Northup, was the Rev. Wm. Barton. He preached two years, but without success. His compensation was the farm and thirty dollars for the second year, and probably more for the first. He was as different a man from Mr. N. as he was from Mr. Thompson. He was highly Calvinistic in his sentiments and in his preaching. But it was cold orthodoxy; his preaching had little to warm the soul. The church was cold and divided, and the preaching was cold, and the people were cold, and on the whole, it was a gloomy time. Mr. B. was not a man of education, nor did he want it: he considered it injurious. The meeting became very small the gold had indeed become dim. During his ministry the church was much in trouble from the difference that arose from the dismissal of Mr. Northup. Quite a number drew up and signed a paper, in which they inquired the reasons for his dismissal, and protested against that act. Some of the signers considered it a withdrawal from the church, and others not. Although after a length of time this contest died away, yet the effects of it are left still. Nearly all the west part of the church was alienated and in great measure lost to the church. After two years' trial it was found that Mr. B. was not the man for them, and he was dismissed, at his own request. He removed from here in the spring of 1810, after which he preached more or less for a time, but at length having lost his property, and become discouraged, he left preaching, and finally left his attendance on religious worship, and felt sour towards all; but several years since, the Lord was pleased to return his captivity, so that in his old age he enjoyed the blessedness of his first love. Since that he has joined the Methodists, and last year he departed this life. Such are the changes in man!

In the year 1811 the Rev. Abner Lewis became a member and the pastor of this church. It was voted to record the conditions on which he was settled, but they are not on the book, and what they are I know not, but probably much like those entered into with Mr. Barton. Elder Lewis was in years but of considerable preaching talent, and a very good man. He preached here till April, 1819, when, because he did not enter into the views of the church in relation to the farm, and because he had said he should leave here if he could find a vacant church, he was dismissed. The church, it seems, had thought it best for him to let out the farm, instead of his carrying it on himself. He came to this place when things were exceedingly low, he was able to do less than in his younger days, as he had to occupy much of his time to obtain a living. But he exerted a good influence on the community, and thus hushed the commotion which had shaken the church to its foundation since Mr. Thompson's day. The church had not increased, but diminished, although some had been added to it.

This venerable servant of God was born in Middleborough, Mass., March 16, 1745. He was converted and united with the first Baptist church in that town when he was about twenty years old, 1765. In the year 1770 he began to preach, and in 1774 he commenced his labors in Freetown, where a blessing attended his ministry. In 1775 a church was constituted, and a meeting house erected in the easterly part of that town, Jan. 26, 1776. He was ordained the pastor of this new church, with which he continued till 1784, when, owing to some difficuhies in the church, he took a dismission from them.

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Such a blessing attended his ministry, from his ordination to 1780, that the church increased to one hundred and twenty-eight. Alter he left them he supplied various places for short periods, that from 1789 to 1794 he lived with the Baptist church in Attleborough, and preached for them till then, when he moved back to Freetown; bnt soon after, he became the pastor of the Baptist church in Harwich, on the Cape, where he continued till he removed to Swansea, and became the pastor of the first church in the year 1811, in which office he continued till 1819. From that time he generally resided in this quarter, although he had no family or property, and travelled in various directions, and preached as Providence opened a door for him, till he was unable to so labor. He departed this life July 7, 1826. aged eighty-one, and is buried in the burial ground, near the first Baptist church in Swansea, with a decent stone erected over his grave.

He was twice married, but left no children, and, I believe, never had any. He survived both his wives. He was a man of respectable talents, and for the times, of respectable acquirements. He was acceptable and useful as a preacher, so he was respected as a man and a christian. He died without a stain upon his character or profession.

After the dismission of Elder Lewis, Elder Benjamin Taylor, a Unitarian Baptist was employed to supply the pulpit. The kind, patient labors of Elder Lewis had been preparing the way of the Lord, but many of the church had not been aware of the good he was doing. About this time a blessed work of the Lord commenced, and had this church

continued Elder Lewis' labors, or employed some able, regular Baptist preacher, we have every reason to believe the church would have been built up in its most holy faith. Elder T. was a good man. but he was not a regular Baptist, so that his labors, while they produced a great excitement, loosened the foundation of the church. He baptized in this place sixty-eight, a number, if properly indoctrinated and initiated into the church, would have made it strong, but only about half joined the church, and not more than about half of that number walked with the church to benefit it. The number that actually became useful members, was very small. This was about the time that the Christian Denomination, as they call themselves, sprang up, on a profession of great liberality, and the union of all christians, but really making another rent in the seamless garment of Christ. The effect of this new doctrine was, that some of the churches in this part of the country were divided, and others all thrown off their old foundation. And in this place the effect was to make the name of a Calviuist Baptist a hissing and a byword. After the excitement had passed, there were some that were feeling for the old paths, but this was so unpopular that few dared to do it. Elder Taylor's preaching was of a peculiar character, it was very indefinite you could better tell what he did not preach, than what he did. He was fluent: never preached any thing that would alarm the wicked; he rather led his hearers along by always telling them how good they were. His hearers always thought well of themselves, whether saints or sinners, hence it was that the great multitude thought he was the most wonderful preacher in the world. He preached a great deal of truth, and he was a kind man, and irreproachable in his life; but he never preached up man's utter sinfulness and helplessness, so he never terrified his hearers with the solemnities of the last judgment, and above all with the awful agonies of an eternal hell. He was careful not to make too much of Jesus Christ, but in such a way that many would not see it. No doubt many were truly converted, but not being led to see and feel their need of instruction, but few of them have ever found the old paths, indeed, the effect produced by this state of things has been to lead the great body of the people to feel disposed to give ministers or experienced christians instruction rather than to seek it.

Mr. Taylor preached to this people a part of two years, closing his labors in the spring of 1811. The next preacher was Rev. Bartlett Pease, a regular Baptist preacher; but he entered on his ministry in most unfavorable circumstances. He did not possess the fluency of his predecessor, nor did he preach so indefinitely. The result was that he spent two years rather unhappily, and without accomplishing much. Some of his parishioners cut up his chaise, and did him great injury otherwise, and when he prosecuted the ruffians that did these things their friends used all their influence to beat Mr. Pease, and did beat him, sustaining the wrong. In the spring of 1823, he left the church and the place, thinking himself happy to escape, and well he

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might. A few were added to the church under his ministry, but the church was weak when he left it as it was when he found it.

From the close of Elder Lewis' ministry up to this time there had been a leaven working in the church, and in the community, endeavoring to effect an entire change in

the character of the church, and the effort was well nigh effected. A few members had joined here from Warren, that were dissatisfied with placid waters, finding more happiness where they were turbid, and here they found what they wanted. The business of getting a minister was committed to them, and they secured the Rev. Luther Baker for the minister of this church, though a majority voted against it, but that side prevailed, and he moved here in April of 1824. Elder Baker had been for many years pastor of the Baptist church in Warren, where he was a strong advocate for the doctrines of Grace. From there he went to the second church in Providence, where he became a Unitarian Baptist, and not succeeding there, he found this place vacant, and came to fill it. He continued in this place till 1832, when he left. He did not become a member of the church till he left, when he was received and dismissed. Under his ministry the present parsonage house was built. Only thirteen were added to the church in the eight years that he ministered to this people. Sometimes he had something of a congregation, but at other times it was very small. His preaching was greatly wanting in spirituality, though he was a man of considerable preaching talent. Having renounced Calvinism, he heartily hated it, as was apparent in his preaching, and the blessed, benevolent movements of the age he opposed and strangely caricatured. By the farm, his own efforts, and the presents of the people, he procured a comfortable living. He left this people as he found them, without much efficiency, and certainly without much orthodoxy. His successor was Rev. Jesse Briggs, from Maine, a man it is presumed not much better than he should be. He possessed considerable talent, but uncultivated. He tried to do something for the church, and he did something. His doctrine was rather uncertain; when he came here he was a kind of Free-will Baptist, but he went with a desire to carry a Calvinistic banner. There was some attention to religion while he was here, two and a half years, and he baptized several, some of whom joined the church, and some did not. After he left here, he went into Western New York, where he was put down from the ministry. A bad minister among the Baptists fares pretty hard. One good thing he did for this church; he introduced into this venerable old pulpit, that pulpit which Wheaton, Comer, Callender, and Thompson had filled, a Calvinistic preacher. This was done by the means of the Board of Domestic Missions in Rhode Island. This Board by arrangement with Mr. Briggs sent Oliver J. Fisk, a student in Brown University, to complete his time, from 1st October, 1835, to April 1st, 1836. At the end of that period several members were desirous of enjoying his labors longer, and there were several others in the vicinity who were Baptists, who also desired it. In case that should be carried into effect they proposed to join the church. The result was that Mr. Fisk was employed, and those Baptists joined the church. Under this order of things the church went back to its ancient order. The body of the church were glad to do it. There were a few who would have been glad to continue under a more loose system, but they so far came under the old order as to get along for three or four years, when a few left us. An article had been temporarily adopted under Mr. Baker, by which the church practised open communion. While Mr. Fisk was with this people that article, which had never been recorded, was by order of the church destroyed, so that the church stood on its old ground. Mr. Fisk continued to preach to this people till October, 1836, in all about a year. He visited the members, and ascertained very nearly the number of the church, about sixty. It was afterwards found that there were a few more who were on the records. He was active otherwise he established a good Sabbath school, and did much to set things in order. This church are under great obligation to him for the good he did

them. He was afterwards settled at Lime Rock, in Smithfield, R. I., where he continued some two or three years. Since that he has been in Tennessee, where he is useful in teaching and preaching. Several of the nominal members when he left, lived at a distance. The actual number when Elder Briggs was dismissed was sixty-three. During Br. Fisk's year five were added, and two excluded. When he left the number was sixty-six. Of this

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number twenty-three were males and forty-three females.

The present pastor commenced his ministry first of October, 1836, and has been the pastor eight and a half years. During that time there have been two small revivals, one in 1838, and the other in 1842 and '3. In the first six were baptized, and in the last fourteen, and at other times three others, making twenty-three, and otherwise nineteen, in all making forty-two. The diminutions have been forty seven, nineteen by death, fifteen by exclusion, ten by dismissal, and four have been dropped, leaving now sixty-one. Notwithstanding this diminution of names, the number of active members is greater than at the commencement of the present pastorship. During this period the pastor has had a regular salary, which is the first ever offered or given by this church. The sum is the use of the farm, and one hundred and fifty dollars. Since the church came back to its ancient order, all the active male members have been changed but three, so that the church as a body is a regular Baptist church in gospel order. In the year 1837, this church was received into the Taunton Baptist Association. At its second anniversary, never before having been joined with any Association. While this church had swerved from their old ground, the churches in Warren and Seekonk had withdrawn their fellowship from it; about this time this fellowship was kindly restored.

In 1804 Brs. Hezskiah Kingsley and James Daggett were elected deacons. James Daggett exercised himself in that office for several years, and at his request he was dismissed from that service. Deac. Kingsley discharged his duty to the great acceptance of the church for near forty years, having the character of a peacemaker, he died Jan, 16, 1842, aged seventy-four. The present deacon is brother Benj. Peck.

Thus it will be seen that this church has maintained its visibility one hundred and eighty-two years, a monument of the goodness and power of God. And though the field which it occupies is small, and not easy of cultivation, yet by the help of God it may continue and prosper. As this is the first Baptist church formed in Massachusetts, and the fourth in America, it seems very desirable that it should receive the sympathy and aid of all the brotherhood. The prayers of all she urgently asks, and may the Lord hear prayer.

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