

First Parish Church (Haverhill, Mass.) Records, 1711-1964, 1993, undated

Collection Summary

Reference Code:	MRQ, US.
Repository:	Special Collections, Haverhill Public Library, Haverhill, Massachusetts.
Call Number:	MSS 51 (formerly HC4 F52)
Creator:	First Parish Church (Haverhill, Mass.)
Title:	First Parish Church (Haverhill, Mass.) Records
Dates:	1711-1964, 1993
Size:	15 boxes, (2.918 linear feet)
Language(s):	Collection materials are in English.
Abstract:	The First Parish Church (Haverhill, Mass.) records document the activities, memberships, financial transactions, pastoral activities, and social activities of the church in the 18 th , 19 th , and 20 th centuries.

Organizational History

Haverhill was first settled by Puritans in 1640. In 1641 Rev. John Ward, from Haverhill, England, came to the settlement and became the first minister; the town was incorporated in 1641 and named Haverhill after Ward's birthplace. Rev. Ward was officially installed as the pastor of the First Parish in 1645 and the first meeting house was constructed in 1648. Rev. Ward served as the minister until his death in 1693. He was followed by Rev. Benjamin Rolfe and was installed in 1694. Construction on the second meeting house began in 1697 and was completed in 1699.

The town of Haverhill was separated into multiple parishes during the early eighteenth-century. In 1728 the town was divided into two parishes with the formation of the North Parish. The North Parish was transferred to Plaistow, New Hampshire, in 1741 and the Rockingham Congregational Church was formed. In 1734 the town was divided yet again with the formation of the West Parish and the East Parish was formed in 1743. In 1748, a bell, imported from London, was installed in the First Parish church. The third meeting house was constructed 1766. In 1821, two stoves were added and a clock was placed in the steeple.

Rev. Dudley Phelps, a strict orthodox Congregationalist, was installed as the pastor of the First Parish in 1828. His strict orthodoxy became a point of contention and the parish dissolved its relation with Rev. Phelps in 1832. The First Parish, which kept the third meeting house, became

a Unitarian church after the split. In 1830, an organ was installed. In 1837, the church building was taken down, the land was sold to the city of Haverhill and a fourth church was built. In 1847 it burned down and was rebuilt in 1848. This was the first commission of architect Alpheus Carey Morse (1818-1893), a Haverhill native. When constructed, the church face southward toward Haverhill Common, but was raised up and turned around to face Summer Street in 1884. The First Parish occupied the building until 1926 when it was sold to the Episcopal Church of St, John the Evangelist. The Episcopalians occupied the premises until 1945 when it was sold to the Armenian congregation of St. Gregory the Illuminator.

In 1940, the Centre Congregational Church and North Congregational Church merged to form the First Congregational Church in Haverhill which occupied the North Church building. In 1950, after years of intermittent discussion, the First Parish (Unitarian) and the First Universalist Church joined together as the Universalist Unitarian Church of Haverhill. Eleven years later, at the national level, the two denominations merged to form the Unitarian Universalist Association. In 1963 the North Parish Community Church merged into the First Congregational Church. In 2010 the church building was sold and the First Congregational Church was formally dissolved. In 2017, the building was demolished.

Succession of Ministers (partial list)

John Ward (1645-1693)
John Rolfe (1694-1708)
Joshua Gardner (1710-1716)
John Brown (1719-1742)
Edward Barnard (1743-1774)
John Shaw (1777-1794)
Abiel Abbot (1795-1803)
Joshua Dodge (1808-1827)
Dudley Phelps (1828-1832)
Nathaniel Gage (1834-1840)
Nathaniel S. Folsom (1840-1846)
James Richardson (1847-1850)
Frederic Hinckley (1850-1853)
Robert Hassall (1856-1858)
William T. Clark (1859-1862)
Joseph Angier (1862-1864)
S. H. Morse (1865-1866)
James Vila Blake (1867-1869)
W. H. Spencer (1869-1873, 1875-1880)
G. H. Patten (1874)
Thomas E. St. John (1881-1890)
James Bagley (1890-1893)
F. A. Gilmore (1894-)
George E. Littlefield (1900-1902)
John A. Hayes (1903-1912)

Frances W. Holden (1913-1921)
 Edward L. Houghton (1922-1925)
 Wallace G. Fiske (1937-1948)
 Emerson S. Schwenk (1948-1956)

Arrangement

Series 1. Administrative, 1711-1900, 1917-1939, 1956-1964, 1993, undated
 Series 2. Financial, 1799-1964
 Subseries 2.1. Receipts and Accounts, 1799-1862
 Subseries 2.2. Treasurer's Records, 1808-1944, undated
 Subseries 2.3: Trustees of the Haverhill Congregational Ministerial Fund, 1823-1964
 Subseries 2.4: Pew Sales, 1828-1903
 Series 3. Pastoral Activities, 1807-1903
 Series 4. Church Social Activities, 1866-1926
 Series 5. Other, 1813-1821

Scope and Content Note

The First Parish Church records document the activities, memberships, financial transactions, pastoral activities, and social activities of the church in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. It mostly consists of financial records, but also contains record books, correspondence, leases, meeting minutes, reports, member lists, sermons, programs, and printed material.

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation: [Item Identification], First Parish Church (Haverhill, Mass.) Records, MSS 51, Special Collections, Haverhill Public Library, Haverhill, Massachusetts.

Custodial History: Material is on deposit by the creator.

Acquisition Information: The bulk of the material was deposited by the First Unitarian Church in August 1943. Two record books of the Branch Alliance of the First Parish Church were deposited on July 2, 1962. The 250th Anniversary invitation and program were donated to the HPL by Mrs. H. L. Lewis. Programs (1882-1916), pastors' installation programs and a sermon, and a 1993 news clipping are the property of the Haverhill Public Library. The assessors' book (1808-1878) was a gift to the library from A. G. Harding, date unknown.

Processing Information: Processed by Tamara Gaydos, 2021. Revised by Elizabeth Smith, 2024.

Access Rights:	Collection is open for research.
Phys. Access Restrictions:	None.
Tech. Access Restrictions:	None.
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Related Collections:	First Congregational Church records, RG5027, Congregational Library & Archives, Boston, MA.
Separated Material:	Books and sermons belonging to the Haverhill Public Library were cataloged separately.
Conservation Notes:	Fragile items were placed in Melinex sleeves. Newspaper clippings have been photocopied on archival quality paper to preserve their recorded information.
Subjects:	Account books Branch Alliance of the First Parish Church (Haverhill, Mass.) Christian union Church buildings Church bulletins Church discipline Church finance Church history Church membership Church records and registers Church youth groups Clergy Clippings (Books, newspapers, etc.) Congregationalism First Congregational Church (Haverhill, Mass.) First Parish Church (Haverhill, Mass.) Folsom, Nathaniel S. (Nathaniel Smith), 1806-1890 Haverhill Anti-Slavery Society Haverhill (Mass.) -- Church history Marriage records Necrologies Pews and pew rights Receipts (Acknowledgments) Sermons, American -- 20th century Sunday schools -- Records Trustees of the Haverhill Congregational Ministerial Fund Women -- Societies and clubs

Worship programs

Collection Inventory**Series 1: Administrative, 1711-1900, 1917-1939, 1956-1964, 1993, undated**

This series contains record books (which include baptisms, marriages, votes, marriages, deaths, and accounts), letters, warrants, petitions, applications, news clippings, and more, arranged chronologically.

<u>Folder Title</u>	<u>Container Number</u>	<u>Folder Number</u>
Record book including baptisms, marriages, and votes, 1711-1795	5	
Warrants, minutes, and accounts, 1729-1833	6	
Record book of minutes, 1730-1734; notices of meetings, 1734-1739, undated	1	1
Record book including baptisms, admissions, marriages, deaths, and accounts, 1795-1828	7	
Letters, 1806-1807	1	2
Agreement between Benjamin Kimball and parsonage, 1806	1	3
Description of the line between the East Parish and the First Parish, 1806	1	4
Petitions for parish meetings, 1823-1834, 1847, undated	1	5
Record book including baptisms, admissions, marriages, deaths, and accounts, 1824-1833	8	
Record book of meetings and votes, 1833-1900	9	
Vote to secede, 1835	1	6
Membership vote, 1839	1	7
Resolve from Haverhill Anti-Slavery Society giving thanks for use of church, 1839	1	8
Letter from Centre Congregational Church offering use of their church, 1847	1	9
Record book, 1850-1874	1	10
Applications to American Unitarian Association, 1917, 1920	1	11
Warrants and agenda for annual meetings, 1917, 1919, 1925, 1929, 1963-1964	1	12
Letters about giving property to Haverhill Public Library and reducing mortgage rate, 1925-1939, 1962	1	13
News clippings, 1956, 1993, undated [after 1859]	1	14
Lists of members, undated	1	15

Series 2: Financial Records, 1799-1964

This series consists of four subseries: 2.1 Receipts and Accounts; 2.2 Account books; 2.3 Trustees of the Haverhill Congregational Ministerial Fund; and 2.4 Pew Sales.

Subseries 2.1: Receipts and Accounts, 1799-1862

This subseries contains receipts, tax abatements, accounts, and order books (books where receipts were given out and the remaining stub details the transaction), arranged chronologically.

<u>Folder Title</u>	<u>Container Number</u>	<u>Folder Number</u>
Receipts, 1799-1803	1	16
Receipts, 1806	1	17
Receipts and tax abatements, 1808	1	18
Receipts and tax abatements, 1809-1810	1	19
"Order book" (receipts), 1809-1816	1	20
Receipts and tax abatements, 1811-1812	1	21
Receipts and tax abatements, 1813-1814	1	22
Receipts, tax abatements and subscriptions, 1815-1816	2	1
"Order book" (receipts) [2 volumes], 1816-1823	2	2
Receipts and accounts, 1817-1818	2	3
Receipts and accounts, 1819-1820	2	4
Receipts and accounts, 1821-1823	2	5
"Order book" (receipts) [2 volumes], 1823-1830	2	6
Receipts and accounts, 1824-1826	2	7
Receipts and accounts, 1827-1828	2	8
Receipts and accounts, 1829-1831	2	9
"Order book" (receipts) [2 volumes], 1830-1838	2	10
Receipts and accounts, 1832-1834	2	11
Receipts and accounts, 1834-1835	2	12
Receipts and accounts, 1836-1837	2	13
Receipts and accounts, 1838-1840	2	14
"Order book" (receipts) [3 volumes], 1838-1858	2	15
Receipts and accounts, 1846-1847	2	16
Receipts and accounts, 1851-1852	2	17
Receipts and accounts, 1853-1854	2	18
Receipts and accounts, 1855-1856	2	19
Receipts and accounts, 1857-1858	2	20
Receipts and accounts, 1859-1862	3	1

Subseries 2.2: Treasurer's Records, 1808-1944, undated

This subseries contains a variety of treasurer's records including auditors' reports and some Sunday School insurance policies, arranged chronologically.

<u>Folder Title</u>	<u>Container Number</u>	<u>Folder Number</u>
Assessors' book, 1808-1878; tax rates, 1807-1811	3	2
Poll tax list for bell, 1822	3	3
Treasurer's ledger, 1822-1866	10	
Report of vote, 1829	3	4
Subscription for a fence, 1853	3	5
Letter to the <i>Haverhill Gazette</i> by R. Stuart Chase regarding the alleged division of First Parish Church funds, 1884	3	6
Sunday School, insurance policies, 1906, 1911	3	7
Treasurer's record book, 1908-1919	11	
Collectors' and treasurers' reports, 1910-1922, 1947-1964	3	8
Auditors' reports, 1912-1924, 1944	3	9
Appointment of Joseph Dodge as tax collector, undated	3	10

Subseries 2.3: Trustees of the Haverhill Congregational Ministerial Fund, 1823-1964

This subseries contains record books, leases, a history of the fund, proposals for enhancements to the parish building, and reports of the Trustees of the Haverhill Congregational Ministerial Fund, arranged chronologically.

<u>Folder Title</u>	<u>Container Number</u>	<u>Folder Number</u>
Record book, 1823-1920	12	
Sale of parsonage lots, 1831	3	11
Record book, 1833-1866	3	12
Leases, 1873-1900; history of the fund, 1903; proposals for enhancements, 1884	3	13
Record book, 1925-1964	13	
Reports, 1938, 1950, 1952	3	14

Subseries 2.4: Pew Sales, 1828-1903

This subseries contains documentation of sales of pews in the First Parish Church, arranged chronologically.

<u>Folder Title</u>	<u>Container Number</u>	<u>Folder Number</u>
Pew sale [copy], 1828	3	15
Pew deeds record book, 1837-1890	14	
Pew deeds and taxes, 1837-1848, 1860-1873	3	16
Pew sales, 1875-1889, 1897-1903	3	17

Series 3: Pastoral Activities, 1807-1903

This series contains material about some of the First Parish's ministers, programs, publications, letters, news clippings, and an admission for a member.

<u>Folder Title</u>	<u>Container Number</u>	<u>Folder Number</u>
Admission of Samuel Knight, 1807	3	18
Ordination of Rev. Dudley Phelps, 1828	3	19
<i>Order of Exercises at the Dedication of the New Church</i> , 1837	3	20
<i>Sermon Preached at the Installation of Rev. Nathaniel S. Folsom</i> , 1840	3	21
Nathaniel S. Folsom, acceptance letter, 1840; resignation letter, 1846	3	22
Frederic Hinckley, <i>Order of Exercises at the Installation</i> , 1850	3	23
George W. Patten, <i>Order of Exercises at the Installation</i> , 1875	3	24
Thomas St. John, <i>Order of Services at the Installation</i> , 1881	3	25
Programs, 1882-1916, undated	3	26
James W. Bagley, <i>Order of Services at the Installation</i> , 1890	3	27
Frank Albert Gilmore, <i>Order of Services at the Installation</i> , 1894	3	28
250 th Anniversary, invitation and program, 1895	4	1
John Ward, news clipping, 1898	4	2
<i>The Ariel</i> (calendar and sermon including topics and leaders for The All-Together Club), 1900	4	3
John A. Hayes, program for the installation, 1903	4	4

Series 4: Church Social Activities, 1866-1926

This series contains records of the All-Together Club, the Branch Alliance, and the Sunday School.

<u>Folder Title</u>	<u>Container Number</u>	<u>Folder Number</u>
The All-Together Club, record book, 1889-1890	4	5
The All-Together Club, constitution and record book, 1890-1895	4	6
Branch Alliance, constitution and record book, 1906-1914	4	7
Branch Alliance, programs and membership, 1914-1924	4	8
Branch Alliance, record book, 1914-1926	4	9
Sunday School, Treasurer's account books [4 vols.], 1866-1897	4	10
Sunday School, Treasurer's account book, 1869-1874	15	
Sunday School, Treasurer's receipts, 1876-1886; annual report, 1878	4	11
Sunday School, Treasurer's receipts, 1887-1893; annual reports, 1888, 1892	4	12
Sunday School, Treasurer's receipts, 1894-1899; annual report, 1896	4	13
Sunday School, Treasurer's receipts, 1900-1909; annual report, 1907	4	14
Sunday School, attendance book, 1906-1907	4	15

Series 5: Other, 1813-1821

This series contains receipts of David and John Marsh for equipment and building materials, including a recipe for making mead. It is not clear why this material is included in the church records.

<u>Folder Title</u>	<u>Container Number</u>	<u>Folder Number</u>
Receipts of David and John Marsh, 1813-1821	4	16