

Address by

Mr. David Floyd

Delivered November 16, 1884

On the Occasion of the Observance of the Fiftieth
Anniversary of the Dedication of the
First Edifice of the Winthrop
Methodist Episcopal
Church.

2

Pulling Point and Vicinity in 1834, and Some Facts About the First Church Erected in that Year, Read at the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Dedication of the Winthrop Methodist Episcopal Church, November, 16, 1884.

Friends:

Our Pastor (Rev. Seth C. Cary) this morning told the story of our church's existance during the past fifty years. I shall attempt to give some facts about the little village and its neighbors at the time of the building of the first church in the territory now the town of Winthrop.

Boston, in 1834, had been a city twelve years and had a population of seventy or eighty thousand souls.

The year 1834 was an enventful one in the history of Boston and vicinity.

The means of conveyance was by the old fashioned stage coaches, and the directories and almanacs of that time contain lists of the many stages leaving the city for all parts of New England.

Steam railroads had been in operation in England for several years, and, after much discussion and consideration, in the year 1834 the rails of the then Boston and Worcester road were laid as far as Newton, and the regular passenger service of the first railroad from Boston began on the sixteenth of May of that year. Three trains were run each way daily. The trip of ten miles was made in about thirty-four minutes and the fare was thirty-seven and one half cents.

Zion's Herald under date of November, 5th, 1834 contained the following:

"Dedication at Chelsea Point.

"The new Methodist Meeting House in Chelsea will be dedicated on Wednesday 19th inst. Services to commence at one o'clock P.M.

"We congratulate our brethern upon the accomplishment of their labors and prayers. They have struggled through difficulties with the most commendable perseverance.

"May their house be the holy place in which God shall appear in power, and scores be converted."

Let us imagine ourselves in Boston at that time and from there go down to Pulling Point, or Chelsea Point, as the present town of Winthrop was then called. How shall we go? Through Noddles Island do you say? The East Boston Co. had obtained their charter but a year before, and at the end of 1833 but one house was on the island and only eight persons were living there. In 1834 a public sale of land was held and the sum of \$86,000 netted. This was \$6,000 more than the Company paid for the whole island. The place grew rapidly, ferries were established, the sugar refinery and the Maverick House were built, but in 1834 there was no bridge from Noddles Island to Breeds Island nor from the latter to Pulling Point.

Mr. Breed had built a bridge from the west side of the island to Chelsea and the ministers and others used to cross it and come down to where the Main St. bridge now crosses Belle Isle Inlet, and wait until some one came for them in a boat.

We find that the stage which goes the nearest to the place is the one to Lynn and Saugus which leaves 9 Elm St. at 4.30 each day, and passes through Chelsea village (now Revere).

We finally conclude to make the journey in "a one hoss shay", the popular conveyance of that time, and in this we leave Boston, passing through Charlestown and then across the long bridge to Chelsea. This bridge was built in 1803.

By an act of the Great and General Court, passed January 10th, 1739, that part of Boston known as Winnisimmet Village, Rumney Marsh and Pullen Point, "in consideration of the fact that they had long since built a meeting house and supported the same," be set off as a town to be known by the name of Chelsea.

The area included within the town at that time was what at present constitutes the city of Chelsea, towns of Revere and Winthrop and part of the town of Saugus.

Arriving at Winnisimmet We find a rapidly growing settlement. Only three years before the first house was built in the village, and the population of what now constitutes Chelsea consisted in 1831 of about thirty, the whole town about seven hundred and seventy-five.

Until 1831 the ferry from Chelsea to Boston consisted of two small sail boats. In 1832 the new steam ferry-boats Boston and Chelsea were built and were the first boats of their kind in Boston Harbor.

In 1834 a charter was obtained for a bridge from Chelsea to Noddles Island, East Boston, the present Chelsea St. bridge.

In 1832 John Low built the first store in Chelsea. The first school was built in 1833. The First Baptist Church, the first religious society at Ferry Village, was organized in 1836, and the first Methodist church in 1839. So we find at the time of the dedication of our church Chelsea was without even a church organization.

The first Sunday School in Chelsea was formed by a young

5

woman who afterward removed here, joined this church, and who until called to her reward in 1881 was active in all good works. I refer to Mrs. William Belcher, my Sabbath School teacher for several years. I deem it a privilege to pay here a tribute to her consistent Christian character, to her useful life and the impression it made upon me.

From the ferry we are driven over Salem turnpike to the "Centre", as what is now called Revere was sometimes called. Here we find some six hundred people, a school house, a church, two or three stores where groceries and dry goods are sold, and---this is history, remember---also alcoholic liquors. Here the town meetings are held, sometimes in the church and at others in the school house.

Leaving the turnpike at Fenno's store we turn to the right, and going past the old Unitarian church and the old cemetery we strike the beach near where the Crescent Beach station now stands, and then along the beach north of Beachmont across the Short Beach into what is now Winthrop.

Winthrop in 1834.

The only road considered public at this time was the one now known as Revere St. and ending at Mr. Eben Burrill's barn which was directly opposite this church. And this as well as the private ways, were crossed occasionally by gates and bars, so that unless a boy or girl was found ready, for a consideration, to open the bars for the traveller, he had to get out of his carriage and make a place to drive through. But the young people of that time, as some here can testify, kept a sharp look out for carriages, and many a dime and shilling was obtained from some

of the Bostonians who visited the place.

As we reach the top of the hill now called Winthrop Highland and look to the south we see all of the thirteen houses of Chelsea Point. Let me point them out and tell who lived in each of them..

MAP HERE.

Houses in 1834.

Thomas Floyd-----	T. F., wife and one child-----	3
David Floyd-----	D. F., wife, Edward Floyd, Mary H., and Hannah Floyd-----	5
Winthrop House---	D. F. Jr., wife, P. P. Floyd, John Floyd, one child-----	5
Bill House-----	Bill Tewksbury, wife Ann, John, Martha, Mary, Herman-----	7
	Phillip Tewksbury, wife, Nancy, Thomas, Phillip Abigail, Sarah, and John-----	8
Samuel Tewksbury-	Samuel G., wife, Augusta P.-----	3
Samuel Belcher---	S. B., wife, George G., Samuel, Mary, Caroline, Frank, Fred, Jane-----	9
Eben Burrill House-	Mrs. Burrill, Harriet, Susan, Sarah, Eben, Charles, Abigail, Bill, Martha Ann-----	9
Washington Tewksbury-	W. T., wife, George W., L. C., S. H., Hannah B.-----	6
Sarah Floyd-----	Sarah F., Sally Ann, Josiah, Sam, Emeline, Susan-----	6
Joseph Belcher---	Joseph B., wife, David, Thomas, James, John, William, Warren, Nancy-----	9
Joseph Burrill---	J. B., wife, Joseph, Stephen, Samuel, Alfred, Mary-----	7

Henry Tewksbury-----	H. T., wife, Henry, Susan, Elisa-----	5
William Wales-----	William Wales, wife, William, John, Nat Susan, Sarah, Hannah-----	8
John Sargent Tewksbury--	J. S., wife, James-----	3
	Point Shirley, 6 Houses	
John W. Tewksbury---	J. W. T., wife, Lucretia, Charles S., Caroline Elizabeth-----	6
Andrew Tewksbury---	A. T., wife, Gerry-----	3
Alpheus Wyman (Captain Wyman)-	A. Wyman, wife, John, Jerome, George, Eliza, Mary Emeline-----	8
William Tewksbury (Captain Bill)-	William T., wife-----	2
Martin Tewksbury----	Martin T., wife, one child-----	3
William L. Battis---	W. L. B., wife, William, Martin, Otis, Josiah-----	6
Benj. Wheeler (brick House)-	B. W., wife, Mary, George, Frank Theadore-----	6
Samuel H. Tewksbury--	S. H. T., wife, one child-----	3

The whole valuation of Chelsea Point and Point Shirley in 1834 was not more than \$40,000, \$30,000 real and \$10,000 personal. The rate of taxation was about \$5.40 on \$1,000, poll tax \$1.40. The whole amount of tax was about \$250.00. The number of resident land owners was twenty-one, non-residents six. Nine of the taxpayers owned the whole or a part of a lighter. These lighters were small sloops used in freighting paving gravel from the islands and from Point Shirley to the City of Boston.

Most of the men cultivated more or less land. The Winthrop farm, then consisting of 212 acres, was carried on by David Floyd. At Point Shirley were the salt works of the late John W. Tewksbury. About eight horses and twelve yoke of oxen and perhaps two hundred sheep were then kept in Pullen Point and Point Shirley. Many of the houses contained a spinning wheel, and the wool after being sent off to be carded was brought back and made into yarn. But little fruit was then raised here.

The houses were all provided with open fireplaces and brick ovens. The first stove was in Mr. Joseph Belcher's house, about 1830. They were not generally used until several years later.

The farm products were sold in Boston and were carried there by boats or by team through Chelsea and Charlestown. Every house contained at least one flint lock gun and thousands of marsh birds and water fowl were annually shot and sold. The candles (sometimes home made) and the lamps in which whale oil was burnt, were always extinguished by nine o'clock in the evening. The few letters which came to the people were brought down from Boston by a man on horse back. Zion's Herald, about the only paper then taken here, was left in Boston at a store and the papers were called for each week by some one from the "Point".

SCHOOLS.

Towns were empowered to divide into school districts, and these districts raised money for the erection and repairs of school houses.

In 1833 the town of Chelsea was divided into three districts: the Ferry district, comprising all of what is at present Chelsea;

Center district, what is now Revere; and Point district, what is now Winthrop.

In 1834, the year of the church building, an additional district was made by setting off Pt. Shirley from the Point district, and a school house was built there the same year.

The schools were for many years in private houses. In 1805 the first school house was built here, and it was in this building, which stood just south of the Town hall, that the first preaching service was conducted in 1817. The old school house was not more than twenty-five feet square. The chimney and stove were in the center of the room, the teacher's desk on one side, and on the other three sides either two or three long benches with forms in front of them. Here a school was kept four or five months in the year at an expense of about \$100. When the teacher "boarded round" he was paid sometimes not more than \$2 per week. (This at Pt. Shirley.) The old school house was the scene of the district school meetings, of the preaching service on the Sabbath and the Sunday School, of the week evening prayer meetings, of the singing school, of the meetings of the Chelsea point Bridge Corporation, and of the temperance society.

(See original warrant for District Meetings.)

One of the features of those days was the annual election by the town of certain men known as tithing men, whose duty it was to see that all persons should be at meeting on the Sabbath, or, at least, all persons were not to be found on the roads, wether on foot or riding, unless they could offer, as an excuse, that they were out on charity or for a doctor. Tithing men were elected in Chelsea as late as 1834.

Query. Did the building of a church at the Point in that year seem to the good people to do away with the necessity of longer continuing the custom?

Another query. How many tithing men would it now take on a pleasant summer Sunday to see that all the people along the Winthrop and Revere Beaches were obeying the law?

Third query. What is the church and State of to-day going to do about it?

I have thus attempted to give some idea of the place and its surroundings 50 years ago next Wednesday, when a church was dedicated to the service of God.

There are at present thirty Methodist churches in Suffolk County. Of these, Bennet Street, formally Methodist Alley, was organized in 1792, Bromfield Street in 1806, the church at Dorchester in 1817 and our church in 1818. The Trinity church in Charlestown was also organized in 1818, and the Revere Street church for colored people was organized in 1826. Rev. Samuel Snowden was for twenty-five years pastor of the last named. The People's Church, then Church street, was organized in 1834. Our church, then, was the fourth organized and the sixth to have a meeting house of all the Methodist churches now in the county.

The question doubtless occurs to you as it did to me, What incited the handful of people then here to build a church? There were but few more houses then in 1818 when the church was organized. The church records do not speak of any increased interest. Something happened in 1832 that explains it all-- happened did I say--I recall the word. It was not by chance

11

that in 1832 a revival swept through the place. It was the usual result of prayer and labors of the preceding years.

(Read artical in N. E. Christian Herald for 1832.)

Building the Church etc.

At the first meeting of the society, after the reception of members, mentioned in the Christian Herald, the following business was transacted, as appears by the original record.

(See manuscript, warrant and record.)

The first mention of building a church in the records is in a warrant issued December fourteenth, 1833, calling a meeting of the "members of the Methodist Society in Chelsea qualified to vote in the Town affairs to meet at the Point District School House on Monday the 23rd of December at six o'clock P. M. to act on the following articles:

"First:-To choose a Moderator. Second:-To see if the Society with the advice of others will build a house for Public Worship, and if so to see in what manner the Society will raise money for that purpose and act thereon as they may think proper."

Some here remember, and we can all imagine, the sensation created by the posting of this notice. How the matter was talked over as the people met during the ten days intervening between the time of the call and the evening of the 23rd. With what solemnity did the "male members" meet and consider the matter in the old school house. The record is as follows:-

"Chelsea, December 11th, 1833,

"At a legal meeting of the members of the Methodist Society held at the Point School House the following business was acted on:-

- "First:-Joseph Burrill chosen Moderator;
- "Second:-Voted build a house for public worship;
- "Third:-Voted that the house be thirty by thirty-four feet;
- "Voted that the house be a suitable hight to be convenient;
- "Voted that money be subscribed to wards Building;
- "Voted that a committee be chosen to present the subscription paper to all they think proper.

"Edward Floyd)
 "Joseph Burrell)
 "Joseph Belcher) Committee
 "Joseph Belcher 2nd)
 "David Belcher)

The committee began their work immediately, as the original subscription paper is dated the same day of the meeting. The heading is in the hand of the master, Frederick William Augustus Stuben Brown, a school teacher of that day.

The subscribers to this paper all lived in what is now Winthrop. We find another paper which was circulated in the other part of the town, now Revere. The heading is a copy of the other and underneath is written: (see manuscript)

The subscriptions on the first paper amount to \$505, on the second to \$24; total of \$529. In the warrant for the annual meeting held on the tenth day of March, 1834, were the following articles:

"Art. 8:- To choose a Building Committee to purchase materials and superintend the building a house for public worship for the said Methodist Society in Chelsea.

"Art. 9:-To choose a treasurer to receive the Building Fund.

"Art. 10:-Nominate a suitable number of persons for trustees." Under the articles the following action was taken:

"Art. 8:-Joseph Belcher)
 Joseph Burrell)
 Edward Floyd) Building Committee

"Art. 9:-Joseph Belcher was chosen building treasurer

"Voted, that the said society authorize the building committee to hire money to finish the house for public worship.

"The following were elected trustees:

Bill Tewksbury	David Belcher
Joseph Belcher	John Floyd, 2nd
Joseph Burrill	James M. Belcher
Edward Floyd	

(Only the last named, Mr. James M. Belcher is now living.)

"Voted, that the building committee build with such materials as they think proper for underpinning etc.

"Voted that the committee commence building as soon as is consistent."

The lumber used in the building was landed in a vessel at what is now Sunnyside. The stone steps came from the State Prison. All that the records contain concerning the building and dedication is as follows:

"May 8th commenced work on the Meeting House; David Belcher architect. July 2nd the house was raised. November 19th dedicated by Rev. Daniel Fillmore."

No written or printed account of the dedication has come down to us. Many remember something about it. The church was well filled. The singing was by a choir who occupied the little gallery under which one passed in entering the church. The instrumental music consisted of a flute, a violin and bass viol. In those times it was considered such a privilege to play in church that the society selected by vote the three or four persons who should take turn in playing the double bass during the year.

Rev. Mr. Fillmore's text was from Matthew XVI--18: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." It is remembered that two preachers from Saugus were present, Benjamin F. Newhall and E. W. Stickney.

At a meeting of the society held November 10th before the dedication a committee, consisting of John Floyd, David Floyd, Jr., and David Belcher, were chosen to appraise each pew. On the 26th of November, the twenty-four pews having been appraised at prices varying from thirty to forty-five dollars each, seventeen of them were sold at auction, Edward Floyd acting as auctioneer. The seventeen were valued at \$690. Choice money varying from \$1 to \$9 was paid, amounting to \$59.00, making a total of \$749, and leaving pews valued at \$270 in the hands of the trustees.

At the next annual meeting in March, 1835, Mr. Joseph Belcher was authorized "to give Bills of Sale for what pews have been sold or may be the ensuing year.--" (see original) At this meeting sextons were chosen for the first time. "John Floyd chosen first sexton, T. J. Belcher chosen second sexton."

Twice the old church was on fire, but both times was saved from destruction with but a little loss. The church was used until 1858, when the houses in the town numbered about ninety and the congregation filled the building. The Town Hall having just been built, it was hired for church services until 1862, when the old church was enlarged by building an addition of twenty feet and substituting settees for the old pews. Again in 1871, the number of houses having increased to one hundred and nineteen, the present church was built and dedicated.

Comparisons.

We have shown that the town and State tax was \$5.40 on each \$1,000 valuation in 1834. The amount paid the same year for the new church, if it has been assessed on all the property of Pulling Point and Point Shirley, would have been \$20.00 on each \$1,000. But those who paid for the church represented only about one-third of the property of the town, thus making \$60.00 on each \$1,000 the amount paid by the subscribers taken as a whole. But if we take individual cases we shall find that the percentage was often larger than this. Some men who owned no real estate, and the value of whose other possessions was not more than \$200,

14
gave \$25 or \$40 toward the erection of the church. To-day we raise for town and State taxes \$22,000, \$11,000 of this paid by residents. Should the residents pay towards church building in the same proportion as did the people of 1834 the amount would be \$40,700 yearly.

The church expenses, including the preacher's salary, was some years not more than \$100. You may think this not a burden. If the permanent residents paid in the same proportion now, \$5,000 would be the amount raised annually for the support of the two churches in Winthrop.

Of the twenty-nine persons who contributed towards building the old church but five are now living, and many others who in later times stood firmly for God and the right have gone from earth forever. It is fitting that we should honor their memory. As we have heard their names spoken to-day we have for a moment wished the old times back that we might see the old faces and exchange greeting with departed friends. We feel our unworthiness as we think of their lives and of God's goodness to us. We know that the future has responsibilities for all of us. Let us meet them with courage, and not forgetting the past say with Whittier:

"Henceforth my heart shall sigh no more
For olden time and holier shore;
God's love and blessing then and there,
And now, and here, and everywhere."