

Address by Mr. David Floyd

Delivered Dec. 14, 1910

At the Unitarian Church, Revere

On the Occasion

Of the Observance of the 200th Anniversary

Of the Erection of that Church Building

The First in this Section

And the Oldest Standing Church Building in Old Boston.

The town of Boston in 1710 consisted of "a pear-shaped peninsula, connected by a narrow neck of land with the town of Roxbury," having an area of about 783 acres; of Rumney Marsh containing about 6,000 acres; and of Noddles and other islands. Five years previous, Muddy River which had been a part of the old town since 1630 was incorporated as Brookline and in 1793 was annexed to Norfolk County.

The Boston proper of two hundred years ago, formerly called Shawmut, extended North and South about two miles and its average width was one mile. A population of 7,000 souls lived on and about its three hills:--Beacon, Copps, and Fort. There was then a fort at the Northerly end of the town known as the Battery erected in 1646 and another on the east side at Fort hill built in 1666 and called the Sconce. In the year we are considering, a fortification was built at Roxbury Neck to take the place of an earlier one which had fallen into decay. This was a substantial structure of brick and stone with breastworks of earth and provided with gates, and its site was at about the Southwest corner of Dover and Washington streets.

The first town house, built in 1657 still stood on the site of the present old State House at the head of State, then King street. This building was burned the following year.

The old Province house and the Green Dragon tavern were two buildings of importance at that time.

The first newspaper in America, The Boston Newsletter, had been established six years, and in 1710 was published by its founder, John Campbell, Postmaster of Boston. During this year the General post-office in America was established by act of Parliament. The rate of postage to England was then one shilling.

Queen Anne was the sovereign of Great Britain and the Royal Governor for Massachusetts was Joseph Dudley, who at that time owned land and a house in Rumney Marsh which was a part of the present Shurtleff farm. The witchcraft delusion had ended in 1693 and the Baptist and Quaker persecutions were over.

In 1710 there were seven church organizations in the old town, viz;--

The first church, organized by Governor Winthrop and others in 1630. Its meeting house erected in 1640 was then on Washington street where later the Joy building stood. The pastors of this church in 1710 were Reverends Benjamin Wadsworth and Thomas Bridge.

The Old North, organized 1650. Its meeting house, built in 1677 stood at the head of North Square, and was pulled down by General Howe in 1776. Reverends Increase and Cotton Mather were the pastors.

The Old South, organized 1669, and its wooden building then occupied the site of the present structure on the corner of Washington and Milk streets. Its pastor was Reverend Ebenezer Pemberton.

King's Chapel, organized in 1686. A wooden building then stood on the corner of School and Tremont streets, where the stone building is now, one of the most interesting of Boston's possessions. Reverend Henry Harris was the minister.

Brattle Street, organized 1699, and its meeting house erected the same year. Reverend Benjamin Colman was the pastor.

First Baptist, organized 1665. Their first church was closed by order of the Governor and Council in 1680. Its meeting house 200 years ago was on what was then called the Mill Pond, now Stillman street, between Salem and Pond streets. Reverend Ellis Calender was the pastor.

Quaker, 1664. The society of friends built the first brick

house for public worship in Boston, on Brattle street, in the year 1664. It was occupied by them until 1708 when they removed to Congress street.

There were no bridges connecting Boston with towns across the Charles in 1710. A ferry took passengers to Charlestown where a church was organized in 1632. Its meeting house stood in what is now City Square, and its preacher was Reverend Simon Bradstreet. Here sometimes preached John Harvard, the founder of the College.

Following the "neck" southerly from Boston, a traveller in 1710 would have seen a rude "unbeautiful structure", being the meeting house of the "First Religious Society of Roxbury," formed in 1632. Reverend John Elliot, the Indian Apostle was its first pastor. Two hundred years ago Reverend Nehemiah Walter who came from Ireland was pastor, a position he held for 61 years.

"The First Parish in Dorchester," which dates from 1630 was the third church planted in the Colony. In 1710 its third meeting house, built in 1677 stood at Meetinghouse Hill and Reverend John Danforth was in the midst of a pastorate which lasted 48 years.

Brighton completes the list of towns now a part of Boston. The early residents of Brighton attended the Cambridge church which was organized in 1633 and of which Reverend William Brattle was pastor in 1710. Cambridge was then eight miles from Boston by the round about road which existed before the bridge from Boston was built.

The Boston Latin School had been established in 1635, on School Street. This school fitted youths for Harvard University. In 1682, Boston established two free schools "for the teaching of children to write and cipher within the town."

The year 1710 was in that period of which we know so much "of the people, of their dress, periwigs, funeral and wedding favors,

their dinners, town meetings, personal quarrels, and the innumerable trifles, and even foibles, which make up for the most, so much of life." Judge Sewall's Diary covered the fifty-five years beginning with 1673. It has been called, "one of the American Nation's most ancient and elaborate historical monuments. His story of the event, the anniversary of which we celebrate, is a sample of his account of visits to many localities in New England.

"Ferry boats for carriages and people made trips from the north end of the town to Winnisimmett every two hours from 5.00 o'clock A. M. to 7.00 P. M."

Rumney Marsh in 1710 consisted not only of the present territory of Chelsea, Revere, and Winthrop, but at that time a strip of land forty rods in width called the Panhandle, extending as far north as Reading, was until 1841 a part of old Chelsea.

In 1735 the grist mill was established, now known as Slade's Mill. The nearest one before this was at Malden. The road from the turnpike to Pulling Point was laid out by a committee of the town of Boston in 1698. The same year both Muddy River and Rumney Marsh were allowed to nominate an assessor and the inhabitants of Rumney Marsh were exempted from paying taxes for the watch.

The Rumney Marsh voters had asked for a free school for their children in 1701. In 1709 Mr. Thomas Cheever was offered twenty pounds a year if he would undertake the task of keeping a school. One of the returns made for the year 1714 by Mr. Cheever for the "body of the town," contains the names of 27 scholars from 14 families, bearing the following names:--Tuttle, Wayts, Chamberlain, Hasey, Cole and Pratt.

At the Boston annual town meetings about this time as many as 25 pounds were sometimes voted for highways at Rumney Marsh, or "number thirteen," as it was called in the Boston town records. Con-

stables, fence viewers, surveyors, and hog-reeves, and tything men were chosen to act for the same district.

Probably not more than 40 families lived in Rumney Marsh when the church was erected and the number of inhabitants was about 200.

As the church was not organized until 1715, we must pass to that date to get the names of its earlier members. The first signers of the covenant were John Tuttle, John Floyd, Sen., Edward Tuttle, Sen, Elisha Tuttle, William Hasey, Daniel Floyd, Asa Hasey and the pastor Reverend Thomas Cheever.

John, Edward, and Elisha Tuttle were grandsons of Richard Tuttle who came from London in 1635. Unlike most of those to whom allotments were made by Governor Winthrop's Company (otherwise the town of Boston) he lived on the 171 acres of land given him in 1638. He purchased three other allotments and thus became the owner of a large section of what is now Revere. While Judge Mellin Chamberlain's history of Chelsea mentions the names of 123 men and women bearing the name of three of the first signers of the covenant, only three men of that name now live in Revere and they do not claim relationship.

John Tuttle was the first deacon of the church, and Elisha, with others, gave the land for this building in 1710.

John Floyd, designated as senior in the record, was the son of Captain John Floyd, the first of the name in Rumney Marsh, where he first lived about 1680. The senior was a lieutenant in the militia and held many local offices from 1697 to 1723. He evidently had influence among the voters of Boston as is shown by a letter written in 1719 by Joshua Bill of Pulling Point, to the treasurer of the town, in which he complains of being chosen constable and blames John Floyd, the assessor, whom he calls "Lord Ruler at Winnisimmet."

In his will John Floyd left ten pounds for a silver cup for

the communion service and Deacon Chamberlain purchased the bell-shaped flagon we have been shown today with the other silver.

Daniel Floyd was brother to John.

William and Asa Hasey were sons of Lieutenant Joseph and Hannah Hasey.

Under date of October 6th, 1710, the Haseys joined with Elisha Tuttle in deeding land to the inhabitants of Rumney Marsh for a meeting house.

Thomas Cheever was a school master, and the son of a school master and the first pastor of the church.

After the petition for a new meeting house had been presented to the town of Boston, certain inhabitants of Rumney Marsh signed a protest which they prayed should be entered in the town book. One objector lived near Malden and another near the Lynn boundary. Five men from Pulling Point, all having the family name of Bill, and the christian name of each beginning with the letter J, were among the objectors.

Deane Winthrop had died in 1704, his nine children having preceded him to their rest in Revere's old burying ground. His house and farm were rented by one of the Bills and others of that name occupied at least three other houses at Pulling Point. The Bills and the grandchildren of Deane Winthrop then owned nearly the whole peninsula and there may have been no other name than that of Bill among the then residents. Some of the Bills were connected with the second church and but one (Hannah) ever joined the Rumney Marsh Society under the name of Bill.

Parson Cheever's first wife was Miss Sarah Bill, who died before the church was built. Other women from the Point married men living at the centre and then joined the church.

But Pulling Point people were not to remain uninfluenced by the new church. Among the seven additions to the church roll in 1716 was the name of Ensign Joseph Belcher, whose grandfather, Jeremiah Belcher, of Ipswich, was the ancestor of all the Winthrop family of Belchers. Ensign Joseph bought the Point Shirley, Great Head, and the beach sections of Deane Winthrop's farm in 1720. He probably lived at Point Shirley, and after his death, his son Joseph, and other Josephs in several generations made Winthrop their home.

There are living in Winthrop at present many descendants of Ensign Joseph Belcher bearing the following names:--Belcher, Dunham, Burrill, Wyman, Collins, Paine, Smith, Lindsey, Tupper, Patch, Brown, Battis, and Wales.

In 1748, the first Joseph's widow sold Point Shirley to Thomas Pratt, ancestor of Pratt of Chelsea, and soon after the Point passed through Thomas Goldthwaite into the hands of Boston capitalists who established there a fishing station and named the Point in honor of Governor Shirley.

A church was erected in 1755, and its location is shown on Pelhams Plan of Boston. The following year the town of Chelsea voted that the tax collected at Point Shirley for the support of the ministry should be expended there.

Judge Chamberlain thought that the people who lived there until the enterprize failed, were Episcopalians, but no record has been found regarding the preacher.

The Winthrop Public Library has in its historical collections an old tax bill of the town of Chelsea for the year 1790, which is of interest in connection with the church history of the 18th century. The bill was the one rendered to and paid by, John Tewksbury of Pullen Point, and is receipted by Joseph Cheever, Collector. The total bill for "State," "Town," "School", "Minister" and "County" is



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69-18s-4d. of which 3-2s-2d. (or about one-third,) was for the minister.

The Rumney Marsh records state that Reverend William McClen-achen, the second pastor, was allowed "to preach, to the people at Pulling Point for six months, and no longer without the town's consent." This was in 1753. There is no record that Reverend Phillips Payson ever preached in Winthrop, but his successor Reverend Joseph Tuckerman preached there in a private house in 1804, and after the first school house was erected in 1805, in that building, where he baptised Priscilla Belcher.

Deacon John Chamberlain moved to Pulling Point in 1734 and resigned his office as deacon in 1749 on account of the infirmities of old age.

The name of Tewksbury, first appears on the church records in 1766 when John Tewksbury, Junior, owned the covenant. He and his brothers Andrew and James were the sons of John Tewksbury, born in Amesbury, who came to Point Shirley in 1750. The first named, married Anna Bill (1758), the second married Susanna Hasey (1762), and James married Mary Sargent and their descendants in Winthrop number about 100, of the following names: Tewksbury, Floyd, Magee, Hall, Wyman, Haggerston, Brown, Lougee, Knox, Crosby, Ingalls, Eldridge, Tucker, Dunham, Pope, Shattuck, Griffin, Olson, Whittemore, Cobb, Paine, Smith, Tupper, Belcher, Patch, and Lindsey.

As no church was established at Pulling Point until 1818, when Joseph Belcher, a descendant of Ensign Joseph already mentioned, became the first member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, some of the residents of the two "points" attended the church in the centre. Sometimes the journey was made by boat from Point Shirley or Pullin Point, passing through Belle Isle Inlet to a point near Slade's old grist mill where the boat would be left until after the service.

The tide served for this method of conveyance only twice a month. Others went by carriage or walked over the Short beach to the Sales farm and thence to the church.

John Sargent Tewksbury of Pulling Point, born 1774, purchased the first chaise that was owned in this vicinity. It had wooden axles, was painted yellow, and was adorned with the monogram of the owner. Mr. Tewksbury with some member of his family used to attend church in this beautiful carriage. Some still living remember when the vehicle was used by James Tewksbury, son of John Sargent.

John W. Tewksbury and his wife Abigail of Great Head were the last of the Pulling Pointers to attend with some regularity the old church. They drove over in a carryall, not in a "one-hoss shay."

John Tewksbury of Pulling Point removed to the Centre in the 18th century, and was the ancestor of the Tewksbury family of North Chelsea. This family, together with those with whom it became connected by marriage, has been active in the work of this society and in town and library affairs. Their family names are Tewksbury, Spavin, Fenno, Eaton, Staples, Peirce, Vinal, Kidder, Rich, Keene, Foster, and Boynton.

David Floyd, a descendant of Hugh Floyd who became a member of the church in 1724, himself joined in 1817. In 1825 he came to Pulling Point and there five of his six sons and two of his three daughters lived and died. Their descendants bear the names of Floyd, Dunham, Griffin, Cobb, Covell, Barber, Smith, Toulmin, Capen, Coy, Abbott, and Holt.

John Fenno came to old Chelsea from Boston early in the 19th century. Two of his descendants were Representatives in the General Court, and they served in important town positions.

One, the late Warren Fenno is especially missed today, as his knowledge of Revere's early history would have been so valuable in

this celebration. The Fenno descendants of today are called: Fenno, Farnsworth, Tewksbury, Proctor, Morse, Cheny, Chamberlain, Barret, Hall, Wright, Lewis, Luteen, Ricker, Stearns, and Taylor.

The Green family is now represented by the Green, Dale, and Farnham names.

Two descendants of Abijah Hastings reside in Revere, bearing the family name.

Nathaniel Hood Hall was baptised in 1764. His descendants in several generations have been men and women who wrought well in town and church. Their descendants are named: Hall, Proctor, Weston, Harriman, Sargent, Brooks, Hudson, Wadsworth, and Counce.

The Shurtleff family who have had such an important part in the affairs of the town and church in Revere for so long, are the descendants of Dr. Benjamin Shurtleff of Boston who was born in Plympton in 1774.

The descendants of William Pratt, born in 1764, in Prattville have the family names of Pratt, Wood, Janvrin, Magee, Hussey, Green, Kimball, Pierce, Sawyer, and Park.

Joseph Stowers, known as a teacher and as "Squire Stowers" for so many years was a grandson of James, Senior, who signed the covenant October 26th, 1757. Descendants bear the name of Stowers, Derby, Emerson, Magoun, Sanborn, and Batchelder.

Seth Copeland became a member in 1898. His son Jonathan and his descendants have always been connected with the old church. Copeland, Grover, and Stodder are the family names.

William Harris was admitted in 1786 and was chosen Deacon in 1798. Descendants of today: Harris, Langley, Eldridge, Clapp, and Brooks.

In 1812 Samuel Sturgis moved with his family from Boston to Point Shirley where he engaged in the manufacture of salt. His daugh-

ters, Nancy, Abigail, and Elizabeth were married by Dr. Tuckerman, respectively, to Philip Tewksbury, John W. Tewksbury, and Barnabas T. Pratt. The two first-named, together with Hannah who married Thomas Floyd, Sally who married Samuel H. Tewksbury, and Charles R. Sturgis, died in Winthrop. Mr. and Mrs. Barnabas Pratt were well known residents of this part of the town. Their descendants on the Sturgis side bear the names of--Kimball, Pishon, Torrey, Estabrook, Longley, and Gillis.

Sarah (Tewksbury) Pierce wife of Captain John Pierce became a member of the church Sept. 25th, 1824. Their children: Almira, Louise, Ephraim, Sarah Ann, Lydia Maria, and John Payson were baptised by Dr. Tuckerman on October 10th following. Another son, Henry Augustus, was baptised in June 1829. To John Payson Pierce above-named, as well as to his son H. Winthrop Pierce, the libraries in Revere, Chelsea, and Winthrop are under obligations for books, manuscripts, and articles of historic interest relating to old Chelsea and this church. The old contribution box exhibited today is from the collection of Mr. John P. Pierce.

On March 23, 1824, an unusual service took place, being the baptism by Dr. Tuckerman of nine children of Col. John and Hannah Sale viz: Frederick, Almira, Lavisia, Mary, Emeline, Cornelia, William, John, and Ephraim. One of the above named, Mrs. Cornelia Soper, still lives in----- . Descendants of Lavisia, (Belcher) live in Winthrop and Fall River, and of John, in Chelsea, and of James Penn Sale, a half brother, to the above-named, in Melrose. They bear the following family names: Sale, Dunham, Belcher, Wales, Soper, Bolton, Hawkins, Stahr, Drake, Richards, Keith, Churchill, Young.

Nathaniel Oliver was admitted on certificate from the Brattle Street church. His son Nathaniel was clerk of the church and also served as representative in 1701. Among their descendants now liv-

ing are the Currier, Hall, Brooks families.

I have made diligent search for miles around, and today have scanned the people in the gallery with the result that I find no descendants of a large number of people whose names appear on the records as having been "baptised," "admitted to the Communion," "married," "or having died." Many of the families of old Chelsea during the eighteenth century had people of color as servants. Old Probate inventories show that negroes were appraised as personal property the same as oxen and horses.

Their names and position in the old families are thus stated: "Caesar, a servant of Captain Sale." "Three children of elder Watt's negro woman, Phillis, were baptised--Cato, Balindon, and Violet." "Jupiter Holland, a free negro," "Priscilla, a negro servant to Mr. Samuel Floyd," "Fortune, a negro man, one hundred years old," "Peg, a negro woman, age unknown."

In 1760 the number of "servants for life" in Chelsea was 13.

I have attempted to mention some of the men and women who for two centuries have been connected with this church, and also the family names of their descendants.

What changes the old building has witnessed! For more than seventy years it stood in the days when "we were under a King." Its members and one pastor did well their part in bringing about Independence. Ruling Elder Samuel Watts, and Deacon John Sale were delegates to the Provincial Congress. In eight of the 13 graves in the town burying place, which bear the markers of the sons of the American Revolution, sleep brave men who were connected with this church. Their sons and others who worshiped here were some of those who went forth to preserve the Union in '61 and in the terrible years which followed. Her wisest men have sat in both branches of our General Court. The meeting place in early days of the voters

"assembled in town meeting,"----her sons have given good service to their fellow citizens as town officials and in faithful attention to local affairs.

Let it not be supposed that bronze markers or mention of honorable official positions, indicate all the brave, useful, and loyal members who have worshiped here for 200 years. As faithful service to God, and home, and native land, has been quietly performed by the women of this society as by the men.

Boston, which was so reduced in size when Chelsea was set off in 1739, added to its area by annexing southerly so that now it assesses 17,193 acres and its population is 630,000. Its church buildings of two hundred years ago are all gone and now there are 322 church organizations of many kinds in place of the seven of 1710.

Rumney Marsh, Winnisimett, and Pullin Point would not be recognized by Judge Sewall could he now attend a wedding, a funeral, or a church-raising here. Instead of one church there are now 34, in the section formerly No. Thirteen; 15 in Chelsea, 13 in Revere, and 6 in Winthrop.

The rapid growth of this section of Suffolk County has brought the city problems to the attention of the people of Chelsea, Revere, and Winthrop. The 50,000 people now inhabiting the three places should be better prepared to continue the work our fathers began 200 years ago, because during the two centuries the building has stood for certain principles which must be considered in whatever changes of form which the government of the people of old Rumney Marsh may assume.

Revere, December 14, 1910.