

FIRST CHURCH OF GLOUCESTER

Archive Collection A03

Cape Ann Museum
27 Pleasant Street
Gloucester, MA 01930

4.5 linear feet
10 manuscript containers
1 bible, wrapped

Accession # 1523
Processed: Sept. 1995
By: Mary Sibbalds
Supervising Archivist, Ellen Nelson

Acquisition: Gift of the Trustees of the Ministerial Fund of the Unitarian Church in 1950. Alfred Mansfield Brooks was secretary of the Fund and president of the Cape Ann Scientific, Literary and Historical Association at that time.

Copyright: Requests for permission to publish material from this collection should be discussed with the Cape Ann Historical Association Archivist.

Historical Note

The first settled minister on Cape Ann was Rev. Richard Blynman who arrived here with a group of Welsh followers in 1642, the year the town was incorporated.

Rev. Blynman left in 1650 taking many of his flock with him. Due to a lack of population and money the town was without a minister for the next decade.

In 1661 Rev. John Emerson was hired and the town built a new meeting house, the First Church, at the Green in Riverdale on the banks of the Annisquam River. He remained the town's only pastor until his death in 1700.

In 1703 Rev. John White was ordained as the second minister of the First Church. He also remained in service until his death, which occurred in 1760. During his tenure the town grew to a size able to support five separate parishes¹ and saw First Church move from the Green to Middle Street in the Harbor, leaving the old First Church to become Fourth Parish.

Rev. White was succeeded by his assistant Rev. Samuel Chandler who was faced with open revolt against the established order when the Universalist minister Rev. John Murray arrived in town in 1774. In 1778 a group of parishioners broke away from the First Parish Church and formed the First Universalist Church in America.

¹ These were: Second Parish, West Gloucester in 1716; Third Parish, Annisquam in 1728; Fourth Parish, Riverdale in the original meeting place in 1738; Fifth Parish, Sandy Bay (Rockport) in 1754.

First Parish survived the break and in 1805, following a religious trend of the day, forsook its Congregational history and became Unitarian. In 1828 they built a new church on the site of their old one on Middle Street.

The following year a small group of parishioners asked to be dismissed and formed their own church which they called the Evangelical Congregational Church.

In 1950 membership in the First Parish Church was so small that they dissolved their society and the building was sold to members of the Jewish synagogue.

Series Listing

Series 1. People of the First Church

- A. Baptisms to 1875
- B. Marriages 1776-1780, 1805-1824, 1836-1849
- C. Deaths 1805 -1824, 1838-1846
- D. Membership
- E. Owners of pews/deeds

Series 2. Church/Parish Meetings

- A. Warrants 1728-1884
- B. Civil Matters
- C. Church Matters

Series 3. Ministers of the First Church 1661

- A. Papers pertaining to the ministry
- B. Sermons
- C. Correspondence

Series 4. Church/Parish Financial Records

- A. Assessors, Treasurers' & Auditors' records
- B. Trustees' records
- C. Bills and receipts

Series 5. Miscellaneous

- A. Rev. Eli Forbes' Bible, 1792
- B. Alfred Mansfield Brooks' inventory of accession

Series Container List

Series 1. People of the First Church

A: Baptisms to 1875

Box 1

- Book 1 Gloucester Church Records 1703-1803
 - 2 Gloucester Church records 1805-1837
 - 3 First Parish Church : Records 1836 - 1849
- Folder 1 Children baptized before 1703
 - 2 Children baptized by Rev. John White, 1703-1729

B: Marriages to 1849**Box 1**

- Book 1 Gloucester Church Records 1703-1803
 - [marriages only from Dec 1780 to 1783 plus one entry for 1789]
 - 2 Gloucester Church records 1805-1837
 - 3 First Parish Church : Records 1836 - 1849

C: Deaths 1805- 1846**Box 1**

- Book 2 Gloucester Church records 1805-1837
 - 3 First Parish Church : Records 1836 - 1849

D: Membership**Box 1**

- Book 1 Gloucester Church Records 1703-1803.
 - A list of the Church of Gloucester, July, 26, 1703.
 - Brethren who are inhabitants.
 - Brethren that are out of Town.
 - Sisters inhabitants in this Town.
 - Sisters that are out of Town.
 - Persons admitted to full Communion Sept 7, 1703 – Feb 7, 1714.
 - Names of Such as have only owned the Covenant before July 27, 1703.
 - Names of persons admitted from march 1714- June 1749 are intermingled with other church matters.
 - Persons who have owned the Covenant 1750-1797.
 - Dismissals before 1779
- 2 List of persons Administered Sacrament 1805- 1836.
 - Members of the First Church in Gloucester 1830
- 3 Church Members 1835-1848 (pages 20-22).
 - Male members of the First Parish 1845 (page 102)

Box 2

- Folder 1 Lists of members “about 1858”, subscribers 1862, 1863, 1879, 1884 owners of pews 1879
 - 2 Pew deeds, 1794-1876
 - 3 Societies within the Church – Singing society 1822, choir 1854, Female Society (missionary society) 1812.
 - 4. Dismissals to other Churches 1831-1834
 - 5. Certificates of withdrawal from First Church Membership 1824 -18
- Book 4 First Parish Fraternity 1869-1884

5 First Parish Church Sunday School 1881-1883

Box 4

Book 7 Gloucester Church Records, 1731-1834

Contains some admissions and withdrawals scattered throughout

Series 2 Records of Parish/Church Meetings

A: Warrants 1728-1884

Box 4

Book 7 Gloucester Church Records, 1731-1834

Book 8 First Parish Church: Records 1834-1868

Box 3

Folder 1 1716-1783

2 1784-1792

3 1792-1799

4 1800-1809

5 1809-1817

6 1818-1824

7 1824-1833

8 1834-1839

9 1840-1850

10 1851-1859

11 1860-1874

12 1875-1884

Rolled Six original warrants – 1880, 1881, 1882, 1886, 1887, 1888

B: Civil Matters

Box 4

Folder 1 Papers regarding miscellaneous civil matters, 1635

(grants of land, laying out of roads, operation of grist mills, etc.)

2 Letter to Gov. William Shirley requesting setting off 4th parish

C: Church Matters

1: Covenants of the Church

Box 1

Book 1 Original Covenant 1703

Book 2 Covenant adopted September 29, 1836.

This is in a separate manuscript inserted and attached in the middle of Book 2

Book 3 Another copy of the September 29, 1836 Covenant page 20

Box 4

Folder 3 Copy made April 1819 of a Covenant, presumably the one adopted September 2, 1791 and
Covenant adopted February 20, 1827

2: Selection of Deacons, Elders, Moderators, Committees

Box 1

Book 1 Gloucester Church Records 1703-1803

Box 4

Book 6 Gloucester Church Records 1703-1837.

Much of the material in book 6 is a repetition of that in Book 1

Folder 4 Proviso regarding termination of Minister

3: Sanctions of Members for non-attendance, profanity, violations of the Commandments

Box 1

Book 1 Gloucester Church Records 1703-1803

Box 4

Book 6 Gloucester Church Records 1703-1837.

Much of the material in Book 6 is a repetition of that in Book 1

4: Actions taken in Parish/Church Meetings

Box 1

Book 1 Gloucester Church Records 1703-1803

2 Gloucester Church Records 1805-1837

Box 2

Book 4 Gloucester Church Records 1869-1884

Box 4

Book 6 Gloucester Church Records 1703-1837.

Much of the material in Book 6 is a repetition of that in Book 1

7 Gloucester Church Records 1731-1834

8 Gloucester Church Records 1834-1868

Box 5

Book 9 First Parish Church of Gloucester Records 1869-1914

10 First Parish (Unitarian) Society March 1907 – January 1916

11 First Parish Unitarian Church: Gloucester 1917-1939

12 Records of the First Parish (Unitarian) Society of Gloucester, Mass. 1940-1950

Folder 1 Record of Corporation of the First Parish 1866

2 Misc. papers *Includes: Diary 1835-1836 talking of Hamilton's run for Republican Party & Schism in the Church

3 Petition to Selectmen 1809, regarding people attempting to destroy "all regular well organized religious societies"

5: The Meeting House

Box 6

Folder 1 Copy of Deed to 1745 Meeting House (New Harbor House built 1738)

2 Accounts for building of Meeting house, 1737- 1738 and 1826

3 Misc. papers re Meeting House, 1828

4 Letters regarding temporary use of other churches during repairs

Series 3 Ministers of the First Church 1661-1879

A: Papers pertaining to the Ministry

Box 1

Book 1 John Emerson (1661-1700)

Box 6

Folder 5 John White (1702-1760) [Missing 2005]

6 Samuel Chandler (1751-1775)

7 Eli Forbes (1776-1804)

8 Perez Lincoln (1805 1811)

9 Levi Hartshorn (1815-1819)

10 Hosea Hildreth (1825-1834)

11 Luther Hamilton (1834-1836)

12 Josiah Waite (1837-1851)

13 William Mountford (1850-1853)

14 Robert Rogers (1854-1869)

15 Minot Gage (1869 -

B: Sermons by or about the following:

Box 7

Folder 1 Samuel Chandler 1751, 1755

2 Eli Forbes 1792, 1795, 1800

3 Perez Lincoln 1805

4 Levi Hartshorn 1815, 1820

5 Hosea Hildreth 1825, 1827, 1830

6 Josiah K. Waite 1840, 1858

7 Unknown, 1813 [A discourse delivered in the First Parish Church, 1839]

C: Correspondence

Box 7

Folder 8 Letters between Rev. John White and Rev. William Blanch of Bradford 1744

9 Rev. Andrew Bigelow to First Parish 1820, 1822

10 Applications to "supply the pulpit" 1878, 1879

Series 4 Church/parish Financial Records

A: Assessors, Treasurers' and Auditors' Records

Box 7

Book 13 Gloucester Church Records First Parish Assessor's Book, 1729-1792

Box 8

Book 14 Gloucester Church Records Treasurer's Report of First Parish Church 1729-1794

15 Records of Parish Tax Collector 1802-1834

16 First Parish Treasurer's Book 803-1893

Folder 1 Treasurer & Auditor's Reports 1782 -1810

Box 9

Folder 1 Treasurer's & Auditor's reports 1820-1824

2 Treasurer's & Auditor's reports 1820-1824

3 Treasurer's & Auditor's reports 1825-1833

4 Committee Report to settle with treasurer and assessor of the Parish 1830

Book 17 Gloucester Church records First Parish Valuations 1817-1831

- 18 Gloucester Church Records First Parish Taxes 1826-1836
- 19 Gloucester Church Records First parish Church 1832-1836
- Folder 5 Treasurer's & Auditor's reports 1834-1854
- 6 Treasurer's & Auditor's reports 1854-1871
- 7 Treasurer's & Auditor's reports 1873 -1884

B: Records of the Trustees of the Ministerial Fund

Box 10

- Folder 1 1820-1867
 - 2 1827-1882
- Book 20 1866-1923
 - 21 1925-1950

C: Bills and Receipts

Box 10

- Folder 3 Misc. Bills & Receipts 1764-1799
- 4 Misc. Bills & Receipts 1800- 1869
- 5 Papers re. major alterations to Meeting House 1850- 1874
- 6 Bills for church alterations 1874-1875
- 7 Accounts for Repairs 1874
- 8 Bills for improvements 1882

D: Series 5 Miscellaneous

Box 10

- Folder 9 Photograph of drawing of 1738 Meeting House
- 10 Inventory of Accession by Alfred Mansfield Brooks
- Unwrapped Cover of Book – Gloucester First Parish Records from 1729 to 1802
- Wrapped on shelf Rev. Eli Forbes Bible