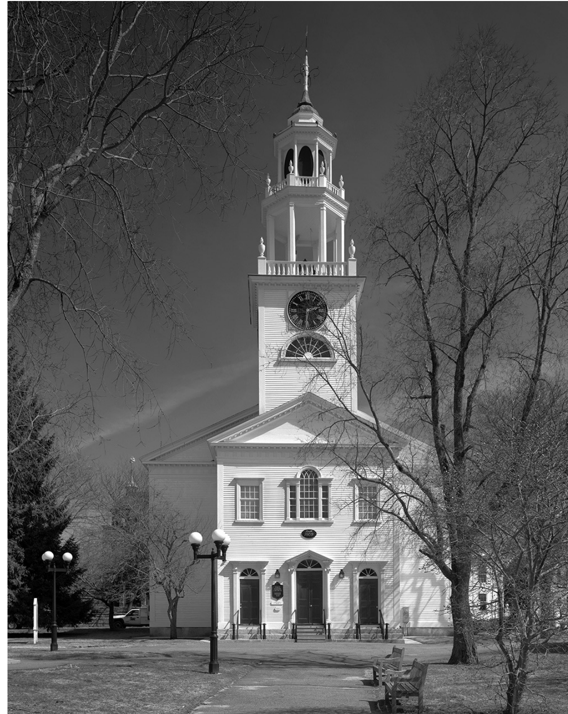
THE HISTORY OF THE MEETING HOUSES OF MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA, MASSACHUSETTS



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Manchester
Historical
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Written by Robert Booth

In recognition of 2020, Manchester's 375th anniversary year, "The History of the Meeting Houses of Manchester-By-The-Sea, Massachusetts" is a celebratory gift to the community.

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The Meeting Houses of Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts,
and The Town's Civic and Religious Life, 1645-1845

by Robert Booth

Introduction

The present First Parish Church Congregational meeting house in Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts, built in 1809, stands on roughly the same spot as its predecessor meeting houses, built in 1673, 1692, and 1720, on an open common that included a public landing place.

This study was commissioned, on the 375th anniversary of the town, to tell the story of the successive meeting houses and of the civic and religious activities that took place in them from the 1600s to the mid-1800s. As such, it is not a history of the town—a much larger undertaking—but a look at its governance and worship during that period, with historical context sketched in. The information in the text was drawn mainly from primary sources, which are footnoted.

One major finding was a revised date of construction for the first meeting house: 1673 (and not in 1656), according to best evidence. Ezekiel W. Leach in his 1835 "Historical Collections" cited a town record of 1656 as the date of the vote to build the meeting house. The same 1656 date is cited by historians Lee, Tappan, and Lamson, presumably copying Leach. In fact, the town records for the 1600s[1] show no record at all for 1656/7, but give the date for the decision to build the meeting house as 12th month 1672 (February 1673, based on modern calendar). Of the various histories I consulted, that of Helen Cheever Sears, in her booklet, "History of the Congregational Church in Manchester-by-the-Sea Massachusetts" (1959), correctly identified the first meeting house as having been built in 1672 (actually 1673).

The town's meeting house was the center of combined civic-religious activity for a very long time, from 1673 to about 1820. In some other towns, these activities were held in different structures—a church building and a town hall—in the colonial period. For example, Marblehead built a town hall in 1727-8, after which its 1695 meeting house served solely as a house of worship.

As a small town that did not grow large, Manchester[2] had neither the means nor (evidently) the need to divide the two functions. It is possible that a single meeting place continuously fulfilling these dual needs tended to reinforce the concept of comity—everyone getting along for the benefit of the community. From the 1600s well into the 1800s Manchester's people partook of the intensely interpersonal and inter-dependent nature of small-town life, in which the economic basis was barter—cooperative exchange of services—rather than cash. Everyone knew everyone else (many were related), starting with a shared childhood in a remote and insular place. Everyone went to the same church, and everyone was bound, by Christian duty and by local mores, to avoid the extremes of dissent or self-interest. The meeting house was the symbol of a people drawn together by the observance of ritual, the absorption of common values, and a shared civic and religious gravity.

Unlike bigger towns, Manchester had an original religious society (Congregational) that never split into a second Congregational society that would have required different houses of worship for

1 In both the digital version of the original manuscript and the 1889 published version (p. 11).

2 In 1990 the town name was changed to Manchester-by-the-Sea; the historic name Manchester is used herein, unless mentioned in a modern context.

different parishes. The town's Congregationalism—conservative mainstream post-Puritanism—was durable and relatively flexible. The main threat to the single church in the 1700s was the power of "revivals"—evangelical eruptions—which, in the 1740s and 1760s, overspread New England, a region whose every town and neighborhood took its religion very seriously. These revivals had a powerful effect, causing upheaval and disruption elsewhere, whereas Rev. Benjamin Tappan and his adherents in Manchester were able to weather the storms without much trouble. As a self-contained small town (whose men were often away at sea), Manchester sustained, in the course of two long pastorates in the 1700s, a form of worship that worked for its people, and, especially in the person of Rev. Benjamin Tappan (minister from 1745 to 1790), benefited from a pastor who gave great satisfaction to his flock and left the community and its leaders with a pattern for judging his successors.

From the 1790s forward, the town's one church was occasionally buffeted by the incursions of other Protestant sects which won some local followers but never enough (until the 1840s) to threaten the hegemony and popularity of the old-line Congregationalism.

Manchester's civil society was quite different from other places, even to the ownership of property. Where most towns granted parcels of land to their inhabitants from the outset (1630s and 1640s), here the earliest settlers had received their grants of land from Salem; and they and their descendants/assigns chose to hold the property—the best in town, including its central district—in common for generations. This implies a rare level of comity and cooperation. Not until 1711 did the owners of the common property—known as The 400 Acres—apportion it into separately owned parcels.

The voters at town meeting were adult males who had a taxable income. Most were the heads of the households (men, women, children, servants).[3] They also attended weekly religious services, all in the same small building: a house of God/governance. Perhaps, in Manchester, that meant that civil proceedings were somewhat tempered by religious considerations, while religious meetings were subject to a democratic spirit—at least more than if the two functions were held in separate buildings. As to the "democratic spirit" on the sabbath, we sometimes see the people's freedom in moving from pew to pew during services, to the extent that town meeting's voters would appoint an enforcer to direct traffic in the meeting house and stop "disorder" in time of worship; and it was the job of a voter-appointed committee or the selectmen annually to "seat the meeting house"—to determine who was to sit where.

The level of community cooperation evinced by joint ownership of The 400 Acres may also be seen in the town's relation to the church. From the outset, the inhabitants, acting as a Town, took responsibility (by annually levying a tax) for paying the minister's full salary and for building and maintaining the meeting house. In most other places, this responsibility was taken up by a parish, which controlled the church and paid most of its associated costs. Manchester did not fully shift the financial onus from the Town to a Parish until 1836.

From the outset, too, the town retained common land that was rented out to raise money for the ministry and also built and maintained a parsonage (more than one over time), which sometimes was made available gratis (but not sold) to a minister and sometimes was granted outright to a minister. In 1692, when the town built a new meeting house, a group known as "the meeting house proprietors"

3 Town meeting was held at least once a year, usually in March, which was the first month before 1752.

shared in the construction costs and thereby gained pew ownership; but until 1716 Manchester had no formal religious society or incorporated "church" body. The 1692 building was replaced by one built in 1720. Like its predecessor, the 1720 meeting house was partially owned by its proprietors—a broad base of the inhabitants, men and women, who owned their own pews and a two-thirds interest in the building—while the town retained one-third ownership, including the "parsonage pew" (where the minister's family sat) and many of the seats, which were made available to those unable to afford their own seating. The town also paid for visiting ministers, for the singers, or choir, and, sometimes, for musicians.

Manchester's essential unity, symbolized by the meeting house, carried over into the early republic. The beautiful meeting house of 1809, built at a time that the town had been rocked by the devastating Embargo and had just lost its minister, is a noble reminder of Manchester's unshakable optimism and its abiding faith in God.

Part I: Civic and Religious Concerns of The Early Town, and Its Meeting Houses of 1673 and 1692

Jeffreys Creek, as Manchester was first known by the English inhabitants of this coast, was settled by a few families starting in 1640 or 1641.[4] Among these settlers was Rev. William Walton (1605-1668), who had left Marblehead in hopes of founding a church and partaking of land grants. His hopes were not met. In 1643 he returned to Marblehead, where he would remain for the rest of his life. He must have preached regularly to his fellow settlers while he was at Jeffreys Creek, but his ministry was that of a missionary. The village, renamed Manchester, was recognized by the colony's General Court in 1645.

Today, Manchester-by-the-Sea has a "classic" town common, or green, centrally located with a collection of public buildings: the landmark house of worship, the town hall, the old fire house, and, adjoining, the public library. But this configuration is rather recent: with only a few families in residence, early Manchester did not come together like other, larger towns. For decades, almost all of the town's land was held in common by the first settlers, who built their houses within the boundaries of The 400 Acres, so called, which would not be divided into privately owned lots until 1711. It seems likely that what is now the meeting-house green was considered the town's central place in the mid-1600s: it had a bridge that carried the road over the local stream (Sawmill Brook), the stocks and the animal-pound, a landing place for vessels, and the training field for the militia. A few houses stood nearby, including the first tavern, which, until 1673, likely served as a meeting house for civic and religious gatherings.

Manchester was reached by boat at first, and then over land as well, by a roadway that led through the "Cape Ann Side" part of Salem (now Beverly); the road was claimed to be "sufficient" for its purpose by the end of 1646.[5] More a cartway than a road, it would need frequent repairs to keep it open.

At low tide the upper half of the present Manchester Harbor was a mudflat, through which wound a narrow creek; at high tide, it had shallow coves. The lower part of the harbor, from current Tuck's Point to the mouth, was navigable at all tides but did not offer much anchorage for larger vessels.[6]

The earliest town records, from the 1640s into the 1650s, have not survived; they were kept in what was a First Book of Records. A Second Book of Records contains only a few surviving pages,1650s-1670s; those pages are torn and many pages seem to be missing.[7] At town meetings, the small number

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4 In May, 1640, seventeen Salem church members, headed by Rev. William Walton, asked the General Court to give them "the power to erect a village" at Jeffreys Creek. The petition was granted, but some of the people never moved there; perhaps none moved right away. Before 1645, their power seems to have been limited by Salem, which would make grants of land at Jeffreys Creek as late as 1644 but never to Rev. William Walton.

5 See "Essex County Quarterly Court Records & Files" as published in volumes by the Essex Institute, Salem, volume I, page 108; hereafter cited as ECQC.

6 Bow Bell Ledge, off Tuck's Point, a major obstacle, was somewhat remediated in the 1930s, 100 years after townsmen first tried to have it removed. In the 1880s and after, the upper two-thirds of the Harbor was dredged to make it navigable at low tide. In the old records, the Harbor, such as it was, was called "the river."

7 The published "Town Records of Manchester, From The Earliest Grants of Land…," volume I, was published in Salem in 1889, 200 pages plus index, all transcribed and assembled by a diligent and knowledgeable town committee. In it, the earliest records seem to be out of sequence and not always verbatim; and the system for numbering the original manuscript pages is hard to follow. A second volume was published in 1891 and includes the commoners' records as well as the town meeting records through 1786. The published books are the source for references herein, cited as MTR.

of householders would vote to set an overall tax on themselves, out of which they would pay for town business and for what the town owed to "the country" (Massachusetts Bay) and the county (Essex). They were also to choose selectmen, two jury-men for the County courts, and a constable, tasked with collecting the rates (taxes) and keeping the peace when necessary; and the voters were to choose a committee to meet annually with men from other towns to run the boundaries. They did not always do all of those things; but they did choose carpenter William Allen as a juryman in 1642 and grand juryman in 1643, 1646, 1648, and 1649.[8]

The people were Puritans and most took very seriously the obligation to participate weekly in worship services. No extant town records reference ministers or the raising of money for ministers until 1686; yet Rev. Ames Cheever's 1726 notation—a slender thread!—tells us that the early town was served by ministers surnamed "Ginners, Smith, Stow, Dunham, Millett, Hathorn, Jones, Winborn, Hubbard, Emerson, Goodhue, Eveleth, Webster."[9] It seems unlikely that any clergyman resided in the town before the 1690s; rather, it was served by "supply" ministers preaching on the sabbath.

Early Manchester's few inhabitants were not overly concerned with following rules. They failed to send a delegate to the General Court in Boston; and in 1649 they were reported to the County Court for not fulfilling the duties of a town in holding militia trainings or setting up a pound for stray animals or a pair of stocks for wayward people (ECQC I:160). By June 1649, they chose Pasco Foot as constable—maybe their first ever—for a year (ECQC I:170). Presumably, the people met their legal obligation to attend church every Sunday by going to Salem if they were not visited by a traveling minister.

By the end of 1650 Manchester had a tavern, kept by John Norman as "a house of common entertainment" (ECQC I:205).[10] By 1651 Manchester was a village (per record of 1651 marshland grantees, referenced in 1679 at ECQC VII:296) with at least 16 heads of household (presumably there were others, like Edmund Marshall, a resident who did not qualify for marsh grants):

William Allen,
William Bennett,
Thomas Chubb,
William Everton,
Pasco Foot,
Samuel Friend,
Robert Leach,
Henry Lee,
Nathaniel Masterson,
Thomas Millett,
Richard Norman,
John Norman,
Benjamin Parmiter,
John Pickworth,
John Sibley,
Nicholas Vinson.

8 ECQC I:42,53,114,153,169

9 Darius F. Lamson, "History of Manchester, Mass., 1645-1895," 1895, p. 222; hereafter, cited as Lamson.

10 Benjamin Allen's tavern (at now-#3 North Street), sometimes cited as the first, was built much later than John Norman's, which evidently stood on now-Union Street, on or near #17 (Santander Bank).

Robert Leach was chosen constable in 1651; and in June he served a warrant on Edmund Marshall for being absent from public ordinances for 3-4 sabbath days and for "reproaching" Mr. Thomas Dunham as "a preacher of blasphemy and a common liar" (ECQC I:246). This confirms that Rev. Thomas Dunham (1620-1689) provided religious services to the people of Manchester. Evidently, he had been preceded in that role by Rev. Thomas Jenner, Rev. Ralph Smith,[11] and Rev. Samuel Stow.

In the 1650s, Manchester could be turbulent. In 1656 there were two arrests for women fighting (ECQC II:10). In 1657 the freemen of Manchester were fined for not having attended the colony's General Court; and the town constable was fined too (ECQC II:31,39).

In 1658, the town selectmen were Pasco Foot, John Sibley, and Robert Leach (MTR I:8), although there is no surviving record of the town meeting in which they were elected. In June 1659, Samuel Allen was sworn constable; a year later, Samuel Friend was sworn constable and Nicholas Vinson was chosen grand juryman (ECQC I:161,213,250).

In the absence of relevant records, it may be assumed that the village voters, at town meeting, raised money to pay for their "ministry," meaning those who came to Manchester to preach. For the sacraments (baptism, communion, membership), people would go to Salem's church, of which a few in Manchester were members; later, some would become members of Beverly's church (founded 1667; meeting house built 1656).

In 1660, probably as the result of a town meeting vote, Manchester asked the colony's General Court (legislature) to define the boundary of Manchester and Gloucester—evidently a sore subject. On 31 May 1660 the General Court, "in answer to the petition of the inhabitants of Jeffreys Creek," ordered a committee to determine where "the bounds of each place should be and lie."[12]

The committee did some research and soon reported they "can neither find at that time, or since, any land granted to Gloucester lying toward Manchester." That being so, they proposed that "the two towns be divided in the mid-way between both, at the meeting house … only we conceive in this division Manchester is the sufferer." We know that Gloucester did have a meeting house by 1660 (probably built 1642), whereas it seems that Manchester had a tavern that served as a meeting house.

Disregarding this proposal, the General Court deputies fixed on a line starting along the coast 3.5 miles from Gloucester's meeting house and running northerly toward Ipswich; but this was overruled by the magistrates (upper house of the General Court), who made a new line, "four miles being allowed Gloucester between the meeting houses…"[13] In the Essex County Quarterly Court records we see a boundary set four miles from Gloucester meeting house "toward the Creek," and no reference to a Manchester meeting house.[14] Since Manchester (as Jeffreys Creek), had, in 1640, been allowed to

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11 Benjamin Parmiter, almost 70 in 1680, then testified that (in the 1640s) "he heard Mr. Smith, minister at Manchester, say that Mr. Blindman, the minister at Gloucester, had given him leave to cut hay on his farm at Kettle Cove," ECQC VIII:5. Mr. Smith's step-son, Nathaniel Masterson, is listed among the 1651 recipients of marsh grants.

12 "Records of The Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England," Vol. IV, Part I, 1650-1660, Boston, 1854, pp. 423, 427; hereafter cited as Mass. Bay Records. Note that in 1660 the General Court records refer (twice) to Manchester by its former name of "Jeffreys Creek."

13 Two-page document, evidently a transcript of original files of General Court in 1660, retrieved in 2020 by Susan Parker of the Manchester Historical Museum (MHM) from collection of Phillips Library of Peabody Essex Museum.

14 See 1679 lawsuit, ECQC VIII:4-5. In 1659, Richard Russell of Charlestown, owner of the Blinman farm at Kettle Cove, sold the same to Robert Knight of Marblehead, but had to defend the title from the inhabitants of Manchester, "whose welfare," he

take adjoining lands that were not claimed by another plantation (Gloucester was not settled as a town until 1642), Manchester people naturally thought that they had a claim to the land well east of Kettle Cove.

In June 1661, Thomas Bishop was chosen constable; John Norman, housewright, was chosen grand juryman in September (ECQC II:300). At the same time (1661), in one of the torn pages of the town records, there is a reference to the "ministry" in relation to the town's selling to Goodman Jones the house and land where he then lived (MTR I:10). Perhaps this house had been built for rental income to pay the ministerial expenses.

In a partial town record for 1668 it appears that the selectmen were Thomas Jones, William Allen Sr., and Samuel Friend (MTR I:11). "Selectmen" were annually elected to oversee civic matters; and the inhabitants often chose committees to conduct separate pieces of business.

Although the town records of the 1670s are incomplete and damaged, there is a record for the 12th month (now February) of 1672 (actually 1672/3).[15] Text is missing due to a torn margin, but what remains reads (line-breaks as in original):

"___________ the 12th month, 1672, it was generell/
________d upon at a towne meateing that/
_____g house shall be builded 18 foot/
______ length(?) and with too gabell ends/
_____ up(?) at the landing place by/
_____h the inhabitants arr to come to/
____mber this day fourtnight."

This reads roughly as follows: "it was generally agreed (or voted) upon at town meeting that a meeting house shall be builded 18' _______ in length and with two gable ends, to be set up at the landing place by ______. The inhabitants are to come together to work on the lumber this day fortnight."

The next entry (evidently) names William Bennett, John Pickworth, and Samuel Friend, who together (line-breaks as in original)

"arr to oversee the _____
cutting on & the getting the timber
________the building of the meating h______
and if any man negle___________
according to the time apoynte_________
he give a sofishent reason__________
being absent he or they sha________
5 shillings for his neglect ________
this is generell con(?)_______
by all the inhabitants _________."

told them in May, 1661, "is more joyous to me than your impoverishing" ECQC VIII:5.

15 The quoted sections following are taken from a digital record (in MHM collections) of the original town records manuscript. Note that before 1752, the first month of the year was March and the 25th was the first day. Often dates for January and February were given as the 11th and 12th month, and the year's date would be split, e.g. 1672/3.

These entries show us the town voters meeting in February 1672/3 to authorize construction of a meeting house at the landing place. One dimension was 18', probably the length but maybe the width. It was to have two "gable ends," the usual term for "peaks" (oversized dormers), which were probably built opposite to each other. The inhabitants were (in the cold) to cut the timber and raise the frame (probably) in exactly two weeks (a fortnight). Goodmen Bennett, Pickworth, and Friend were appointed to oversee that work; no inhabitant was to be absent without a sufficient reason, on pain of a five-shilling fine.

The meeting house of 1673 stood on a spot near the brook as it flowed into a salt-water cove that (at high tide) made for a public landing-place for boats. In some other towns, the meeting house was built at a centrally situated place that was handy for a graveyard (as at Marblehead and Beverly). Manchester inhabitants placed the meeting house at a spot near the landing place and most of the houses; the graveyard had been set aside elsewhere by 1668.

The meeting house went unheated. In cold weather, people would come bundled up, and maybe their body heat would make a difference; but essentially it was like holding worship services in a meat locker, everyone sitting in place in the near-dark.

The 1673 meeting house would last until 1692, a matter of 19 years. The main impetus for its construction was to host weekly sabbath services; but it was also used for the town meetings. From Rev. Ames Cheever's list of ministers, it seems that likely candidates circa 1673 were surnamed Millett, Hathorne, Jones, and Winborn.

"Millett" was Thomas Millett (1604-1675), the long-time Teaching Elder of the Gloucester church and frequent preacher there. Likely he preached at Manchester for several years; and he was a resident too, but for how long is unknown.[16] He had a strong Manchester connection in that he was married to Mary (nee Greenaway), the sister of Elizabeth Allen, wife of William. The town evidently set aside a lot of land for his income (but not ownership) while he provided services—in future years it would be known as "Millett's Lot."[17]

From the extant (incomplete) town records, we see no elections of selectmen in the 1670s, although they were probably chosen. In June 1673, presumably in the new meeting house, a town meeting decided that anyone absent from any public meeting or town work was to pay a fine. At that meeting too it seems that certain inhabitants were given small parcels of land and that a committee (William Bennett, Robert Leach, John Pickworth, John Sibley) reported on having run the bounds with Beverly men (MTR I:12). The town had yet to choose a delegate to attend the General Court (legislature) in Boston, an expensive proposition. It also failed (as did Beverly and Salem), as noted by the court in June, 1674, to comply with the law regarding the "Christian nurturance" of children, who by the age of nine, were expected to be able to read English, to have learned a catechism and capital laws, and to be on track toward "honest employment." The selectmen, Samuel Allen, Thomas Bishop, and Aaron Bennett (the latter two could not sign their names), promised to read the law to the local families, who were to be certified by the next board of selectmen (ECQC V:378,427).

16 See 1680 testimony of Benjamin Parmiter, ECQC VIII:5.

17 As mentioned, Manchester held its land in common for many years after settlement; the land reserved for "ministry" income included the "green," which was much larger in those days and extended from the harbor ("the river") across now-Central Street and perhaps an eighth of a mile up the west side of now-School Street. Other scattered parcels of "ministry" land, like Millett's Lot, were rented out for grazing, logging, etc.

In 1674, when Thomas Millett and wife Mary moved to the new town of Brookfield, he became unavailable to Manchester. In 1675, so-called King Philip's War began, fought between the United Colonies troops and the warriors of Indian tribes from Maine to Rhode Island. At Brookfield, Thomas Millett was killed in June 1675; Mary returned to Gloucester. Some Manchester men served in the army. In March 1676, the Court identified Manchester's selectmen as Thomas Bishop, John West, and Samuel Friend; and the constable was John Ellithorp (ECQC VI:132-3).

At a town meeting of 7 March 1677/8 (MTR I:16), pursuant to a law passed at the General Court, it was agreed, with regard to the common land, that all persons living in Manchester having lots or farms granted by Salem or Manchester before 1662 were to have one common right belonging to each lot and to each farm (in proportion); and several persons, who lacked (commonage) propriety but "who have been forward & ready in helping to defray defense of common lands," were now granted a common right too. Although no effort was made to proceed toward a division, it was agreed that the common land was owned in the following shares or proportions:

Samuel Allen Sr. (2 shares)
William Allen (1 share)
Onesiphorus Allen (1 share)
William Allen Jr. (1 share)
Moses Bennett (1 share)
William Bennett (2 shares)
Thomas Bishop (1 share)
John Crow (1 share)
John Elithorpe (1 share)
Robert Leach (2 shares)
Samuel Leach (2.5 shares)
Widow Norman (2 shares)
Widow Pickworth (2 shares)
John Sibley (2 shares)
James Standish lot (1.25 share)
Nicholas Vinson (1.5 share)
John West for his wife (1 share)
Widow Whittier (1 share)
Nicholas Woodbury (3 shares, 1 for farm bought of Messrs. Pitt & Maverick, 1 for purchase of Thomas Chubb, 1 for purchase of Mr. Pitt formerly Parmiter's).

In November 1677, William Bennett's license as an innholder was certified by selectmen Samuel Allen and Samuel Friend (ECQC VI:370). William Bennett would continue as the town inn-holder for several years.

In June 1679, the inhabitants chose Thomas West, John Sibley, and John Ellithorp (not the selectmen) to represent the town in a court case against Robert Knight of Marblehead (ECQC VII:201-2). Knight held ownership of a large tract at Kettle Cove which the people of Manchester claimed as part of their common lands. The land had been in controversy since 1661 evidently. Variants of the case were heard by the court five times in 1679 (twice on appeal), and Manchester or Manchester people

eventually prevailed. In the course of one trial, Knight alleged that "the Creek men"[18] had gathered in a "hugger mugger" on his property and cut down his trees (ECQC VII:201). In the November 1679, case, the defendants (Leach and Allen) submitted more evidence about what could be considered common land, including the record of the 1651 division of marshland among heads of household (ECQC VII:296). Robert Knight, a good sport, would move to Manchester in or before 1686.

Manchester was not populous and was not especially prosperous. Most people were living very simply. The small population kept it from raising much tax money, which meant that they could not "settle" a resident minister, nor could they help poor people who wished to settle there. In September, 1679, the selectmen, William Bennett, Thomas West, and Samuel Leach (ECQC VII:271) petitioned the court to expel Thomas Chick and family, refugees from the war in Maine, claiming that they were "unable to contribute" to the Chicks' well-being "in regard of our own inability and the smallness of our town and accommodations." The Court ordered the Chicks to move back to Maine.

One reason for Manchester's small population may have been The 400 Acres, the large tract of "downtown" land held by a few families in common, and therefore (since not subdivided) unavailable for selling to others. At a town meeting in April, 1684, the inhabitants (who had been represented in negotiations by a committee) agreed with the proprietors of The 400 Acres as to the extent of the proprietors' shares, the overall boundaries, and the owners thereof (Samuel Friend, John Sibley, Joseph Pickworth, Samuel Leach, Robert Leach, John Norman, Nicholas Vinson, William Allen, Samuel Allen Sr., and Onesiphorus Allen). Although The 400 Acres were not then subdivided, a few parcels had been reserved to the town, including the "land and meadow sold to the Joneses by the town for the ministry," and the "landing place at the water side below the town bridge" where the meeting house stood (MTR I:14-15).

The town records that have survived do not include those from the early 1680s showing the election of selectmen and other town officers (if any). At a town meeting in March 1683/4, a committee was chosen and set off some common land to private owners (MTR I:18-19). One year later, in March 1684/5, at a town meeting the committee set off a good deal more common land. This committee may be seen as a fore-runner of the "proprietors of common lands," who would eventually meet as a separate group from the town meeting (MTR I:19-23).

In 1686 Rev. John Winborn is first mentioned in the town records, which are complete, or close to it, from this point forward. He was in Manchester as early as July, 1683, when he bought from Ephraim Jones the former "ministry" house and land in The Plain; Jones, a fisherman, had moved to Marblehead.[19] The selectmen and a committee set a tax rate in August, 1686, for the maintenance and firewood of Mr. Winborn retroactive to May, 1686. All 34 property-owners—not just residents—were assessed by name (MTR I:28-9). The highest assessments were placed on John Sibley, Samuel Leach, Robert Leach, Samuel Allen, John Lee, Aaron Bennett, Thomas West, and Thomas Tewksbury.

Mr. Winborn, as John "Wenborn," had been graduated from Harvard in 1660, a son of William and Elizabeth of Boston. In 1667 he married Elizabeth Hart in Malden. His subsequent career is obscure until we find him in Manchester in 1683. By 1686 evidently his father Mr. William Winborn was also briefly here, chosen "to serve in place of a clerk for the town" and record the births and deaths

18 Note that outsiders, at least, still referred to Manchester people in terms of the old name for the town, Jeffreys Creek.

19 Southern Essex Registry of Deeds, book 6, leaf 98; hereafter, cited as SERD.

(MTR I:30). Rev. John Winborn decided to move to South Carolina.

Probably as an inducement for a new minister, on 2 March 1685/6 (MTR I:52) the voters decided to build a parsonage on a ¾-acre parcel on the north side of the sawmill brook, by the highway (now-School Street), being part of The 400 Acres, whose owners freely granted it to the town "for the setting up of the parsonage house and to be improved for the use of the ministry" (MTR I:52).[20]

Presumably, the parsonage was built right away in 1686. Probably efforts were made to find a new preacher, without success. On 17 March 1686/7 town meeting chose men to fill the offices of constable (Robert Knight Jr.), selectmen (John Sibley, Thomas Tewksbury, John Ellithorp, Aaron Bennett) and "commissioner" (Samuel Leach) to assist the selectmen in making a list of all males over sixteen and an estimate of the value of their property in order to set a tax to be paid to the colony (MTR I:33). This new position of commissioner, later held by others, would eventually be discontinued.

Manchester was caught up in larger events at this time. Early in 1686 a new royal government had been imposed on the Massachusetts Bay colony. Under the Dominion of New England, new laws were enacted based on those of England, replacing the Puritans' system of government and worship. In April 1689, before the new system could be implemented at the local level, word arrived that James II, a Catholic, had been dethroned in favor of his Protestant daughter Mary and her husband William of Orange. In Boston, this inspired an uprising in which the royal authorities were captured, imprisoned, and shipped off to England. On May 17, the Manchester town meeting met and had Thomas Tewksbury, "clerk, in behalf of the whole town," write a letter to the former Governor, the Puritan Simon Bradstreet of Salem, congratulating him for "such a wonderful deliverance out of the hands of tyranny and oppression" and urging the restoration of the previous form of government and worship.[21]

In March 1688/9, the new parsonage house was rented out to fisherman Richard Lotherer for one year (MTR I:34). After three years without a settled minister, the town meeting in September, 1689, appointed a committee "to treat with any man whom they can hear of or now to be fit for the carrying on of the ministerial office here amongst us" (MTR I:34). In October, the town meeting voted 12 li for half a year's maintenance of a minister "if he might be procured" (MTR I:35).

Along came John Eveleth, nineteen, a recent graduate of Harvard, and a grand nephew of the deceased former preacher Thomas Millett. At the town meeting of 10 Feb. 1689/90 the committee reported that they had hired John Eveleth for a year, backdated to Oct. 1, to "officiate among us" at the rate of ten shillings per sabbath "with all necessary charges as is befitting the said Mr. Evelly" (MTR I:36). In October 1690, they raised a salary for him after paying 5 li to Rev. John Winborn to extinguish his claims for land and back salary (MTR I:41).

A new meeting house was needed: on 18 Jan. 1691/2 town meeting admitted that "our old meeting house (is) the most part considerable part of it rotten" and "too small to accommodate our people when convened together for the worship and service of God." The new one was to be 30' long, 25' broad, and 16' high between the sill and roof-plate. The roof was to be like the roofs of the Beverly

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20 Manchester submitted a petition to the General Court, which in February, 1685/6, replied that the town should look to "the charity of neighboring churches and congregations to afford them some present relief and assistance," Mass. Bay Records V:510.

21 Letter of 17 May 1689, "to be inserted" in the town records, signed by Thomas Tewksbury, retrieved by Susan Parker of MHM from collection of Phillips Library of Peabody Essex Museum.

or Wenham meeting houses, with a belfry suitable for a good bell of 100 lbs. or more. The interior was to have three galleries, one running the whole length, and two the whole breadth at each end of the building. A committee was to contract with a builder to have the frame raised by June 10, 1692, with all work finished by Oct. 31. It was to be set up near the old meeting house and finished “with seats and all other decent and suitable appurtenances;” and the committee was also to assign the seating—“to place the people in the seats of said house” (MTR I:44-5).

The seating of a meeting house was generally done with the most prominent and pious people seated forward, but money was involved as well. Likely the cost of the meeting house, as finally completed, was borne mainly by the proprietors of the building (who owned pews and seats), for in 1720, when it was taken down, two-thirds of its value were assigned to the proprietors, and one-third to the town.

Presumably, the new meeting house was finished on schedule, or at least before winter 1692/3. Of course 1692 was the year of the witchcraft hysteria, which bypassed Manchester—a testament to the character of the people and their leaders, young Mr. Eveleth included.[22] The crisis in Massachusetts called for a long session at General Court, and this time Manchester could not shirk its duty. In June 1692 Thomas Tewksbury was chosen to attend the legislature, convened by Gov. William Phipps, whose agenda included addressing the witchcraft matters as well as introducing the new royal government he headed. Tewksbury would attend the session for 35 days; and in July he was chosen by town meeting to be a “commissioner” (MTR I:46).[23] Phipps then headed north to carry on the war being fought with the Indians and French Canadians, which had begun in 1688. Manchester’s fishery suffered, as vessels stayed away from the Gulf of Maine and banks off Nova Scotia. The war would not end until 1697.

Manchester had already fallen behind in its payments to John Eveleth, and in June and November 1692 the town meetings ordered the collection of arrearages from constables who had not paid over the full amounts of the ministry taxes they were to have collected (MTR I:47). At the town meeting of 24 March 1692/3 it was voted to sue Moses Bennett for his failure, as constable, to have turned in all of the tax money that he had collected.[24] Evidently to prevent a recurrence of such problems, the voters designated Jenkin Williams and Thomas Bishop as tithingmen—the first so identified—to collect the minister’s tax separately; then, too, they elected Thomas Tewksbury town clerk—the first ever (MTR I:49).[25]

John Eveleth (1670-1734) sometimes could not get to Manchester to preach, at least in 1693; on such occasions, he arranged for his place to be filled by his Harvard classmate Rev. John Emerson Jr., a native of Gloucester residing at Salem. Both men would stay at militia-leader John Sibley’s when in town (MTR I:48). Mr. Emerson did not serve long in Manchester at this time but would return in 1695.

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22 Joseph Emmons (b. 1641), a shoemaker recently arrived in Manchester from Marblehead, was arrested after being accused of wizardry by a Salem Village woman. Freed from prison late in 1693, he moved to Hampton, NH, where he remained.

23 Town meeting in September, 1693, voted to avoid spending so much money on a General Court representative by getting the agreement of Capt. John Browne of Marblehead, that town’s representative, to represent Manchester too (MTR I:51).

24 In December, 1694, town meeting voted to sell 7 li (pounds) worth of town common land to make up for Bennett’s deficiency and also voted to pursue four other former constables to collect money that they had withheld (MTR I:60).

25 In the 1889 published “Town Records of Manchester,” vol. I, the contents of the Third Book of Town Records begin on page 12. Thomas Tewksbury, who by 1684 had come to Manchester from Newbury, proceeded to collect all the earlier records he could find, going back to 1661, and to copy them into what was known as the Third Book of Town Records, and to keep complete records going forward.

By mid-1693 it seems that Mr. Eveleth had agreed to come live in Manchester if his terms were met. The parsonage of 1686 was fixed up (MTR I:51-2); and in July 1693 the town meeting earnestly concerned itself with "some effectual way for the encouragement and settling a minister in our town, namely Mr. John Eveleth," agreeing on their duty "to maintain the ministry of the Gospel amongst us," and dreading "the ill consequences" of making themselves "destitute of such means whom God hath ordained for the everlasting salvation of immortal souls…" Several biblical passages were cited in the record, all to the effect of "where there is no vision the people perish." Having thus encouraged themselves, they voted a 35 li salary for Mr. Eveleth, who was to have the free use of the parsonage house with its land and meadow, as well as the use of the six acres of "Millett's Lot," which was to be fenced.

John Eveleth signed the agreement, and at last Manchester had its own resident minister (MTR I:53-5). Possibly he was ordained on Oct. 1.[26] In December 1693, the town meeting balanced the accounts, paying him 24.16.2. for arrears and ongoing salary and prevailing upon him to represent them at General Court session to hear the grievances of towns (MTR I:56).

In April 1694, the selectmen and "commissioner" John Sibley set a tax rate for purchasing ammunition and building a watch house and fencing the minister's orchard (MTR I:57). Later that year, in June, the voters elected Thomas West of Beverly the moderator of the town meeting and proceeded to sort out the difference between "contributions" and taxes paid to the minister (MTR I:58). At the July town meeting, moderated by Thomas Tewksbury, he and two others were chosen special "assessors"—evidently the first time this title was used—to make a tax bill for payment of the colony's tax on the town (MTR I:58).

In January, 1694/5, there was held a meeting of "the proprietors of the commons" who conferred a commonage right upon "the ministry" and at the same time appointed five men as "overseers or rangers" to see that "all intruders" upon the common land would be held accountable (MTR I:61). They also affirmed and explained the allotment of the common lands made in 1677 (MTR I:62-65). This meeting of common land proprietors is the first we see of this group, which was not the same as the proprietors of The 400 Acres. In February town meeting voted to have a barn built (probably for the minister) 18' long by 16' wide and 9' stud, and to have John Knowlton set up a grist mill "upon the river by the meeting house at a convenient place for the use of the town" (MTR I:61). To have a town-owned grist mill was an unusual commitment. The town meeting of 22 March 1694/5 voted in selectmen (Thomas West, John Sibley, Joseph Woodberry) and various other officers, including the first "clerk of the market," John Bishop (MTR I:65). This implies that the town had a regular market-place, probably on the meeting-house common, in which farmers and provisioners appeared on a regular basis, perhaps weekly, to sell their goods to the people, with fees going to the clerk; perhaps sellers' stalls were set up inside the meeting house in bad weather. There were then evidently no retail stores in Manchester. Mr. Bishop would remain clerk of the market for some years, and, by March 1696/7, culler of fish and barrel staves as well (MTR I:76).

By August 1695, Mr. Eveleth was ready to move on. Town meeting voted to try to hire him for four years; failing that, the selectmen were "to get another if possible as soon as they can" (MTR I:67). By the fall of 1695, John Eveleth was settled as minister at Enfield; and in 1700 he would become the minister at Stow.

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26 Shipton's "Harvard Graduates," Class of 1689; hereafter, Shipton.

Manchester evidently hired the Newbury schoolmaster Edward Thompson (1665-1705), a graduate of Harvard in 1684, as visiting preacher. He was much-admired; and in November 1695, town meeting offered him a 45 li salary and free moving of his family into the fixed-up parsonage (MTR I:68). He chose not to come to Manchester; later he would be the minister at Marshfield. John Emerson Jr., their former visiting preacher, resumed that role; and finally, in January 1696, they landed him with a 45 li salary (MTR I:69). The town meeting of 27 March 1695/6 appointed a committee "to treat and agree with a schoolmaster to teach our children to read and to write" (MTR I:70). This is the first reference to schooling. Perhaps it was at the insistence of the minister. By October, Mr. Emerson had procured a bell for the meeting house, and Ephraim Jones was hired as the sexton (MTR I:75).

The town meeting of Dec. 25, 1696 (Christmas was not observed), concerned itself with seating problems in the meeting house. Some people had "no certain place for their being seated," and some were "disorderly" in taking others' seats. A committee was to assign the seating and to build any new seats if necessary, to prevent further disorder. Assignments were to be made "according to each and every person's proportion that he paid towards the building of said house and also according to what such do now pay to the ministry as near as they can unless in case of any ancient grave sober persons and of good conversation" (MTR I:75). This last evidently provided for up-front seating for pious older people who had not paid much.

At town meeting of 19 March 1696/7, the voters were again concerned about "strangers not belonging to our town" who were cutting timber on common lands and the prosecution of these "trespassers" (MTR I:77). At another meeting in March, town officers were chosen, including John Lee as town clerk (MTR I:77). In July 1698, the west end of the parsonage house was rented to Thomas Battis, who provided a pair of door hinges for the meeting house in partial payment (MTR I:84). Presumably, the eastern end of the parsonage was occupied by Rev. John Emerson and family.

45 School Street: Residence of Reverends Thurston and Emerson

In November 1698, town meeting voted to sell George Norton (shipwright) the land "lying before the meeting house" where he had built a house-frame (MTR I:83). In March 1698/9, money was paid for building a new "pound," which was a small corral for stray animals. It too stood on the common, or in the street, near the meeting house (MTR I:83). The town had maintained a pound since the 1640s probably.

In December, 1699, the "commoners" met for the first time since 1695 and chose a committee which made a division of the western part of the common lands, laid out in 38 lots (MTR I:87-93).

Rev. John Emerson Jr. (1670-1732) preached at Manchester, and probably resided here, until April of 1699 when he was last paid (MTR I:84). He moved to Salem, then Ipswich; then (1703) he would become pastor at Newcastle, New Hampshire, and later at Portsmouth's Second Church

(Shipton, Class of 1689).

A new parsonage was in order. At the town meeting of 26 June 1699 (Lt. John Sibley, moderator), having sold the former parsonage and its land for 20 li to John Tarrin in April (MTR I:85), the voters decided to build a fine new one, 42' long by 18' wide, and with 14' stud—two stories high, doubtless with a pitched roof and center chimney. It was to stand "in some convenient place near the meeting house" (MTR I:86).

By January 1700, Rev. Nicholas Webster (1673-1717) was living and preaching in Manchester (MTR I:93). A native of Newbury, he was a graduate of Harvard in 1695 and husband of Mary Woodman. His sister, Sarah Webster, was the wife of Rev. Edward Thompson (1665-1705) who had preached at Manchester in 1695. Nicholas and Mary Webster and their children moved to Manchester and occupied the ministry house. He was skilled in medicine and probably served as the town doctor too.

Part II: Civic and Religious Concerns of The Town in The 18th Century, and Its Meeting House of 1720

In the first decade of the 18th century, Rev. Nicholas Webster evidently lived in Manchester and served as the pastor of the church. The population remained small and was made up primarily of descendants (now in the third generation) of the early settlers. Much of the land remained in common and in the ownership of the proprietors of The 400 Acres. Perhaps no other old town in Massachusetts had so much land undivided among the inhabitants. This situation would change in the years of the next decade, capped by the events of 1711.

At the town meeting of New Year (March 25), 1699/1700, Thomas West (of Beverly) was chosen moderator, and Sgt. Robert Leach, John Knowlton, and Samuel Lee were chosen selectmen. Joseph Woodberry was chosen constable; John Lee, clerk; tithingmen Onesiphorus Allen and Aaron Bennett; highway surveyors Abram Marsters and John Pearce; fence-viewers Philip Nichols and Samuel Allen Sr.; culler of fish James Pitman; clerk of market and packer John Bishop (MTR I:93).

In May, 1700, the proprietors of common land (a group separate from the town inhabitants) met to identify and sell some parcels that were "not convenient to be improved in general" (MTR I:94). This was followed by meetings on Dec. 16 (in which they agreed to sell House Island) and on 10 Jan. 1700/1 in which they identified the lands that Samuel Friend, deceased, had owned within The 400 Acres (MTR I:95-97). On January 28 they met again and agreed to divide some of the common lands into five parts, three of them near Kettle Cove (MTR I:97).

In the meantime, at the inhabitants' town meeting on 16 Jan. 1700/1 it was voted to have constable Joseph Woodberry collect 4.5.8 "to pay the Indians for our township" (MTR I:97). In the 1680s, many towns had secured deeds from descendants of Indian sagamores to establish the town's right to their land separate from any claim of the King's. Manchester (like Beverly) did the same much later: on 19 Dec. 1700 the selectmen paid 3.19.0 to Samuel English and John Umpee, "Indians," of Middlesex County, grandsons of Sagamore John of Agawam "alias Masquenomenit" (Masconomet), and so acquired their claim on the "soil" and "growth" enjoyed by the Town of Manchester "for the space of sixty years and upward, and that in the first place by the consent and approbation" of Masconomet and his descendants.[27]

At the meeting house on 28 March 1700/1 town meeting voted that John Knowlton was to finish building a seat for himself "next to the west stairs," and that a committee was to proceed as usual to seat the meeting house. In addition, Mark Tricker was hired as sexton, to ring the bell and sweep the meeting house, for a fee of 1.4.0 (MTR I:98).

Presumably, the town had been prospering during this time of peace; but the fishery would be diminished once again, for war with the French and Indians recommenced in 1702 and would continue for years.

In February, 1703/4, the proprietors of the common lands voted that the rest of the common lands should be divided among the share-holders; and in April a committee was chosen to "renew

27 SERD 14:82, recorded 1700; note that Joseph English, named in the deed, did not join his brother Samuel English and John Umpee in signing it; nor did their sister (named in the Beverly deed, although John Umpee was not). In 1638 Masconomet himself had ceded Ipswich and Chebacco; and in 1700 Samuel English and his brother and sister, as heirs of Masconomet, had ceded their claims on Beverly; whereas the claims on Salem and Marblehead (1684) were ceded by other Indians altogether.

bounds between the commons and particular proprietors" and did so in 38 lots in March, 1705/6 (MTR I:104-6,109-114).

Town meetings were held all along, voting for town officers and various boundary-running projects. In a list of 1709 town debts, we see amounts paid to John Lee for mending the meeting house seats and for a ladder for the parsonage house (MTR I:119).

In 1710 the English captured Nova Scotia. Maine remained contested territory for another three years, which kept the fishermen from ranging safely to the best fishing grounds. In July 1711, a proclamation was read regarding deserters from the "expedition to Canada" (MTR I:120).

In 1711, evidently, much of the common land had been distributed, but The 400 Acres remained to be subdivided. On 23 May 1711 "the proprietors of the land called The 400 Acres" divided their property in specific metes and bounds. This land, including most of what is now downtown Manchester, had remained in common since the settling of the town in the 1640s. The proprietors were Onesiphorus Allen, Samuel Allen, John Bishop, Elizabeth Carter, John Knowlton, Robert Leach Sr., Samuel Leach, John Lee, Abraham Masters, and John Stone (MTR I:121-128).

The war ended in 1713, which allowed Manchester's small fishing fleet to go the banks off Maine and Nova Scotia without fear of attack. The town had some money, and would make more in the years to come, bankrolled by the merchants of Salem, who sold the cured fish overseas.

The town records for the years 1711-1715 are evidently incomplete: whole years (e.g. 1713) are missing, and there are few votes for selectmen etc. The last payment to Mr. Webster is recorded in 1711. He may have continued preaching into the year 1715. Then, if he had not done so already, he moved to Gloucester, where he worked as a physician.

The town meeting of 5 Dec. 1715 voted "to have a minister to preach the gospel to us as soon as we can conveniently;" and a committee was chosen to confer with ministers of neighboring towns, while all were "to pray unto God that He would be pleased to send forth a faithful laborer into this little part of His vineyard if it be His good pleasure" (MTR I:131).

At just this time, the Marbleheaders, whose fishery was booming, were choosing an assistant pastor for their aged minister, Rev. Samuel Cheever. The competitors were the formidable duo of John Barnard and Edward Holyoke, and a third, Ames Cheever, 29, son of the incumbent. Ames was not preferred at Marblehead; and Manchester moved quickly. On 12 March 1715/16 town meeting ordered the selectmen to agree with some men to repair the meeting house forthwith, to offer 70 li to Ames Cheever for a salary along with the parsonage house and an acre belonging, and to agree with him to be "our settled minister" and be given a formal call (MTR I:132-3). That they first voted to fix up the meeting house indicates that it was not in good shape.

This was a major commitment from the small town—a much larger salary than Mr. Webster's, together with the outright gift of the parsonage and its land. Ames Cheever responded favorably, for on 6 April 1716, another town meeting was held, in which it was voted to make a "legal conveyance" of the parsonage and to have a committee treat with Mr. Cheever, whereupon the proprietors of The 400 Acres gave up their rights to a parcel of land on the west side of the highway to the sawmill (now School Street)—the acre on which the parsonage house was standing (MTR I:132-3).

On 4 Oct. 1716 Ames Cheever (1686-1756) signed the agreement in which he was given a 70 li salary, his annual firewood or 10 li, and "the town's house wherein Mr. Webster lived and a piece of land where it stands, 1 or 1.5 acres with the barn, fences, trees, etc.;" and the further agreement that when the town reached a population of 80 families his salary would be raised to 80 li, and, when it reached 120 families, 100 li. Clearly, the people felt that Manchester would attract newcomers, given that they now had a settled minister and much available land that could be sold out of former holdings from The 400 Acres. The town meeting ended with a vote to hold a fast day in the third week of October "to seek God's blessing in order to ordain of Mr. Ames Cheever to be our settled minister and pastor" (MTR I:136).

Cheever was thirty, married (to Anna Gerrish), and experienced, having grown up in a minister's home and attended Harvard (class of 1707). Presumably, he conferred with Dr. Nicholas Webster, his predecessor, who would soon die at Gloucester (22 Dec. 1717).

Rev. Ames Cheever was ordained 7 Nov. 1716 in a ceremony involving ministers from other towns as well as the local people. On that same date, the church—meaning those who were in full communion as formal members—was gathered, adopting as its creed the Westminster Assembly's Catechism (a Puritan formulation of 1647 in England). It was made up of a few Manchester people who on Oct. 21 had been dismissed from the church at Beverly (a few preferred to remain members there for some years more). The founding members of the Manchester church were Benjamin Allen, Jonathan Allen, Joseph Allen & wife, Jabez Baker & wife, John Knowlton and children John, Joseph, and Abigail; Robert Leach, John Lee, Samuel Lee, Josiah Littlefield, John Sibley & wife, and Samuel Stone (Lamson, 225). They were soon joined by Samuel Allen and wife Abigail (6 Jan. 1716/7); Abigail Tarring, Sarah Pitman, Hannah Masters; Elizabeth and Lydia Knight (31 March 1717); John Foster and Elizabeth Whittier (28 April 1717); Anna Nichols (26 May 1717); and Aaron Bennett and Mary Pearce (25 Aug. 1717).[28] Benjamin Allen and Samuel Lee were chosen the deacons.

Cheever's ministry got off to a good start. On 23 Dec. 1716 the proprietors of the town's common land—there was still plenty of it—voted to offer him a choice of one of three parcels of land: 15 acres pasturage near the mill, 10 acres in Poplar Plain, or 8 acres near Milletts Bridge (MTR I:136).

Of course, the new church was a major presence in the town and affected its decision-making. Its minister, whose salary was paid by a town-wide tax, was the most important man in Manchester; and the church created new opportunities for people to show their piety and to have influence, including two deacons. These were, however, internal to the church and its religious mission. The town itself continued to own one-third of the meeting house and to pay the salary and most of the expenses of the minister. Church officials would also raise money, "contributions," toward his and his family's comfort.

On 12 Feb. 1716/17, the selectmen (who were also the assessors) set forth a town (tax) rate on all property-owners, including women (MTR I:137). This probably assured enough money for Mr. Cheever.

One of the major effects of the formation of the church, evidently, was the decision to elect a variety of town officers to manage the town's business. This new organization was introduced at

28 Per manuscript Records of Manchester First Church, online; hereafter, cited as MCR. Note that in these records there is a typescript of a church covenant of 7 Nov. 1716 at the "embodying" of the church, with the names of nine men, and five more men signing at the time of Cheever's ordination. It does not include the women members.

the town meeting of 26 March 1716/17. Until then, the only officers had been selectmen, a clerk, a constable, and a treasurer (a fairly new position). Evidently the tithingmen (first elected in 1693) were no longer elected. At this meeting the voters elected selectmen (Robert Leach Jr., John Lee Sr., and Thomas Pitman), a clerk (John Lee Jr.), a constable (Richard Leach), and a treasurer (Samuel Lee Jr.); for the first time, they also elected surveyors of highways (three men), fence viewers (two men), field drivers/cowherds (four men), a clerk of the market (John Bishop), and a culler of fish (John Pearce) (MTR I:137). In 1718, this array of officers would be expanded to include sealers of leather and tithingmen (MTR I:142).

These changes in town government, making for a more inclusive and job-specific organization, were consistent with the way such matters had been handled in other towns for many decades. It was a reflection both of Manchester's increasing population and its sense of itself as a "real" town with its own church. It may be said that this was the moment at which Manchester began to regard itself as a town rather than a village.

Manchester's success in settling a minister and running its municipal business attracted the attention of people at Beverly Farms, among whom the prominent West family had close ties to Manchester. On 17 June 1717, town meeting voted to send Capt. John Knowlton to the General Court in Boston "with the men of the farm of Captain West of Beverly" to present a petition allowing the Beverly men to separate from Beverly and join with Manchester—and "to raise our former petition if he think best" (MTR I:137). The Beverly annexation did not come to pass, and the content of "the former petition" is unknown; but it shows that Manchester was a place that had attractions for others and ambitions of its own.

While the town had evidently hired a schoolmaster in 1696, it seems that the school had not been continued, perhaps because of the hard times brought on by the war. Public education was again important, in a town whose new minister had signed an agreement with seven men, four of whom could not even spell their names (MTR I:135). There was a town schoolmaster by March, 1718 (every child sent to the schoolmaster was to pay 5 pence per week); and town meeting appointed a committee to join the selectmen "to look for a school mistress" (MTR I:142).

By the fall of 1718 it was the intention of the town to build a new meeting house and a schoolhouse, both, evidently, on the landing-place common near the extant meeting house. This we see at the meeting (12 Sept. 1718) of the Proprietors of the Common and Undivided Lands (probably gathered in the meeting house), evidently twelve in number, with Capt. John Knowlton as moderator (MTR II:1). These are evidently the successors to, or revivers of, the old Proprietors of Common Lands, as well as to the Proprietors of The 400 Acres, who had already agreed to divide their lands in 1711.

Like much else in Manchester, the Commoners' activities were inspired by the events surrounding the hiring of Rev. Ames Cheever. At this first meeting they voted that every common-land proprietor who had dwelled in Manchester in 1716 should receive 20 acres of upland and five acres of swamp, to be awarded in a drawing (lottery), with a plan to be drawn up by a hired "artist" (surveyor). The whole of the common land was described as running from a line eastward of the meeting house all the way out to the boundary with Ipswich. They referred to "their great cost in settling Mr. Cheever among us as our minister," and agreed that "all timber on any man's land shall be free to build our new meeting house and schoolhouse." All of the common land was to be divided by 1768. Significantly, they

wished to encourage the growth of the town and to recognize the presence of the people who were living there without common-land rights. They voted that any man who settled (or lived) in Manchester as a freeholder (owner of property) shall receive one commonage right (the original proprietors would receive one extra right for every new right so awarded) until there was a total of 100 proprietors. They also voted that any quarter-acre of their common lands could be sold to anyone who would agree to build on it and reside there for seven years (MTR II:1).

On 22 Dec. 1719 town meeting voted to build a new meeting house "as fast as it can be done," to be 49' by 35' in footprint, 20' high inside, with side walls to be planked and not studded. This building would be about one-third larger than the extant meeting house, and 4' higher. Planking the walls meant that stout boards, 20' long and perhaps an inch thick, would be set up vertically on all sides (with holes made for the windows) and give the structure much greater strength than if they had used studs. It was to be clad in clapboards, with casement windows whose glass was set in lead cames.

Evidently the new meeting house was built early in 1720. Like most meeting houses, it looked like an oversized barn with windows. Upstairs, it had a front gallery and a side gallery, with pews and seats. Its pews may have been arranged in square cubicles, high-walled and accessed by half-doors. It also had seats (per 1751 repairs). The meeting house was owned partly by shareholders ("proprietors") and partly by the town. The front door was nine-paneled and large. Behind the pulpit was a sounding board, to project the minister's voice.[29]

1720 Third Meeting House by W. H. Tappan (Lamson p. 240)

In March 1721, Jabez Dodge was chosen school master, to be paid no more than 20 li per year (MTR I:150). Dodge, a tailor who had come from Ipswich in 1710, did not long hold the teacher's job; soon he would be a selectman and town clerk. In 1723 Manchester decided to launch something new: a free school. In February, the town meeting voted a tax of 10 li for the next four years "to support a free school for all sexes for reading and writing English and for ciphering" (MTR I:155). The new schoolmaster, "to teach the children reading and writing of English," was native son Nathaniel Lee (as of the town meeting of March, 1722/3); he would be teaching at the new school house, to be set up "southward of the meeting house" and built to the dimensions of 24' by 17' by 7' stud, probably with a pitch roof (MTR I:155,157).

Evidently Mr. Lee did not last the four years they'd hoped for. They turned to their minister, Ames Cheever, who took on the job; however, by May 1727, there was some question about his desire to continue. At the town meeting of May 8, a committee was empowered "to treat with our Rev. Mr. Cheever to know of him whether or not he will provide for us a school and if he refuses to provide for

29 The 1720 meeting house seats, pews, galleries, and ownership are referenced in the 1751 town meeting that addressed repairs. The front door ended up after 1809 in the south end of the Foster warehouse. The sounding board bounced around and ended up in the Library. In Lamson's "History" there is a drawing of the 1720 meeting house, undated, showing also the steeple/tower that was added in 1754.

us any longer also to reckon with him for all his disbursements for support of a school." Although he had some grievances with the town, he graciously agreed to "take care and provide suitable schooling for our children and youths for this year" (MTR I:170).

On Oct. 19, 1727, a sabbath day, Manchester, like the rest of coastal New England, was rocked by a great earthquake. No one died (evidently), and the buildings (including the meeting house) survived; but the people were thrown into a state of dread. One result was a turning to God. Mr. Cheever encouraged this, as about 40 new members were taken into the church during the ensuing months;[30] this was also true in other places.

At town meeting on 11 March 1729/30, Mr. Cheever was out as schoolmaster and Mr. Jonathan Pierpont was hired for 45 li to keep a free school for one year (MTR I:179). Pierpont, 33, the son of the minister in Reading, was a graduate of Harvard in 1714; he had taught school for some years before going to now-Portland, where he had been minister in 1721. After teaching at Manchester (assuming he did) in 1730, he returned to Maine and would work as a surgeon and soldier at Fort Richmond.

At that same town meeting, they raised an extra 30 li to pay Mr. Cheever, who in turn released his claim on the income of the ministry land at Milletts Swamp as well as on any town-raised extra contributions. By May of 1731 he was back before town meeting, complaining that he had never been given a deed to the house and land—his domicile—that was part of his settlement contract (MTR I:183). This had led to some hard feelings over the years (in 1727 especially). He was found to be correct; and on 10 June 1731—fourteen years late—a committee conveyed the property to Mr. Cheever. In April, 1734, town meeting voted him an additional 45 li to pay for renovations to his house, he to give the town a receipt for all of his salary received up to that time (MTR I:194).

In March 1733/4, town meeting voted to build a Town Wharf, 50' long, at the landing place by the meeting house and east of the schoolhouse (MTR I:194-5). This wharf, which cost 33 li to construct, was intended as a municipal profit center; by 1738 it would be managed by a hired wharfinger, Samuel Allen 3rd, who collected fees for vessels that tied up there and loaded or unloaded cargo (MTR II:27). It may have been built out from the land that was formerly granted to George Norton, shipwright, in the 1690s, but that had been traded back to the town in 1725 by Samuel Lee Jr., housewright, in exchange for "a piece by the pound" on which he evidently proceeded to build his residence).[31] It was the scene of much unloading of mud and "sea muck" that would be trundled off for manuring farms and gardens.

The free school was maintained for many years. For example, on 17 March 1734/5 town meeting voted that the main school was to be supported by 25 li per year to the school master "in the school house, fall and winter," while another 25 li went to four "school dames" to keep free schools for young children at small schoolhouses ("dame schools") at Newport (West Manchester), near the meeting house, at The Plains, and at Kettle Cove (MTR I:198).

Presumably, the meeting house was the site of productive town meetings and satisfying worship services during the next few years. It appears that Mr. Cheever presided over revivals, bringing in several new church members, in 1737-8 and in 1741-2 (p. 8, Brief History). Evidently a "pew for Negroes" had been designated in 1737 (Lamson, 241). At that time, enslaved black people lived in a few

30 "Brief History, Articles of Faith, Covenant and Living Members of the Orthodox Congregational Church in Manchester, Mass.", Boston, 1851, p. 8; hereafter, cited as "Brief History".

31 In the 1800s it became the Manchester House hotel, on Central Street, adjoining the brook. See SERD 44:86.

families, notably that of Samuel Lee Jr., who had emerged as the wealthiest townsman, as a result of his construction business (wharves and houses).

All was not well in Manchester. There may have been a problem between the town and the church by 1743, and a problem between Mr. Cheever and his parishioners. The first we see of it is on 29 March 1743, when town meeting voted to choose a committee (Samuel Allen 3rd, Samuel Morgan, Jonathan Herrick) "to treat with the proprietors of the meeting house to give up their right and to make it a town house" (MTR II:33). From this, we gather that the town meeting voters wanted to make the meeting house their own, to be used as a town hall. There is no further recorded discussion of this.

At this moment, the leading citizen of the town, Samuel Lee Jr., builder turned merchant, moved to Marblehead with his family of younger children, leaving behind his two older sons, Samuel and John. At Marblehead, Samuel Lee became a judge and prosperous shipping merchant, in partnership with his son Jeremiah, 22 in 1743. The firm would make a point of employing Manchester men on their vessels and buying Manchester fish.[32]

By late 1743 there was a crisis in the pastorate of Ames Cheever. Money may have been at the root of it; but the result was that Mr. Cheever was giving offense to a large number of his parishioners, evidently both from the pulpit and in his discussion of the issues. Matters reached an impasse by February 1744, when Mr. Cheever, who was inclined to resign his ministry, requested the convening of a council of seven other ministers to investigate the problems and advise him and his congregation. This council conducted an inquiry and rendered its findings: as to Mr. Cheever, "…we solemnly exhort you to walk more circumspectly and to bridle your tongue…" and it concluded that, "for the advancement of Christ's Kingdom in this place and the spiritual happiness of his people here," it would be best for him to resign, which he did on February 27. He would evidently remain in town as a private citizen thereafter (MCR 25 March 1743/4).

One consequence of this was that John Easkoot, who had withdrawn from the church (probably because of the controversy) was welcomed back and "restored to the church fellowship" (MCR 8 March 1743/4). No doubt others had been similarly disaffected.

Without a settled parson, Manchester was probably visited by traveling preachers in 1744 and into 1745. By the summer of 1745 everyone was satisfied with the preaching of Benjamin Toppan[33] (1720-1790), a native of Newbury and graduate of Harvard, class of 1742. At a church meeting held on 22 July 1745 it was voted to give "Mr. Benjamin Toppan a call to the work of the gospel ministry among us" and to have a committee (Capt. John Lee, Mr. Robert Herrick, Deacon Benjamin Lee) invite him. On Nov. 17, a church meeting acknowledged his acceptance, and decided on Dec. 11 as the day of his ordination. For his settlement, Mr. Toppan was voted to have 450 li upon his coming to Manchester, with a salary worth 148 ounces of silver, and a "sufficiency of firewood" (MTR II:47).[34]

Benjamin Toppan was a by-the-book clergyman, trained in the post-Puritan Calvinism of Harvard College, and no fan of the "Great Awakening," the evangelical religious revival which was spreading

32 Col. Jeremiah Lee (1721-1775), a native son of Manchester, would become one of the greatest of Massachusetts colonial merchants, and a top man among the leaders of the rebel movement. His enormous house still stands in Marblehead, as does his father's.

33 He spelled his name Toppan but later came to spell it Tappan, as did his sons.

34 See Lamson, pp. 265-270, for a sketch of the life of Rev. Benjamin Tappan.

across New England. The revival was marked by outdoor rallies and passionate professions of rebirth in Christ. The neighboring Ipswich parish of Chebacco (now Essex), had a "New Light" preacher, Rev. John Cleaveland, who attracted some people from Manchester; and at least one, Mrs. Abigail (Stone) Leach, 41, widow of John, wished to be dismissed to his church. Mr. Toppan evidently opposed this idea; and the church voted on 14 May 1747 both to expel her from communion and to refuse to dismiss her to Chebacco. The double vote was signed by Mr. Toppan and brought to her by Deacon Benjamin Lee and Robert Herrick (MCR 14 May 1747). We may be sure that Mrs. Abigail Stone Leach held to her principles, for in 1750 the church meeting voted to expel members Aaron Bennett, 44, and wife Bethiah, 37, with Abial Harsham, 50 (wife of Joseph), "till such time as you shall manifest signs of repentance and make us Christian satisfaction." Bethiah, Abial, and Abigail were sisters, daughters of Samuel Stone and Abial Gaines of Manchester.

47 School Street: Old Red House of Rev. Benjamin Tappan

As to the worship services—in which there was a noontime intermission—during the period of about 1760-1800 Jacob Allen (1721-1805) "pitched the tune"—sounded his pitch pipe—while someone "lined out" (sang a line of lyrics first) the psalms as they were sung, since some people could not read or did not have a psalter.[35] The meeting house had "singing seats" so we may imagine that there was a choir. At first, Mr. Toppan perhaps made use of the old Puritans' "Whole Book of Psalms," but starting in 1753, the congregants were singing from Isaac Watts' "Psalms & Hymns" (Isaac Watts, London, 1707, and after). Before Mr. Toppan gave his long prayers, notes were sent up to him and he would read for the people to pray for mariners at sea and family members ill at home. Then came the sermon, timed by hourglass: he would name his text and discourse in "formal divisions" to 19thly, 20thly, and beyond, until the close.

In 1751-2 the meeting house would be repaired, enlarged, and updated; and in 1754 it would receive a steeple, or tower. It is notable that, in this decade, the British went to war against the French, and sent armies to America to invade Canada. None of the records of Manchester reflect any requisition of money, supplies, or men for the war effort. As it happened, the English were repeatedly defeated by the French and French Canadians under the generalship of General Montcalm.

By March 1750/1, town government had added new positions to be filled by the citizens. At that town meeting were chosen a moderator (Capt. John Lee), three selectmen/assessors (Capt. John Lee, Jonathan Herrick, Andrew Hooper), a clerk (Benjamin Lee), a treasurer (Thomas Lee), a constable (Richard Day), four highway surveyors, four hog-reeves, four haywards, four surveyors of fences, two tithingmen, a sealer of weights and measures, two measurers of boards and timbers, three corders of wood, one inspector of deer, and a sealer of leather.

35 See Lamson, pp. 255-263, for a sketch, "A Sunday In the Olden Time."

The town meeting voted to repair the meeting house and to buy for the town the front row of pews in the front gallery, the front seats of the side gallery, and the men's seats below on the floor. The meeting house proprietors and non-proprietors agreed to vote together as to its repairs and enlargement, each group to pay 45 li toward the project. It was agreed that Col. Benjamin Marston[36] and Samuel Allen Jr. could pay for the enlargement of the southeast side of the building by about 9' or 10' to bring it to 45' long (thus making the footprint of the building virtually a square). The pulpit was to be moved back to make a new range of pews. Four new windows were to be added; and the old lead casement windows were to be removed and replaced with wooden sash. They also thought to add a steeple from the roof up. These changes were also the subject of town meetings in May and October of 1751 and would be in 1755 as well (MTR II:59-61,71).

In March 1752, town meeting voted to raise a tax of 100 li to build the steeple, and to add 20 li to the tax rate partly for "support of the poor" (MTR II:62). In May, they voted to sell the town's part of the old clapboards and the old glass and lead and old window frames that had been removed from the meeting house and to apply the money to the repairs (ibid).

In March 1753, the town meeting voted that Mr. Ames Cheever, their former pastor, would not be taxed for that year and would be forgiven his taxes for the previous two years (MTR II:65). He would die on the 15th of January 1756, aged seventy years.

The steeple had not been built by March of 1754, they having decided against building one from the roof (like the one at the new meeting house at Gloucester) in preference to a tower-spire built "from the ground and upwards" (MTR II:65,67). So, it was built, by contractor Daniel Potter, of Ipswich (MCR). It was topped by a copper weathercock custom-crafted by Richard Manning of Ipswich (MCR).[37]

Personal behavior was monitored by the church members. Occasionally, a woman (sometimes a couple) would confess to fornication—always in the case of a married couple with an "early-arriving" baby—and receive a punishment of exclusion from communion for five years (MCR May 1755). On 8 Aug. 1756 the Church voted to deal with "owners of the covenant" who had engaged in "scandalous sin" just as they would deal with "the other complete members upon the like occasion" (MCR).[38]

The town meeting of March 1758 identified Downing Lee and Ames Cheever (Jr.) as their candidates for teaching school for three months (MTR II:78). A year later, town meeting voted to assess 20 li for six months of grammar school next winter and 12 li to be distributed to three school mistresses in Newport, Middle Part, and Kettle Cove, the people in those parts to pay their portion of the 12 li (Lamson, 208).

The decade of the 1750s, which was one of general prosperity for the town and its mariners, ended, as it had begun, with the decision not to send an representative to General Court in Boston, "our town not being able to support the charge" of room, board, and expenses of a delegate (MTR II:83).

In 1760, the English took Montreal and Canada became part of the British empire. Henceforth,

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36 Col. Benjamin Marston (1697-1754), a merchant and judge of Salem, had retired to his farm on now-Smith's Point, the first part of which (Gale's Point) he had bought in 1726 (including Codner's Hollow). He also owned House Island and (Moulton's) Great Misery Island. He may have been the first "summer resident" before retiring to Manchester.

37 The weathercock, with its Christian symbolism, remains atop the current (1809) Congregational Church steeple, the only remnant of the 18th century meeting house.

38 Owning the covenant and becoming a full member were two different things.

Britain would have to pay for a standing army and a large bureaucracy in Canada. This bureaucracy extended to Massachusetts, which was heavily taxed by Britain to pay for the war and for ongoing costs.

In town meeting for March, 1760, the voters were concerned about fixing up the "burying yard," which was overgrown and in need of a retaining wall and "the destruction of briars which seem to have universally overspread the congregation of the dead by which means following our deceased relatives to their long homes is attended with no small inconveniency." They voted for the building of a wall, and of a new "handsome gate" in place of the former bars. The briars were to be cleared by Capt. John Foster, who was rewarded by a two-years' liberty to graze his sheep there (MTR II:84,91). This town meeting also voted, as usual, to have a committee attend to the seating of the meeting house; but now attention was paid to people becoming "disorderly by leaving the seats in which they are placed" during the service. It was a significant problem, addressed by a fine of 20 shillings per infraction (MTR II:85). At the same time, Thomas Lee was hired to build a whipping post and set of stocks, with irons.[39]

In this decade, in which Manchester started with a total population of about 720, town meeting took formal responsibility for the condition of Manchester's poor, who included those afflicted with disease or disability or lack of family support.[40] On December, 1761, the town meeting voted for "overseers of the poor;" and by March, 1765, they would vote to "hire a house for the use of the poor" and to appoint an overseer and "provide meat drink and lodging sufficient for them and stock for them to work on" (MTR II:93,105).

In 1763 a major religious revival at Chebacco drew enthusiasts from Manchester, including fisherman Edward Lee (p. 8, Brief History). Mr. Lee, a voluble zealot, would often disrupt services in Manchester with his pronouncements. He was much-admired in certain circles and appeared in one pamphlet as "the apostolic fisherman."

The province was growing restive under the burden of British taxes, not least the crack-down on Massachusetts' trade with the Caribbean, which had been carried on without regard to the imperial rules. British taxes and impoundments of local vessels and their cargoes led to much resentment and a sharp fall-off in the maritime commerce of Salem, the major employer of Manchester men. Again, Manchester decided not to send a delegate to the General Court in Boston, and so the records tell us nothing about the town's response to the Stamp Act of 1765 and other such measures, and the installation of a British army at Boston in 1768.

In December 1766, town meeting voted to sell some town "ministry" land east of the meeting house for house lots as well as the ministry lot at Millett's Swamp, evidently to help raise funds for the poor. A committee was to seat the meeting house for that year—there was no mention of "disorderly" conduct during divine services (MTR II:112). In May 1767, 42 li was voted to buy or build a house for the poor, or to buy the Littlefield house and move it (MTR II:114). In this year John Rogers (1748-1827), a recent Harvard graduate, served as schoolmaster.[41] Among the "poor" was a "Frenchwoman" who

39 See John Price, Meeting House Notebook, p. 22, collection of MHM; hereafter cited as Price's Notebook.

40 The 1761 census lists a population of 745: 7 Acadians, 7 Indians, 23 "Negroes & Mulattos," among minorities; otherwise, 163 females under 16 and 159 males; 203 females 16-plus and 183 males; 103 houses and 135 families. See Price's Notebook, p. 22.

41 John Rogers (1748-1827), son of a Gloucester minister, soon moved to Gloucester, where he would work as a schoolmaster and serve as town clerk for many years.

needed attention from Dr. Woodbury in early 1769 (MTR II:120). She was probably one of the seven Acadians who had been placed at Manchester—hundreds more were sent to other New England towns—after being dispossessed of their lands in Nova Scotia.

In April, 1767, as a result of the 1766 decision, the town sold a double lot of its "ministry land" (common at town landing) to Samuel Lee, along the lane (now Church Street) that ran from the road (now Central Street) to the salt water (ED 129:278). The lot, about 80' in width and 215' lengthwise along the lane, was 165' on the west side ("landing, schoolhouse, training field"). Lee built a barn thereon, east of the meeting house.[42]

The town meeting of 5 March 1770 conducted elections of the usual town officers and addressed typical issues; but now there was again cause to address restlessness in the meeting house. Daniel Edwards was empowered to "inform against and prosecute every person not taking and keeping their respective seats, and every offender (was) to pay him 6 shillings," to be applied to support of the poor. The selectmen were to find someone to paint the meeting house (MTR II:124-5). This was the date of the Boston Massacre, which no doubt would influence Manchester against the British.

The town meeting of 11 March 1771 voted that those paying the highway tax should include newcomers and males over sixteen. A 38 li gift was voted Mr. Tappan, and those who lived far from the meeting house were allowed to build stables near it for their convenience during worship services. The town thanked Deacon Jonathan Herrick for his services and defended him from "a libelous abusive letter." Daniel Edwards was re-affirmed as enforcer against "anyone behaving disorderly or refusing to take his seat." On March 16 it was voted that the town pay for "two hind seats" to be converted into one seat for singers (MTR II:135). As usual, town meeting voted against sending a delegate to the General Court (legislature).

Town meeting of 15 March 1773 voted 40 shillings to Joseph Killam to ring the meeting house bell (as a curfew) every night at nine. For the first time, there was an effort to collect taxes on out-of-town vessels used by Manchester's shoremen "to dry fish" as well as on "trading goods" that were bought and sold in town—the vessel taxes would be excused in the coming year. The economy of the region had become weak, and it seemed that a war was brewing.

As a very small town, Manchester was always worried about the methods of setting and collecting taxes; and in January, 1774, the voters at town meeting rebelled against paying 1773 taxes based on a novel double list of names that had been drafted by town clerk and selectman Benjamin Kimball. They demanded to know "why the rich men's rates were so low and the poor's so high." Rejecting Kimball's explanation, the voters decided to use only the first list, with abatements (MTR II:140-1).

Although Manchester still declined to send a representative to the General Court, the town meeting of 25 May 1774 chose a Committee of Correspondence to affirm a letter received from Boston's rebels (MTR II:144). A town meeting on August 22 voted to send three delegates to the County Congress to be held in October at Ipswich (chaired by Manchester native Col. Jeremiah Lee of Marblehead, it would pass the Essex Resolves against the British)—John Lee Esq., Capt. Andrew

42 Presumably the northerly part of Samuel Lee's lot would be the "barn lot" that in 1809 would be sold as the site of the new meeting house. If so, the 1767 deed fixes the location of the 1720 meeting house, whose s.e. corner was 29' 3" from the n.w. corner of the lot sold—it stood close to the street, evidently in front of present town hall.

Marsters, Mr. Andrew Woodberry. A month later, the voters chose Andrew Woodberry to represent them at the upcoming Salem meeting of the General Court—there, it would declare its independence of the Royal Governor and then adjourn to begin the governing of Massachusetts. By Dec. 27, the voters were forming a Committee of Inspection to carry out the orders of the Continental Congress; and there was much confusion as to whether the town militia officers, led by Capt. Andrew Marsters, would muster the company of soldiers and "officiate in their offices" (MTR II:145-7). What happened after that is not clear; but Andrew Marsters, selectman and militia captain, soon moved away, evidently to Portsmouth.

By early 1775 Manchester was plagued by smallpox in its families (as were other nearby towns). In January, as war impended, the voters agreed to raise money for "minute men" and to keep the fishermen from sailing until March 20 at the earliest (Marblehead had passed a similar order), to be available as soldiers if needed. A month later, the voters approved the construction or acquisition of houses in remote parts of town to serve as smallpox infirmaries and a "smoke house" in which to fumigate visitors (MTR II:148-150).

The town was still filling the various offices of government, funding the school, paying Mr. Toppan, assisting the poor, and seeing to other matters (MTR II:150-152). Amid the smallpox epidemic, Manchester town meeting in March 1775, voted 80 li to build a "smallpox house" (also known as "the pest house"). More frequent meetings in cold weather (in addition to worship services) resulted in some left-behind "stoves" (boxy foot-heaters) at the meeting house, which the sexton was to collect, along with a two-shilling fine (MTR II:149).

The Battle of Lexington and Concord, 19 April 1775, signaled the start of warfare in Massachusetts. On April 21, town meeting voted to build "watch houses" in town, and have men sign up to keep the watch and be ready for "an alarm" requiring them to take up arms (MTR II:152). In July, they voted to have "a company of soldiers" in town, to expand the Committee of Correspondence to nine men, to intervene in the formation of a company of soldiers under Dr. Joseph Whipple as captain, and "to read the law respecting order in town meeting"—evidently the meetings were pretty turbulent (MTR II:153).

With soldiers marching off, it must have been difficult to manage town affairs, to fill offices (still being listed), and to raise money. At the town meeting of November 1775, the voters bought 50 bushels of corn for the poor but had to dismiss the grammar school. Money was tight, and Manchester petitioned the General Court for an abatement of taxes (MTR II: 154). The town remained committed to the schooling of its children as much as possible during the war.[43]

By early 1776 Manchester was still concerned about invasion—fair enough, considering that there was no American navy and that the British had an army in Boston and naval vessels free to come and go. The town watch houses were manned from dusk to dawn, with payment of two shillings per night to the watchers—and "no Negroes shall be allowed to watch" (MTR II:155). This last provision may have been adopted in light of the British offer of freedom to any African American who joined their forces.

By 1777 many Manchester men were sailing as privateers on the private armed warships of

43 Lamson was incorrect about the town suspending public education during the war.

Salem and Gloucester. Others were meeting the town's quota for soldiers, with bounties to be paid for those who enlisted for three years (eight men did so) and support paid to many of the families of those who had taken up arms. Capt. William Tuck was sent as representative to the General Court in May 1777 (MTR II:162). Soon he would be at sea as commander of a privateer. In April, 1778, Manchester's voters rejected the proposed "form of the government constitution" for Massachusetts (MTR II:167).[44] In May, the "whole body" at town meeting (23 voters) affirmed their disapproval of "the method of the constitution" (MTR II:168). In this, they were in the majority of towns, which would in 1779 adopt a revised constitution (presumably Manchester's voters approved).

Inflation of currency set in. The March 1779 overall town tax was set at 1200 li, of which 200 li was to go toward the free school, and other money went to support the soldiers' and sailors' families. Mr. Toppan continued to receive his salary, with gifts; but it was so difficult for the constable to collect the taxes that three men decided to pay fines rather than serve as constable (MTR II:171). In August, 1779, the voters decided they could not commit to giving Mr. Toppan "any particular sum for his salary at present," although they immediately reconsidered and instructed the treasurer to get 400 li from the assessors to pay Mr. Toppan. It was voted that there would be price controls for "articles of consumption" in town (MTR II:172).

At the town meeting of 11 Sept. 1780 it was voted that the selectmen purchase some glass with which to mend the meeting house windows; and on Oct. 9 the voters appointed a committee to negotiate with Mr. Toppan to see what the town owed him in hard currency, given that he had been paid in depreciated notes up to that point (MTR II:178). In January 1781, the town meeting warrant included an item requesting that a committee draft a petition requesting that the General Court "send down a committee to see the poverty of the town" (MTR II:179). No vote is recorded; presumably, they found some other way to make their condition known to the legislature to get consideration for an abatement of state taxes.

At Yorktown, Virginia, in October 1781, General Cornwallis surrendered his British army, which effectively ended the war on land; at sea, the war continued for another two years, during which Manchester lost more of its fighting men. The town was unable to meet the legislature's levies for taxes, beef, and four more soldiers. Jacob Tewksbury was chosen to meet with officials from the General Court; and in February, 1782, town meeting learned that the town would receive an abatement, evidently in regard of its poverty and its efforts to comply (MTR II:184).

On 3 Sept. 1783, the Treaty of Paris was signed, ending the war, which had gone on for seven and a half years. Manchester had been impoverished as a town and had been forced for years to get loans to pay its bills; it had lost dozens of its most able men, mainly in the course of privateering; and many families had suffered great privation.

Salem, the main center of regional privateering, had prospered throughout the war; its merchants soon began a commerce with the whole world, including Asia. Manchester men found berths on their vessels; and some, like Daniel Leach, sailed as their shipmasters. A few in Manchester had grown affluent through privateering, and the town made a recovery by 1785.

At the March 1785, town meeting the voters approved Obed Carter's building of a new wooden

44 E. W. Leach was incorrect in believing this to be the federal constitution, p. 103 Ezekiel W. Leach Historical Collections manuscript at MHM; hereafter, cited as EWL.

bridge, and Mr. Toppan received a gift of 20.13.4 in addition to his salary. One can only imagine the crucial role played by the church throughout the war, with Rev. Benjamin Toppan leading worship services and seeing to the welfare of his congregants, while also allowing the town to pay him as best it could. The grammar school was funded with 40 li; and it was voted to build a new school house, 30' long, 22' wide, one story high "with a sharp roof," to stand on the site of the old school house.[45] They ended the meeting by choosing a large committee to seat the meeting house, extending thanks to a "gentleman" for a cow donated for the benefit of the poor, and voting 30 li for the purchase of a 300-lb. bell for the meeting house (MTR II:193-5).

On 6 May 1790 Rev. Benjamin Tappan, seventy, died in the 46th year of his ministry, after a brief bout of influenza. Of his many sons, only Eben had remained in Manchester; son David (1752-1803), a minister at Newbury, in 1792 would be named Harvard's Hollis Professor of Divinity. Rev. William Bentley of Salem, a colleague of Benjamin, wrote, "He was un-animated in the pulpit, but easy in his manners and exemplary in his conduct out of it. He has brought up a large family in a very reputable manner… He softened the minds, engaged the affections, and greatly improved the happiness of his people." At the funeral Bentley noted that, "the parish defrayed all expenses at the house, provided gloves, and gave a full suit of mourning to the widow."[46] Mrs. Elizabeth (Marsh) Tappan lived on for 17 years; she died on 26 Sept. 1807.

Visiting preachers subsequently filled the pulpit, sometimes with alarming results. One Sunday in October 1790, Rev. Ebenezer Bradford of Rowley preached all day at Manchester and lectured, or harangued, in the evening. Things went off track, and a Mr. Lee (evidently Edward, "a crazy man") began exhorting, which agitated those present—"the women fell into fits" until the schoolmaster tried to stop Bradford, which caused more of an uproar. An amused sailor was heard to say, "The devil of a wedding, hollo, boys, hollo!"[47]

Messrs. Blake and Worcester, visiting preachers, were respectively invited to settle; but both declined (EWL 110). Evidently there was a religious revival in town in 1791, which brought in 10 or 12 new church members (p. 8, Brief History).

Along came Ariel Parish, then preaching at Amherst. He accepted the call in September 1791, agreeing to 150 li at settlement and a 70 li salary (EWL 110). It was voted on 12 Jan. 1792 by the town that Mr. Parish baptize all children who "shall be offered under what is called the Half Covenant"—he preferred a higher standard but survived the controversy.[48] Ariel Parish was ordained in April, 1792, in the presence of various ministers and with a sermon by his brother Rev. Elijah Parish of Byfield (EWL 111). Mr. Bentley, who observed, noted that the meeting house was "both small and weak," so a stage was put up in front and the crowd stayed outdoors for the ceremony.[49]

On April 3, 1792, Mr. Parish purchased a house and land in Manchester from Dr. David Norwood. Born in 1764, Ariel was son of Rev. Elijah Parish of Lebanon, Conn., and a Dartmouth

45 The 1785 schoolhouse, which stood near the meeting house, would be removed in 1811 to School Street and converted into George Cross's dwelling house, per Lamson, p. 208.

46 See 10 May 1790 entry, "Diary of Rev. William Bentley of Salem," hereafter cited as Bentley's Diary.

47 See 24 Oct. 1790 entry, op. cit.

48 See 6 Sept. 1801 entry, op. cit.

49 See 4 April 1792 entry, op. cit.

graduate, class of 1788. He married Hannah Chute of Byfield. They would have a daughter, Philomela, who died young. A strict Calvinist, Mr. Parish was placid in temper and suave in manners, plain and practical in his sermons, and persuasive in elocution. He may have been headed for a long pastorate; but he was among the first afflicted in a terrifying epidemic—likely typhus—in the spring of 1794 and he was the second to die, on May 20.[50] About ninety more people in the village lost their lives to this disease, whose victims were removed to three small town-built infirmaries (EWL 111).[51] The people of other towns stayed out of Manchester.

Ariel Parish was widely mourned and would long be remembered by his parishioners (EWL 112). His widow, Hannah (Chute) Parish, moved to Byfield.

After Mr. Parish's death, the town would go seven years without a minister, 1794-1801, during which it was served by various visiting ministers. Amid the ravages of disease, consoling Methodists appeared. This Protestant sect, which began in England, spread in Essex County primarily through the agency of women, who found in it a refuge from the male-dominated church structure and the chilly Calvinism that then prevailed. The Manchester Methodists were probably served by traveling ministers. They asked to worship in the meeting house in August 1794, during the epidemic, but were forbidden (EWL 112).

In 1796 the congregation accepted Mr. Forbes' baptismal covenant; and in 1798 there was another religious revival in town, inspiring about nine new members (p. 8, Brief History; EWL 112).

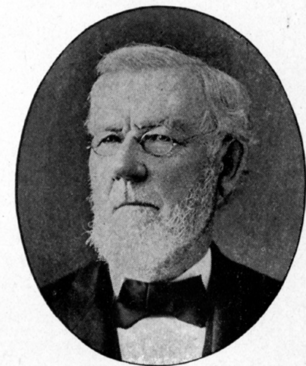
50 The town paid for the funeral, including a procession led by schoolboys and school-master, then church, clergy, corpse borne by young men, visiting clergy, with prayer and sermon at the meeting house, closing prayer by Prof. David Tappan of Harvard College, and graveside prayer by Rev. John Cleaveland, per Bentley's Diary, entry 23 May 1794.

51 Two in Jersey Lane at Newport section, one at Graves.

Part III: Civic and Religious Concerns of The Town in the Early 1800s, and The Meeting House of 1809

Manchester in 1800, with a population of 1,081, was a seafaring town, and so it would remain for three decades. A few small fishing vessels sailed from the harbor, whose waterfront had some fish-yards, notably at Cheever's Point. If not working as fishermen, many of the men and boys were employed as merchant mariners, sailing from commercial ports like Salem. Some followed the sea as both sailors and fishermen, and worked the land or at a trade between voyages.[52] The town had no foreign commerce or merchant vessels, nor did it conduct any significant retail or manufacturing business. There were several farms, and a number of men worked as carpenters, and some as coopers, blacksmiths, or cordwainers (shoemakers), while the women engaged in spinning and weaving, both for home use and for sale.

At the annual town meeting, in March 1800, the voters chose Aaron Lee, Henry Story, and Francis Proctor as selectmen. Manchester and other towns were again visited by smallpox; the family of Nathaniel Allen, afflicted, was to be moved by the selectmen to a "convenient place" away from their neighbors. They applied $300 "to support the Gospel," $600 for the poor, $175 for the schools, and $350 for highways (including the cost of plowing in the winter). A committee was authorized to join the church in settling the ways and means of raising money for the ministry. Regarding the old meeting house, they voted that a Cheever family be assigned to a pew in the west end next to the seats, and that two other pews be left unassigned until they were claimed. The selectmen were to assign numbers to all of the pews (MTR March 1800).[53]



Fifteen ministers had preached at Manchester since Mr. Parish's demise in 1794. Not one had chosen to settle there. Perhaps some were not invited to do so; otherwise, the more ambitious ministers did not see a future at the little town, likely because of its finances, kept at a low level by the high death rate among seafaring men who would have been paying into the coffers of the town. Rev. Ebenezer Flint, the 18th minister to preach there since 1794, was offered Manchester's pulpit in August.[54] He demurred, and would become the minister of Brentwood, NH, by 1801.

On the common by the meeting house, the militia was trained under Col. David Colby, 28, a New Hampshire man who by 1796 had settled in Manchester. Sometimes (as in 1794) the Manchester men combined with the militia of Beverly here, and conducted themselves impressively.[55] Presumably this training had been occurring right along since the 1600s.

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52 See Bentley's Diary, 17 Nov. 1817, "In Manchester and Beverly they have the mixed life of the seamen, fishermen, artizans, and farmers, and have all the shades of character the various strengths of their habits admit."

53 The town meeting proceedings from 1800 on are contained in annual booklets (unpublished) in the "Town Hall Records" collection of MHM; unless otherwise indicated, the references to town meetings of the 1800s are drawn from these booklets.

54 John Price's "Matters of interest with reference to Manchester," labeled item 36, collection of MHM; hereafter cited as Price's Notebook.

55 See Rev. William Bentley, diary entry 23 April 1794; also for 26 Nov. 1790, a combined training at Beverly, in which the new Manchester "standard" (flag) was unfurled bearing the arms of the state wreathed on a white silk field. "Their firings were good, and the men in excellent order."

On 23 May 1801 Rev. Abraham Randall of Stow became Manchester's minister, for which he received $500 for "his settlement" and a $334 salary with the use of the same parsonage land as given Mr. Parish (MTR). Abraham Randall (1771-1852) was a native of Stow and a 1798 graduate of Harvard, where he had roomed with Joseph Story of Marblehead (future U. S. Supreme Court justice) and later studied theology at Harvard under Prof. David Tappan, a native of Manchester. Abraham and his wife Hannah would have three of their ten children in Manchester.

Mr. Randall, who had not worked as a minister elsewhere, was ordained in August, 1801, and soon after he presided over a revival which brought in 21 new members, including some older people (Brief History, p. 9). The town was strongly Federalist in its politics, due to the influence of Capt. William Tuck, who was deeply connected to the merchants of Salem and Boston. Rev. William Bentley of Salem, an anti-Federalist, noted Tuck's power, and observed of Manchester—a.k.a. The Little City— "We think they will retrieve their circumstances, as they are poor. Mr. Eben Parsons of Boston, merchant, has been very bountiful to them in assisting their settlement. They are commonly called the Little City. They are poor as fishermen and generally as farmers, and have little information. They have often been disturbed by the New Lights and itinerants and suffered much from the indiscretion of Mr. Cleaveland of Chebacco, who lived to repent of his many irregularities... Major Stover has the greatest interest and trade in the place."[56] From this, we gather that Messrs. Stover and Parsons (once of Gloucester) were major investors in Manchester's fishery and employers of its men and boys in merchant seafaring.

As was usual, the voters chose not to send a representative to the General Court.

In 1802, frequent town meetings were held at both the schoolhouse and the meeting house. The voters agreed to investigate the ownership of Gales Beach and to lay out a new road in Kettle Cove, paying laborers 9 cents per day. In November, it was voted that Rev. Mr. Randall could "cut a house frame" and "cut 30 trees for sawmill logs for boards of the parsonage." He would have a house built on Union Street (now #41, since modified).

The town was prospering, largely from ascendant foreign trade conducted out of Salem and Boston. In March 1804, pleased with their minister and somewhat flush financially, the town meeting attendees voted to build a new "house of worship." Where was it to go? It was suggested that Major Story's land (on the hill near Mr. Randall's house) might work; but the voters said no. They seem not to have wanted to build it on the common, either. A committee was empowered to purchase the "lumber, timber, and all necessary materials"—no small step—and another was to oversee and manage construction. A plan had been drawn up, at least for the layout of the pews; and this meeting voted to alter the plan.

The voters tried again on 3 Dec. 1804, meeting to agree to build a new meeting house and to review the possibilities for its site; but the project would be deferred for some years, perhaps over the issue of its location.

In 1805, the town meeting voted a typical $100 gift to Rev. Mr. Randall, and chose not to remove the school house, pound, or poor house, and not to reconsider the proceedings of Dec. 3, 1804, relative to building a house of public worship. In March 1806, the voters initially chose Major Story's land as the building site; but evidently there was sufficient opposition that nothing happened that year.

56 Bentley's diary, entry 6 Sept. 1801. "New Lights" and "itinerants" are evangelical ministers.

In 1807, the annual town meeting in March opened with a vote not to award Mr. Randall a $100 gift "as heretofore;" and then they turned to many issues relating to building a meeting house. They had not yet acquired the lumber. The issue of its location was so acrimonious that they voted to choose three out-of-towners (from Beverly, Ipswich, and Gloucester) to advise them on placement and, evidently, to appraise the value of the rights held by the proprietors of the old meeting house, so the town could pay them. They also voted for the town to get a loan of $2000 "to go to the expense of building a new meeting house."

On April 6, the voters first accepted the out-of-towners' advice to build on Henry Story's lot, but then considered a site adjoining the common, namely the "barn lot" of William Tuck Esq. and Henry Lee, provided that "the spot be leveled fit for the underpinning." The meeting continued next day, with a vote to purchase the Story lot, and a vote for a committee (including Henry Story) to purchase the lumber and build the meeting house "upon the plan heretofore contemplated." They closed by voting that they would not purchase the Story lot until they had raised $3000 in subscriptions from prospective proprietors of the new meeting house.

In the fall of 1807, Rev. Mr. Randall signaled his discontent. In October, a brief town meeting deliberated "respecting his situation" and chose a committee of three to "inform him that the meeting is open to receive his communication."

The exact reasons for Rev. Abraham Randall's problems are now unclear. It certainly did not help that they preceded the enactment of Jefferson's Embargo (December 1807), which shut down foreign trade and therefore greatly damaged all seaports. Randall seems to have been a good minister and good citizen and family man. He had earned the gratitude of the town in the form of an extra $100 year after year—the gift that in 1807 was withheld, for reasons unstated. Whatever the issues, they came to a head in the spring of 1808. Mr. Randall and his congregants agreed on the need for a council of ministers, which was held on June 1. He submitted his papers and complaints to the council, but the town withheld materials and informed the council that they had "voted him liberty to leave his church and congregation when he saw fit."[57] In light of this, the church informed the council that they favored a "respectable" dissolution of Mr. Randall's connection to them.

Clearly, Abraham Randall was finished as Manchester's minister. The council agreed and advised the church to grant him a dismission and to recommend him as pastor to other churches "wherever God may call him." Mr. Randall was adjudged "entirely honorable," though "worldly." By the departure date, 1 Sept. 1808, he was probably happy to leave; but his wife "took it hard as if her heart would break" (MCR 177). The Randalls moved back to Stow, where they would live out their lives.[58]

The Embargo on foreign trade continued throughout 1808. Town meeting (March) voted to repair the old meeting house "by glazing same, shingle the front, and sundry small jobs." At the same time, the timber for the new meeting house, piled up at the landing place, was covered in boards to protect it from the weather. Crows were a problem in the farmers' fields, so the voters offered 20 cents for each crow killed (as evidence, bring in the crow's head).[59]

57 Misquoted in Manchester Church Records, p. 173; accurate in town meeting records, 17 June 1808.

58 Manchester Church Records, pp. 168-177

59 This bounty on crows would be continued for many years.

At the Sept. 1st meeting, the voters agreed to "concur with the Boston petition to the President to raise the Embargo" and to pay for "hiring a candidate or candidates to supply the desk" of the minister. By Oct. 27, happy with the preaching of the visiting Rev. James Thurston, they voted to pay him "as long as money lasts if it can." Manchester voters, led by Capt. William Tuck, remained greatly partial to the Federalist party.

In 1809, on Jan. 10, town meeting voted to give Thurston a call to settle as minister, subject to various negotiated terms. He was to have a salary of $550 and to have six cords of hardwood and twelve of pinewood annually for heating. Rev. James Thurston was thirty. Born in 1779 in Exeter, he had recently resigned the pulpit of Newmarket, NH, where he had been ordained in 1800.

In February, 1809, at a meeting not of the town voters but of the proprietors of the building, they agreed that, "Whereas our meeting house is in such a decayed state as becomes dangerous to those who meet therein; therefore we the subscribers, desirous of promoting the worship of the Supreme Being" would erect "a house for public worship" on the Tuck-Lee "barn lot" adjoining the public landing. This signals the intent for the meeting house to be used primarily for religious rather than civic purposes.

With a minister on board and the proprietors ready to proceed, the town voters refocused on the meeting house project: on Feb. 23 (meeting at the schoolhouse) they voted to consider a site and to see if the town would petition the General Court for a state-wide lottery by which to raise money for its construction (no).

To Manchester's great relief, the Embargo (thanks to the leadership of their Congressman, Joseph Story) was cancelled on March 1.

The town voters agreed with the church members to build the new meeting house and to give the timber of the old meeting house to the church proprietors, taking in exchange, for the town's use, some of the pews that would be built in the new one.

After years of indecision, the voters chose as the site of the new meeting house the barn lot of William Tuck Esq. and Henry Lee, to the north-east of the common. In this the voters concurred with the proprietors—a momentous decision which would keep the meeting house on the town landing common where meeting houses had been standing since 1673.

As to the design of the meeting house: the 1804 plan was superseded by a new plan, heavily influenced by the work of architect Asher Benjamin and by the new (1805) Universalist meeting house in Gloucester. In the final bill-payments for construction of the new meeting house, Col. Jacob Smith (said to be builder of the similar Universalist meeting house in Gloucester in 1805) received a $30 fee, less than the $35.87 paid to Samuel McIntire of Salem, carver, sculptor, and architect of many buildings, including the celebrated meeting house of Salem's South Church, erected in 1803 on Chestnut Street. Both Smith and McIntire were therefore involved, perhaps as consultants to the building committee.[60]

On 28 Feb. 1809, at Samuel L. Tuck's house, the proprietors met and first presented a record of $6610 worth of subscriptions for shares in the new building. They then chose a committee (Major Israel Forster, Capt. John Knight, Mr. Daniel Allen) to "draught a plan and present same to the proprietors for acceptance" and to "view the meeting house at Gloucester" and "any other meeting house if they see

60 See "Meeting House account book," 11 Sept 1809; Manchester Congregational Church records.

cause."[61] It is likely that Daniel Allen did the drafting. The committee worked quickly; and on March 6, the proprietors viewed and accepted a "plan on scale and admeasurement of 55' by 55' in the clear, subject to alterations…" and a "plan of the porch and cupola as presented by the committee subject to any alterations…" The plan contemplated an interior with 36 square pews and 48 long pews "on the floor", and 24 gallery pews.[62]

On 9 March 1809, the proprietors met again and chose a committee to purchase the timber, boards, and other materials for construction of the meeting house. They next accepted the offer of the town of the land on which to build, as well as some timber and the town's bell. The Tuck-Lee barn was to be removed from its lot by April 10. The building committee was ordered to advertise in the Salem "Gazette" (Federalist newspaper) for contractors to propose six areas of work: leveling the site preparatory to receiving the underpinning (foundation, which was to be two feet above grade); building the underpinning of hewn or rough stone; framing, raising, and shingling; fabricating and installing window frames and sashes; finishing the inside; and building the outside, the porch, and the cupola. The contractors were to provide their own food ("find themselves").

On March 20, the building committee appraised the value of 39¾ tons of collected timber at $192.78. They further agreed that Tyler Parsons, Burley Smith, and Col. David Colby were to provide more materials: twelve large pine posts dressed at 12" square (Parsons), 50 tons of stone and gravel (Smith), and eight oak sticks each 26' long and 9" square (Colby).

On April 20, the building committee examined the proposals. They contracted with Nehemiah Standley, Wenham bricklayer[63] (mason), to furnish the stones and do the plastering (at 5.5 cents per yard), he to make the mortar.

Col. David Colby of Manchester was named contractor for the exterior work of a building described in the records as 57' square and 30' high (sidewall) with a steeple, cupola, spire, ball, vane, and forty 24-light windows, two Venetian windows (one over the door, one back of the pulpit), with a fanlight in the square of the steeple, the "end view of the house, porch and steeple to represent plate No. 33 in the Country Builder[64] and to be finished in Ionic order." The work was to be completed by November 15. David Colby (1772-1852), a justice of the peace and head of the militia, by 1808 was working sometimes as a blacksmith (SERD 185:46). In this project, he may be seen as the general contractor rather than as a workman. He found a crew of carpenters to do the framing and exterior finish.[65]

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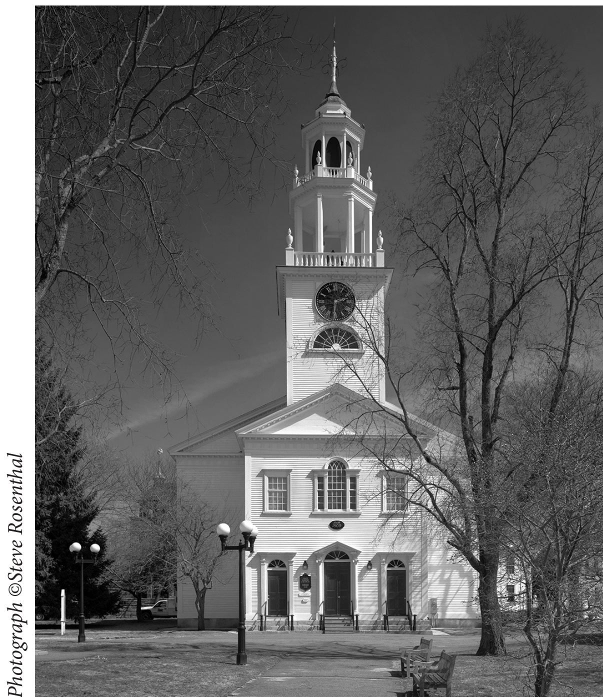
61 The influence of the design of the Gloucester Universalist meeting house is affirmed by Rev. William Bentley of Salem, who took careful note of architectural and ecclesiastical matters in Essex County: on 15 Oct. 1816, after a visit to Cape Ann, he wrote "Manchester New Meeting House was built upon the same plan with the New M. H. at Gloucester but not finished with the same elegance," Bentley's Diary. He was likely referring to interior finish.

62 Per pp. 1, 6-7, Proprietors Book 1809-1845, in Manchester Orthodox Congregational Church Records, 1717-1917, folder two, RG 5361.

63 See SERD 198:80 for Nehemiah Standley's home town of Wenham and occupation.

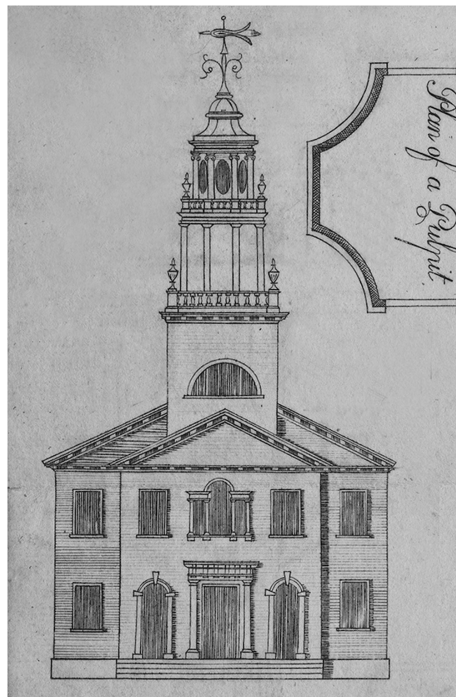
64 "Plate No. 33 in the Country Builder" refers to Plate 33 (meeting-house plans) in architect Asher Benjamin's pattern book, "The Country Builder's Assistant," editions of 1798 (Boston) and of 1805 (Greenfield, Mass.), updated from the first edition of 1797 which shows the same meeting-house elevation on Plate 27. The Manchester meeting house is more faithful to Plate 33 than was Gloucester's, which had an extra belfry.

65 William B. Morgan, in "West Manchester in 1823" (3 April 1897 issue of Manchester "Cricket") recounts the tragedy of carpenter Asa Brown (1789-1825), 19, who suffered sunstroke while building the steeple in 1809 and never regained his sanity.



Photograph ©Steve Rosenthal

1809 Meeting House/First Parish Church Congregational



Asher Benjamin's Elevation of a Meeting House

By the end of December William Brown and four others were to finish the interior "equal in every respect to the Universal Meeting House in Gloucester," including three flights of stairs in the steeple, all "agreeable to the Universal house in Gloucester excepting the architraves round the windows." William Brown (1749-1813) married Elizabeth Edwards in Manchester in 1773 and resided in the Newport section; he worked as a housewright and joiner (finish carpenter or cabinetmaker) (SERD 196:295). His inside crew consisted of his son Andrew Brown, 33, and Jonathan Allen, Caleb Knowlton, and Daniel Allen, who was also paid a dollar for working "one day on plan."[66]

On April 24, the committee paid $14 to Tyler Parsons to dig a trench on the proposed perimeter of the building, 2' 6" wide and 2' deep, to be filled with small stones.

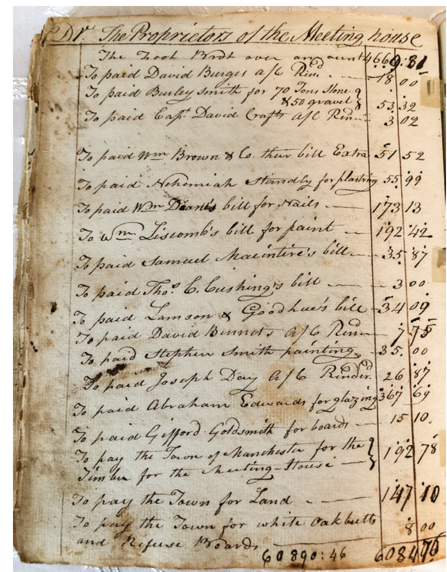
On 28 April 1809 Tuck and Lee for $300 sold to "the proprietors for building a meeting house in Manchester" a lot running s.w. 58' on a lane, running n.w. 48' on land of Thomas Leach, running n.e. 55' on the town landing, and running s.e. 45' on land of David Crafts (SERD 362:265). This "barn lot" was part of the land sold by the town in 1767 to Samuel Lee (SERD 129:278). At the same time in 1809, David Crafts and Thomas Leach sold flanking strips of land to the proprietors (SERD 362:264-5).

The frame of the meeting house was raised in July, doubtless to a general celebration and mug-up at the landing place. In August, 1809, the town would convey a piece of the landing-place land, about 64' by 33', upon which the front of the building stood, to the proprietors to complete the meeting-house lot (deed never recorded at Registry).

On Sept. 8, the proprietors voted "to paint the clapboards of the meeting house" and that the building committee "should cause said house to be painted white and yellow as they shall see fit." The painting contractor was William Luscomb of Salem; one wishes to know which parts were painted white and which yellow.

66 See "Meeting House account book," 11 Sept 1809; MCR.

On 11 Sept. 1809, with most of the work completed, the proprietors paid the contractors and suppliers. The payments show in some instances who did what sort of work; in other instances, the payments do not refer to the service provided. Unexplained major payments went to Ebenezer Tappan, a cabinet maker ($376.14); Maj. Israel Forster ($373.04), and Maj. Henry Story ($498.78). General contractor Col. David Colby received payment of $1378.36 for exterior work, more than the agreed-upon $1145 but including extras like "flaring windows." For the interior work, "William Brown & company" received $51.52 more than the agreed-upon $1100. Salem vendors were William Dean, hardware dealer, "for nails," $173.13; William Luscomb, painter, "for paint," $192.42; Lamson & Goodhue (perhaps upholsterers), $34.09; as well as Samuel McIntire (cited above) and Thomas C. Cushing of the Salem "Gazette," $3 for advertising.



Dr. The Proprietors of the Meeting house

The Foot Brot over amount	4669	81
To paid David Burges a/c Rend	18	00
To paid Burley Smith for 70 Tons Stone & 50 gravel	53	32
To paid Capt. David Crafts a/c Rend	3	02
To paid Wm Brown & Co. their bill Extra	51	52
To paid Nehemiah Stanly for plastering	55	99
To paid Wm Dean's bill for Nails	173	13
To Wm Liscomb's bill for paint	192	42
To paid Samuel Macintire's bill	35	87
To paid Thos C. Cushing's bill	3	00
To paid Lamson & Goodhue's bill	34	09
To paid David Bennet's a/c Rend	7	75
To paid Stephen Smith painting	35	00
To paid Joseph Day a/c Rendr.	26	87
To paid Abraham Edwards for glazing	367	69
To paid Gifford Goldsmith for boards	15	10
To pay the Town of Manchester for the Timber for the Meeting-House	192	78
To pay the Town for Land	147	10
To pay the Town for white Oak butts and Refuse Boards	8	00
60890:46	6084	79

Excerpt 1809 Meeting House Expense Book

On Thanksgiving, 1809, the new meeting house was first used for worship, as James Thurston preached from Ezekiel 36:26-28.[67] The old meeting house stood through the rest of the year; on 14 Dec. 1809, the town voted to have it taken down, with two-thirds of its value to go to the proprietors and one-third to the town. On 25 Dec. 1809, the town voters agreed to keep ownership of the old church bell and have it hung in the new meeting house, and "rung and tolled on all occasions."

As a proprietor of the new meeting house, the town took as its share the singing seats—seats in the gallery extending the whole length of the house on both sides (which were free to all persons)—as well as the minister's pew and the porch (in which the selectmen would meet). The rest of the interior belonged to the other proprietors.

With the new meeting house built, the voters chose in 1810 to improve the appearance of the common by moving the schoolhouse "to some suitable place" nearby for the use of the Middle District pupils.[68]

Inside the new building, music was important to the worship service; and town meeting voted to give $5 to George Babcock "for playing the bass viol and keep(ing) it in tune for the year ensuing." They also exchanged some land near the meeting house with neighbor Capt. Thomas Leach. For once, a representative to the General Court was chosen: Eben Tappan. In January 1810, the town meeting voters accepted ownership of the gallery/singing seats, also the parsonage pew, costing $118; and they ordered an assessment of $247 in order to pay the other proprietors.

On 14 Feb. 1810, the new meeting house was formally dedicated to worship and the service of God, in a ceremony in which Rev. James Thurston preached from Psalms 27:4.[69]

Thurston's settlement, followed by the construction of the meeting house, inspired great interest in religion, with a year-long "revival" that attracted a total of 110 new members (29 in April, 34

67 William H. Tappan, "Manchester," in E. H. Hurd's History of Essex County, Massachusetts, 1888, p. 1287, quoting from Rev. James Thurston's diary; hereafter cited as Tappan's Manchester.

68 Its new home was on part of the ministry lot on the west side of now-School Street.

69 Tappan's Manchester, quoting Thurston, p. 1287.

on May 6, 20 on June 10, and 37 by the end of December).[70] It would later be noted that, "although this revival brought many valuable members into the church, yet some sadly relapsed, and there followed a rank growth of infidelity in the place…" (p. 9, Brief History).

At a March 1810, meeting, the town voters ordered the construction of a powder house (it would not be done right away).

In 1810 the town's first Sunday School, one of the first in the state, was founded by Harriet Newell and Ann Haseltine Judson, outsiders who would become early missionaries to Asia. Their work was soon assumed by Manchester women Eliza Tuck, Mary Bingham, Abby Hooper, and Mrs. Martha Lee, with the support of the pastor (Lamson, 232). It seems that this was the beginning of an association of town women who would meet and raise money for various projects, including foreign missions.[71]

The role of women in Manchester was magnified by the fact that many of the men and boys were away at sea. Adult females outnumbered males by a wide margin, largely because of the seafaring-related deaths of mariners and fishermen. Women and girls made a large contribution to each household by their housekeeping and child-rearing as well as by their work in carding, spinning, and weaving of the wool of local sheep. They sent their work to Warner's Mill in Ipswich to be fulled, after which it was made into substantial clothing for both common and Sunday wear. Later, women worked at home at shoe-binding and at straw-braiding and making palm-leaf hats. Girls were taught to bake and brew, sew and darn, spin and weave, read the Bible and John Bunyan, and to sing counter and treble in church choir (Lamson, 138-9).

In 1811, the annual town meeting, held at the School House,[72] transacted usual business and also ordered the selectmen to handle complaints "about small boys playing ball and (sending) stones around the meeting house" (MTR). This would be flagged as a problem in 1815 as well. Evidently the common (landing place) served as a playground. In this year too, for $1 the town sold to Mr. Thurston a lot of land (on the east side of School Street, just north of the Sawmill Brook) on which to build a house.

The British policy of occasional impressment of British-born American sailors provided an excuse to the War Hawks in Congress; and in June 1812, war was declared against Britain. In July 1812, Manchester town meeting chose Capt. William Tuck (1740-1826) as delegate to a County Convention to consider the "awful and alarming situation of the country." The meeting adopted resolves strongly opposed to the conflict (MTR).

Town meeting voted for a Committee of Safety to place a regular watch on the coast and to erect flagstaffs for signaling. A small breastwork fort was built at Norton's Point and a powder house was built on Powder House Hill. The 80-man militia was drilled to the music of fife and drum, here on the common: officers were Capt. Joseph Hooper and Lt. Daniel Friend, sergeants were Eben Tappan Jr. and Amos Knight. In front of the meeting house was the town cannon, which threw a 6-lb. shot.

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70 Subtotals noted in John Price's "Matters of interest with reference to Manchester," labeled item 36, collections of Manchester Historical Museum; hereafter cited as Price's Notebook.

71 Price's Notebook.

72 From this time forward, most town meetings would be held at the town hall in the schoolhouse; often, however, in the 18-teens the selectmen would meet in the vestibule or "porch" of the meeting house.

Offshore, British warships lounged unchallenged, intimidating all local crews. At one point some British naval whaleboats came toward Kettle Cove, but were dissuaded from landing when they heard the fife and drums and saw the cannon trundled out to Crow Island.[73] Many of the Manchester men and boys went out privateering on vessels from Salem and perhaps Beverly and Gloucester.

Despite many dangers and disasters, privateering and its possibility of a jackpot kept the men shipping out. On land, the war went poorly for the United States, as the British captured Washington, DC and burned the Capitol and the White House. Along the western frontier, U. S. forces prevailed; and the western expansionists had their day. At sea, over time, many privateers were captured, and their men were imprisoned in British prison-ships and at Dartmoor Prison in England.

In 1814 town meeting voted for Rev. Mr. Thurston "to prefer our petition to the Governor." This probably had to do with the conduct of the war and the extra taxes imposed on the towns to contribute toward it.

At last, in February 1815, peace was restored.

Post-war, Manchester men worked as mariners on board the vessels of Boston, Salem, and Newburyport, some as shipmasters. The year 1816 was one in which the crops were blighted due to the cold, which persisted through the summer. But the fishery started up again, as did foreign trade. The town wharf was busy under wharfinger Capt. Francis Low. Joseph Babcock, Capt. Abiel Burgess, and two others were chosen tithingmen. There were the usual votes at town meeting, including bounties for the killing of crows; and the Federalist candidate for Governor won Manchester's votes, 118 to one (MTR).

In 1817 the school districts were made individual entities. As usual, no state representative was chosen.

Manchester's religious life was in turmoil. Rev. Mr. Thurston had encouraged an outside physician to come to town, knowing there was only room enough for one, that being the incumbent Dr. Grosvenor, who seems to have been well liked. In 1816, Tyler Parsons, a civic leader, and a church committee concluded that Mr. Thurston had subverted their efforts at instituting some agreed-upon church regulations and had tried to turn the women against the men.[74] In 1817, the majority of the male church members, and a large number of others, withdrew from the Manchester church and joined a church in Beverly.[75] For the next two years, the situation would steadily worsen.

At town meetings in April and May 1818, the voters (still staunch Federalists) agreed to join the Middle District in building a "Town and Middle District School House," paying for half and becoming proprietor of the lower part, exclusive of furnishing the inside of the District room. The new school building, 27' by 34' in footprint, went up on School Street (site of present fire house) under the management of builder Sargent Burnham of Manchester (MTR, Parsons' Truth). They voted too to sell the corner seats on either side of the singing seats—the boys called these the "sheep pens" (Price's Notebook). They also voted for the selectmen to have the town's meeting-house seats made into pews and to "purchase a stove and set it in the meeting house" (MTR).

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73 The cannon, hauled from the common to Kettle Cove, lost its only cannonball along the way.

74 On 27 May 1817, "an Association of Females in Manchester for School Funds," working with Mr. Thurston, raised $43, while an "Association of Males" raised $31. See John Price's section on Meeting Houses in "Matters of Interest."

75 See testimony and narrative in "Truth Espoused," a pamphlet by Tyler Parsons, 1823, hereafter cited as Parsons' Truth.

On March 8, 1819, meeting at the new School House, town meeting reviewed the transfer of land for the schoolhouse (MTR). In May, town meeting addressed matters about Mr. Thurston. This was a tough session, for Rev. James Thurston, unable to clear himself or heal the divisions, requested of the town that a committee inquire into the allegations about his "moral and religious character." The town voters, who paid his salary, agreed to an ecclesiastical council (seven ministers) on "the subject of differences between the town and Mr. Thurston." After an investigation, the council, in July 1819, advised the dismission of the minister, and the town proceeded to do so right away (MTR; EWL 117-8).

1818 Town House by William Henry Tappan

In July, August, and October, 1819, gathering at the meeting house, the town voters chose a committee to find a new minister and to settle matters with the dismissed Mr. Thurston, who refused to resign (MTR) and would not leave town until 1822. Religious conditions were such that a number of church members and congregants started a Baptist meeting, held at the schoolhouse with Captain Story, a Marblehead layman, as preacher.[76]

In the meeting house, the little black stove, presumably with its long pipe, was the object of much controversy and not a little fear. This, perhaps the first stove ever seen in Manchester, was installed in front of the pulpit; and on the first Sunday that it stood there, sure enough, two women fainted from the "baked air" that it gave off—a matter that might have been more serious were it not that the stove was unlit and stone-cold.[77]

Joseph Babcock (1751-1830), a cooper and veteran of the Revolution, was for many years a tithingman, collecting the tax funds to support the ministry; and he was the long-time beadle during church services, patrolling the aisles and enforcing good behavior among a people who could be disruptive on occasion. His "austere demeanor, stately tread, and staff of office made an impressive figure in the Sunday assembly." Among the children, he was known as the fearsome "Tidy-man."[78]

From 1820 on, the meeting house would be used as a house of worship (except once in 1822), while town meetings would be held at the new schoolhouse/town hall. The little box stove was hardly worth lighting[79] in the freezing meeting house in wintertime, during which it was the custom for females to bring their own foot-stoves. Members of the choir were shivering in the gallery, and the players were trying to tune violins and bass viols without removing mittens—the leader would lay aside his great fur collar, and pitch the tune with a vibrating fork. Sweet young voices carried the solos most satisfactorily, but a great wave of strong lungs and instruments (string, wind, brass) otherwise drowned them out. The minister did not remove his black woolen gloves until well along in the sermon, as the tithing man replenished the wood for a third time in stove, closing it with a bang. By the end of the

76 Per Bentley's Diary, entry 19 Sept. 1819. Bentley's informant was a "Captain Lee" of Manchester: "We are no Baptists," said he. Story was probably a son of Rev. Isaac Story.

77 Tappan's Manchester, p. 1275.

78 Lamson, p. 325. He notes the instance of a small boy, who, misbehaving, was cowed by Babcock's "pointing his finger at him and calling out in stentorian voice, 'I see you, serving the devil, in the Lord's house.'" See extended notice in Tappan's Manchester, p. 1290.

79 Information in this paragraph taken from an article in Manchester "Cricket," 31 Nov. 1896.

service, the stove's effects were somewhat perceptible and the odor of greasy boots decidedly so. After benediction, all filed out on the bare floor of the aisles and hurried home to a dinner of pork and beans taken from brick ovens.

In 1820, Manchester (population 1201) was identified in the census as employing most of its men in the fisheries, some in small vessels of 15-40 tons burthen, others on the Grand Bank and Bays of Newfoundland, a thousand miles at sea. The women annually wove about 50,000 yards of cotton cloth, "principally for the manufacturing interests in the vicinity of Boston, at the rate of 4-6 cents per yard, and the weavers take their pay in yarn at an extravagant advance."[80]

But things were changing, as Manchester began the transition from seafaring to furniture-making, led by John Perry Allen (1795-1875), a native son who would develop a specialty in mahogany veneers. Entering business in 1815 with one apprentice and one journeyman, he had introduced his wares into the Boston market, and taken in partners Charles Johnson of Salem in 1819, and the Long brothers, of New Hampshire. Both Johnson and the Longs would soon start their own firms.

The town was visited by various clergymen; and on 27 July 1821 Rev. Samuel M. Emerson was called to serve as minister. He was installed 12 Sept. 1821,[81] having agreed to a $450 salary and 14 cords of wood (2 of hardwood, 12 of pine and hemlock) and use of the parsonage land. Samuel Moody Emerson (1785-1841) had attended Westfield Academy and Williams College (class of 1810); after some years of teaching, he had been ordained in 1815 at Chester. He would reside in the house built by James Thurston on School Street.

The town's politics had finally changed enough that the old Federalist party candidate, Col. Timothy Pickering, with 49 votes, beat the Republican, Gideon Barstow, by just 11 votes for the US House of Representatives seat (MTR, 11 March 1821).

The town meeting on 15 Nov. 1822 was the last one held at the meeting house. The voters' main decision was to alter the singing seats at the meeting house.

Rev. Samuel Emerson was popular with his new congregants. In 1823 the church raised extra money for charitable donations by the church: $12.14 for missions, $9 for a college in Maine, and $30 ("by the ladies") for a membership in the Bible Society for their Mr. Emerson (EWL 97).

The New Year's sermon by Mr. Emerson, "Redeeming The Time," was a hit—so much so that it was published "by request" in Salem in 1825, thus affording us the only look at an early Manchester sermon.[82]

John Perry Allen, furniture manufacturer, was employing more and more of his townsmen. In April 1825, he was granted the privilege, on the site of the old town grist mill, to build a mill for his cabinet-making (MTR). For years, while producing fine furniture, he would experiment with a water-powered method of cutting veneers. His invention of a reliable mahogany veneer power saw—the first ever used that reliably produced multiple veneers—came by accident, after having recut the teeth of the revolving saw and widening the gap between the plates through which the wood passed (to reduce the heat). The final product enabled him to produce large quantities of first-rate furniture, extremely

80 Notation at the foot of the federal census of Gloucester and Manchester, 1820.

81 In 1822 (the year he left town) Rev. James Thurston brought suit against Tyler Parsons for some of his remarks in the process of his ouster and won his suit for $1500 damages. Thurston removed to Exeter, NH.

82 In collection of Manchester Historical Museum; copy preserved by Deacon John Price.

popular Down South in the showrooms of Charleston, Mobile, and New Orleans. Men and boys by the score left their perilous jobs at sea and came ashore to work at cabinet-making.[83]

In the March annual town meeting of 1826, held at "town hall or school room," the voters reinstated the crow bounty (5 and 10 cents) and ordered a $1 license for all dogs ($2 fine). To John Perry Allen, they finished making over the town's mill privileges on the Sawmill Brook at now-Central Street (MTR).

The furniture-makers worked in the shops until eight in the evenings, six days a week; some had "stints" of 14 hours per day. Holidays, all but unknown, were celebrated with great joy when they came. On July 4, 1826, the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration, the day began with the ringing of bells and booming of cannon, and a parade: Capt. Benjamin Knowlton and the local militia company, in white pants and blue coats, went first; then 24 young men representing the states of the union; then the Gloucester militia company, the committee members, the citizens, and 24 old veterans of the Revolutionary War. The exercises, held at the meeting house, consisted of singing an Ode to Science, Capt. John Girdler's reading of the Declaration, and an oration by Tyler Parsons. "Dinner followed in the hall" (Lamson, 152-3).

In 1827 there was a religious revival, much to the gratification of Mr. Emerson: in early January 1828, 64 new members were accepted (Price's Notebook, p. 26). This was the year in which a fire engine was purchased, and the bridge was built to run a roadway connecting the downtown and the Newport section, without having to pass over Bennett Street.

In 1829 a Temperance Society was formed on "the principle of total abstinence from ardent spirits of persons in health." Larkin Woodberry was chosen president; by 1836 this Society, strongly supported by the church, would have 400 members (Lamson, 158-9).

In 1830, Manchester had a population of 1236, with the following agricultural land: 150 acres tillage, 500 acres English grass (hay) upland, 1550 acres pasture, 75 meadow, 50 salt marsh (per census). Town meetings were held at Town Hall on School Street. Until 1835, however, the town saw to the repairs of the meeting house; after that, the parish was entirely responsible for the meeting house.[84]

This was a time of prosperity and activity in Manchester, which attracted many newcomers. "The village hummed with the sounds of busy industry and of active life." Three coasting packets sailed regularly to Boston and "all departments of life felt the stir," from the furniture trade to the shoemakers in small shops. Eben Tappan manufactured fire engines; John Godsoe produced reed organs. Wages were fair, and most lived in frugal comfort. "The oppression of capital, the tyranny of strikes, were all unknown." Most people were of the same class and background, and the city did not lure the young, who lived in "contentment, simplicity, and honesty." The cabinet industry trained "a thoughtful, reading, intelligent class of men, who gave weight and character to the community" (Lamson 160).

The Manchester Lyceum was founded early in 1830. This association, with library, was dedicated to providing public education. It would have a profound impact on the town. The first lecture was given by Dr. Ezekiel W. Leach, followed by Rev. Samuel M. Emerson presenting on the secular topic of "The

83 See Tappan's Manchester, pp. 1293-4 re the history of furniture-making in Manchester.

84 Per John Lee, 1 March 1876, "Beetle & Wedge" article.

Method of Conducting Debates," followed by three talks on "natural philosophy" by Dr. Asa Story (the Lyceum president) and one by Deacon John Price, a schoolmaster, speaking on "Schools and Methods of Government" (Lamson, 154-5).

In 1833 Rev. Mr. Emerson and the church took a strong position on "temperance" (anti-liquor): "whereas the use of ardent spirits has been the fruitful cause of numerous evils which admit of no remedy but that of total abstinence," the church members voted that, consistent with a "high standard of Christian morality," all candidates for church membership must eschew the use of alcohol (Lamson 234). This helped lead to another revival, with 24 new church members received in 1834 (Price's Notebook, p.26). The meeting house was struck by lightning on Aug. 12 of this year, evidently with no serious damage done (John Lee diary).

The Manchester Anti-Slavery Society began informally in the 1830s, perhaps guided by Parson Emerson. Abolition was becoming a matter of public concern in the North, prodded by Wm. Lloyd Garrison as of 1832. Rev. Mr. Emerson came forward as a member of the New England Anti-Slavery Convention, held in May 1834, in Boston.[85] Presumably he had the support of his congregation in doing so. The early (1830s) leaders of the town's anti-slavery group were Larkin Woodberry and Rev. S. M. Emerson; in the early 1840s, women and other men came forward.[86]

In 1835, Manchester had just 1200 tons of vessels employed in fishing and coasting, while furniture-making employed 200 men and boys, half of them working for J. P. Allen, who installed a steam engine in his veneering mill that year. Manchester was busy, with two packet vessels constantly shuttling to Boston for distribution of furniture. The business generated $60,000 in annual revenue. Manchester then had 3 grist-mills, 3 lumber mills, a mahogany veneering mill, a bakery, 12 carpenter shops, a cooper shop, a wheelwright shop, a brickyard, 6 shoemakers' shops, ten furniture shops, a ship's-wheel shop, a tailor, and 3 painters.

On August 28, 1836, a spark from the steam engine set fire, late at night, to John P. Allen's veneering mill and then Allen's house and two shops, along with several other buildings and homes. The night of the fire was one of dense fog, and the town turned out to put out the fire, using the fire engine, and helped by the fire engines of other towns. The meeting house was a front-row witness to the destruction (Lamson 147-9).

Within a year John Perry Allen was back in business, although highly leveraged financially. In 1837, 120 men were employed in twelve furniture factories, producing chairs and cabinet ware worth $84,000. This contrasted with the 65 men employed in the cod and mackerel fishery, whose year's catch was worth $12,800.

Other than certain seats and the parsonage pew, the meeting house was owned by its proprietors, and the town paid the expenses. Then, in 1836, the First Parish of the Orthodox Congregational Church was incorporated and took financial responsibility for the minister, the music,

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85 See *Proceedings of the New England Anti-Slavery Convention*, Boston, 1834.

86 Lamson, pp. 167-174. Mr. Emerson's abolitionism in 1834 has been mentioned; it seems, from his diary notes, that John Lee (with his wife Sarah) was interested in abolition; Larkin Woodberry as of 1839 was a life member of the Mass. Anti-Slavery Society. In January, 1839, per John Lee's diary, a Manchester anti-slavery group came together with eight members; and in 1844 the town Anti-Slavery Society would be organized, with officers Charles Blanchard (president), first v.p. Albert E. Low, second v.p. John Lee, secretary Charles Johnson, treasurer Isaac S. West. In 1844, John Lee noted in his diary that at least one local meeting was run by women.

and the ministry land (Price's Notebook). The Parish did not, however, own the meeting house, which remained in possession of the proprietors.

By 1838, Rev. Mr. Emerson, in ill health, was often out of the pulpit. The congregation was dissatisfied, and forty members withdrew in March 1838.[87] While Emerson was ill, Rev. Leonard B. Griffin, Methodist pastor at Riverdale, Gloucester, led a successful revival, which further undermined Mr. Emerson. In June, "the new school" of singers filled the singing seats of the church and sang "very well."[88] A month later, a Penobscot Indian passing through town put on a show of bow-and-arrow marksmanship at the common: he hit distant coins, and twice he hit the weathercock atop the meeting house. When he left town that afternoon, he raced a two-horse wagon down the road to Salem and stayed ahead for half a mile.[89]

Another success was the visit of Rev. Edward T. Taylor (1793-1871), pastor of the famous Seamen's Chapel in the North End of Boston and renowned as the greatest preacher in America. On the moonlit evening of Dec. 25, 1838, "Father" Taylor packed the Manchester meeting house for his lecture on the subject of Temperance. John Lee attended, and wrote in his diary, "his lecture was the best I think that has ever been given here."

On 29 Jan. 1839 Samuel Emerson, plagued by ill health and attendant criticism, tendered a letter of resignation (Parish Records).[90] The net result was relief in the congregation, and a succession of inspiring visiting preachers. There followed a wave of good feeling, which extended to the town meeting of March 11, "conducted with excellent order and union," unlike former "party strife and opposition. The change is, and must be, attributed to religious influence…"[91]

Town meetings were exciting events in the small town of Manchester, where entertainment was at a premium; they gave every man a chance to sound off. The meetings were evidently attended by the town's boys, so-called Jebiloons. A later observer noted: "they would come early, sit close, and stay late to every meeting held," mainly in hopes of seeing the meeting erupt in controversy. "All would go smoothly until the time came for taking action on the reports of the town officers and committees; then the curtain went up and everyone would at once sit up and begin to take notice. Some of these men had been waiting for a whole year to get this chance to lay out the selectmen…" One man went so far as to prepare a speech of opposition "based wholly and solely on some crime or misdemeanor that the chairman's grandfather had been guilty of long years before. How the splinters would fly from the moderator's gavel as he would try to call the man down for indulging in personalities."[92] It is likely that the town meetings had always been pretty obstreperous.

87 See "Parish 1836-1875" book, Manchester Orthodox Congregational Church records, 1717-1917, RG5361 Congregational Library & Archives; hereafter, Parish Records.

88 Per John Lee, diary entry 24 June 1838.

89 John Lee diary entry 25 July 1838. A traveling group of 60 Penobscots would camp near Black Cove in August.

90 On 29 Jan. 1839 the parish voted 76 to 39 (many abstaining) to keep him on; but his health was poor. He preached on Feb. 3 (text: "Jesus wept"). On April 8 the parish accepted his proposal that he resign and be paid $225 severance. See John Lee diary for above dates.

91 John Lee diary entry 11 March 1839.

92 "G.E.W." (likely George E. Willmonton, 1869-1934), "The Jebiloons At Town Meeting" in the Manchester "Cricket," 17 March 1906. John Lee, often town meeting moderator, would, like his predecessors, have unruly men evicted and held in detention until it was over.

On 18 March 1839, the Parish allowed the local Universalist Society to use the meeting house for six evening services (Parish Records). After eighteen years' service at Manchester, Pastor Emerson was honorably dismissed by advice of council in the summer of 1839. He moved to Heath, Mass., where he served briefly as minister until his death in 1841.

On 15 August 1839, the Parish invited Rev. Oliver A. Taylor (1801-1851), who had begun preaching there in July, to settle as the new pastor at a $700 salary; and he was installed on 18 Sept. 1839 (Parish Records). Born at Yarmouth, Mass., Mr. Taylor was a graduate (1825) of Union College and had studied theology at Andover. Three of his brothers were also ministers.

Mr. Taylor was a devout, mild-mannered, rather sickly man who had spent two decades as a scholar rather than a minister. Though a faithful clergyman, he was "ill-fitted for the stormy era of anti-slavery discussion, and sometimes seemed to his friends over-cautious and timid" (Lamson 235). The 1840s were a time of ferment in Massachusetts at large and in Manchester—the causes of anti-slavery, religion, and anti-liquor (temperance) tended to stir a lot of emotion, public as well as private, bringing crowds into the streets and meeting halls to be moved by exhorters. The schoolhouse and other venues—Dodge's Hall at the hotel, for example—became the site of the town meetings as well as lectures and revivals. The meeting house was a refuge of worship for the First Church attendees, but they too were caught up in various excitements.[93]

Among Mr. Taylor's congregants, Andrew Lee (1790-1841), a shoemaker of now-78 School Street, was a favorite, for his piety, attentiveness, and unceasing activity on behalf of the Sunday School, of which Deacon John Price was superintendent. Mr. Taylor wrote a full-length memoir in 1841-2, published in 1844 by the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society as "Piety in Humble Life—A Memoir of Mr. Andrew Lee."

In February 1841, the Methodists were allowed to hold their first Sunday service in town, with a Gloucester preacher presiding at the School House at a large gathering (MFC).

Manchester was caught up in religious zeal. "Few communities of the same size could furnish more material for unhallowed fire to feed upon than did Manchester at that period. The church contained a great mixture of characters, and sectarian zeal of the lowest order found countenance in many who belonged to it."[94] About a dozen church members seceded in dissatisfaction. The Parish responded by taking "measures to improve our church music" and to name a committee "to wait on the seceders to solicit aid in support of the gospel" (Parish Records). The annual March town meetings were heated affairs in 1841 and 1842, as the voters considered, with a good deal of contention, matters relating to the town's poor farm at Kettle Cove and the arrangements of school districts (per John Lee diary).

The Millerite, or Second Advent of Jesus Christ, movement swept through Manchester late in 1842, promoted by Elam Burnham, a layman "elder" of Essex, who preached at many meetings in various venues. Widely adopted throughout America, Millerism held that the world would end in 1843-4 with the coming of Jesus. Having won over prominent men like Tyler Parsons and John and

93 An exception, per diary of John Lee, was the 23 Feb. 1840 use of the meeting house for the lecture of "Prof. Jinks of Boston," who packed the house with demonstrations of chemistry and electricity, charging 12.5 cents per head. Evidently it had been decided that the meeting house was the only venue large enough for the anticipated crowd.

94 Timothy A. Taylor, "Memoir of Rev. Oliver A. Taylor of Manchester," Boston, 1854, p. 367; hereafter, cited as Taylor's Memoir.

Samuel Cheever, Burnham prompted wholesale defection among Parish members early in 1843 (Parish Records). John Lee wrote in his diary, "the workshops and grocery stores are shut up, and all sorts of people attend meetings. Men, women, children spoke and prayed. A great reformation in town."[95]

Mr. Taylor and the Orthodox Congregational Church generally opposed the Millerite enthusiasm, as did certain others: a Gloucester minister, Mr. Smith, debated Mr. Burnham head-to-head, somewhat blunting his momentum; and certain "hoodlums would break up the meetings." Undaunted, Burnham baptized a number of people; and the Congregational society suspended and even excommunicated several members. In April 1843, Burnham's followers formed the First Christian Society, with 70 members, who proceeded to lease a lot on School Street from the Parish and build a meeting house[96] (Parish Records; Lamson 157-8).

In March, 1843, the Parish reduced Mr. Taylor's salary by $100; but most people stayed calm and new members were attracted, including ninety to the Sunday School.[97] The Proprietors of the meeting house, led by John Perry Allen, chose that moment to demand a complete renovation of the interior of the meeting house—a windfall for the craftsmen of Manchester—with removal of all the old pews and trim and with the Parish to take ownership. This of course caused a controversy between the Parish and the Proprietors.

In April 1844, the Parish voted to invite the meeting-house proprietors who had seceded from the Parish to meet with them and discuss the proposed alterations. At the same time, Mr. Taylor gave up his claim on the $100 of salary that had been removed, since he—newly married—had found private citizens willing to make up the difference (Parish Records). He made a point of reminding people of Manchester's increasing prosperity. They responded by giving him three months' notice, based on a 25-24 vote of dissatisfaction (Parish Records). Cooler heads soon prevailed.

It was a ticklish moment in church-town relations: John Lee noted that an anti-slavery committee, asking to use the Congregational meeting house for a public lecture, was turned down due to the non-religious nature of the subject.[98] Over time, Manchester would be visited by many anti-slavery orators and would become notable for its commitment to the anti-slavery movement, described as one "not only of earnest thought and discussion, and of unselfish devotion, but of manful and heroic action. It was an education in itself of no mean value. It was an experience which prepared the people for the stern scenes which were to follow. It lifted the moral sense of the community to a distinctly higher plane; it purified and energized the public conscience; it magnified and made honorable the 'higher law.'"[99]

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95 24-25 Jan. 1843, John Lee diary entry.

96 Their meeting house, built in 1844, was taken over by the Baptists in 1850.

97 Per John Price's memo on "Revivals," p. 26 in his "Meeting House" notebook; see also Taylor's Memoir, p. 370.

98 See 4 April 1844 John Lee diary entry; the meeting was held in Essex and then in Manchester, at Dodge's Hall, on April 6, addressed by Stephen Symonds Foster, a fierce radical. Historian Lise Breen (August 2020) has noted the turndowns of 1844 and 1845.

99 Lamson 174. In John Lee's diary we see that there was some resistance in Manchester to the anti-slavery movement, partly because much of the locally made furniture was sold in southern markets. The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 was met with outrage in Manchester and many places in the North; at the risk of being arrested under federal law, some people engaged in the Underground Railroad, moving escaped enslaved persons farther north to safety. Lamson's "stern scenes" would include the battles of the Civil War, 1861-5.

By April, 1845, the Parish-Proprietors plan for renovation and improvements had been completed, with the concurrence of the Town and with agreement that for $3000 the Parish would buy out the Proprietors (Price's Notebook).[100] In taking possession of the meeting house, the Parish voted to sell all of its ministry lands and the old pews, and to lease out a new building—the "Chapel" or "New Vestry" being built by the Proprietors on School Street as an interim house of worship pending completion of the meeting-house renovations (Parish Records).

In 1845, Manchester was visited by the lawyer and author Richard Henry Dana (1787-1879), a Boston Brahmin editor and writer with a wide range of friends and admirers. For decades, Bostonians had been buying up waterfront property along the North Shore for summer residences, starting with Nahant. Dana spotted a beautiful look-out at Graves Beach, Manchester, and built a four-square summer house on 30 acres there. Thus began the re-invention of Manchester as a retreat for the wealthy—at first just in the summers, and eventually year-round. As a place with a small population and an extensive rocky coastline not "useful" to the locals, it was ideal for those who valued the views, fresh air, and beaches.

Much civic-religious progress had been made by March 1846, and the whole town was feeling unified and positive. Mr. Taylor was given his full $700 salary. All of the renovation and alteration work at the meeting house was finished by 9 April 1846, when the meeting house was re-dedicated with a sermon by Mr. Taylor and acknowledgments of the various gift-givers and their gifts, worth $2303, the most expensive being the $1200 organ given by Capt. Richard Trask and Mrs. Sarah Allen; John Perry Allen (most of the $400 toward the new pulpit); a big new bell from Capt. Benjamin L. Allen, $350; an $80 communion service from Mrs. Abigail H. Trask; and $185 from 195 ladies for pulpit trimmings (Price's Notebook).

The prosperity created by furniture manufacturing enabled the town to widen and improve its streets; and Manchester was transformed in appearance, with handsome new houses, old houses painted and renovated, fences built, and shade trees planted. It was a very pretty place by the end of 1847, when the Eastern Railroad opened a line from Boston. Beyond the obvious advantages as to the transport of freight and furniture, a large number of new visitors had a chance to discover Manchester's attractions.

One of those attractions was the meeting house, holding its traditional place at the center of town, on the green where a small group of settlers had laid out the lumber for the first meeting house in 1673. Over the course of 200 years, Manchester had stayed small but pretty certain of its importance. Whether in peace or war, prosperity or hardship, its people gathered here to govern and to worship—to make policy for the benefit of the community, to affirm their commitments to each other, and to follow the teachings of their pastors in the ways of faith.

100 The First Parish acquired all interest in the meeting house—land, building, and bell—by two deeds: 27 Dec. 1845 from the Proprietors (SERD 420:35) and 19 Nov. 1847, from the Town (SERD 394:68). In 1846 someone from the Parish finally got to Salem to record the 1809 deeds of Crafts, Leach, and Tuck/Lee to Meeting House Proprietors (SERD 362:213-5).

Sources

In researching the history of Manchester's meeting houses and their use for civil and religious purposes, I reviewed many relevant primary-source records and incorporated into the text the information that I felt was most important, interesting, and representative of the times.

Manchester Town Meeting Records

Manchester's earliest town records (1600s) were organized and prepared by a three-man committee for publication in book form in 1889, followed by a second volume (1891) covering the period 1700-1786 ("Town Records of Manchester," volumes I and II, published in Salem). These records cover town meetings of the inhabitants as well as the doings of the town commoners and the proprietors of The 400 Acres. Although I have used the published records as references herein, I find that the published version of 1889 is somewhat at variance from the original manuscript (which I reviewed in digital format), nor does the sequence of the early pages, as published, seem true to the originals.

Reviewing the digital records, I found that the earliest manuscript town record dates from 1654 (one deed transaction, which remains unrecorded at the Southern Essex Registry of Deeds in Salem) and then a record from February 1657/8 on a couple of pages of paper that are torn and missing some of the text. Then come pages, similarly torn and defective, for 1661, then one reference to 1662, then partial records for 1668 and 1670, 1672, and a reference to 1673. A town meeting record exists for early 1678, one for 1682, one for 1683, a few for 1684, with extensive records for 1685, 1686, etc. Presumably the settlement's public records were kept earlier than 1657, and continuously thereafter, but most did not survive—evidently a Knowlton set fire to them in the 1700s (see 1833 memoir by Mrs. Rachel Hooper Lee, then 95, in MHM collections).

Starting in 1685, the extant records are complete, or nearly so, for the balance of the 17th century, thanks to the then-newcomer Thomas Tewksbury, who in that year appears to have started keeping the records although evidently he was not elected Town Clerk until 1693.

Given the gaps in the records from the 1600s, I augmented my search by looking at the Essex County Quarterly Court Records & Files, which enabled me to identify boards of selectmen, rosters of inhabitants, and other information that, if relevant to activities at a meeting house, I added to the text of this piece.

The records of town meetings from 1786 to 1799, whereabouts now unknown, were not published. Starting in 1800, the town records (unpublished) are found in annual booklets in the MHM "Town Hall Records" box, and are nearly complete for years into the 1840s. I reviewed all of them, and incorporated relevant information into the text, referencing the proceedings by years.

Manchester Church Records

Courtesy of the Manchester Historical Museum (MHM) and First Parish Church Congregational, I consulted early First Church of Manchester records in digital files, as well as the invaluable original materials collected in the Manchester Orthodox Congregational Church records, 1717-1917, RG5361, of the Congregational Library & Archives.

Vital Records

The town's births, marriages, and deaths, before 1850, were collected from various sources and published by the Essex Institute (Salem) in 1903.

Land Records

Southern Essex Registry of Deeds in Salem contains copies of Manchester deeds as well as index books of grantors and grantees. I consulted these when relevant, with the caveat that many Manchester deeds were never recorded at the Registry.

Court Records

I consulted the Essex County Quarterly Court records and files, published and indexed from 1636 into the 1680s; when necessary, I reviewed the WPA typescripts of the manuscript records.

General Court of the Colony Records

The records, 1628-1686, of the colony (Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay) were published in 1853 and 1854 and are available online. They do not include a complete set of the files and notes of those records.

Other Records

Manchester Historical Museum has an excellent collection of local records, including account books, letters, and diaries, many of which I consulted if they fell within the timeframe of 1640-1850. The diary of John Lee (1813-1879) was most helpful in understanding matters in the 1830s and 1840s. I also consulted the published diaries of Rev. William Bentley (1759-1819) of Salem, who visited Manchester and noted Manchester activities. Sources not cited above will be found in the footnotes.

Secondary Sources

Early Histories

Ezekiel W. Leach (1809-1842) wrote a manuscript "Historical Collections of the Settlement of Manchester 1640-1835," completed in 1835 and on file at Manchester Historical Museum. Leach's work, unpublished, was in the nature of "annals of the town," a collection of references rather than an integrated history; it was similar to Joseph B. Felt's "Annals of Salem," which were first published in Salem in 1827 with additions later. Leach's work was exemplary for its time and included the sources from which he drew his information.

Booklet, "Brief History, Articles of Faith, Covenant and Living Members of the Orthodox Congregational Church in Manchester, Mass.," Boston, 1851. This was published in the year that Manchester's Rev. Oliver Taylor died.

John Lee (1813-1879), selectmen and diarist, wrote extensively on Manchester's history and might have published his work as a book had he lived longer. His thematic pieces on local history were published in the 1870s in the "Beetle & Wedge" monthly newspaper. His work (lacking footnotes) on the meeting houses and parsonages appears in issues for Sept. & Dec. 1875 and Jan., Feb., March 1876.

William H. Tappan, a native son steeped in Manchester lore, wrote a good history, "Manchester," published in E. H. Hurd's 1888 "History of Essex County." It lacks footnotes as to sources but includes some of Leach's and Lee's findings along with much anecdotal material.

Darius F. Lamson, the town's Baptist minister, spent a year writing "History of The Town of Manchester, Massachusetts, 1645-1895," published in 1895. He did so as a member of a committee including W. H.

Tappan. He reviewed the works above. His footnotes as to local sources were skimpy, and he seems not to have used Dr. Leach's abstracts from the 17th century court and colony records.

John Price (1808-1895), schoolmaster, deacon of the First Church, and long-time superintendent of its Sunday School, was also a talented antiquarian. I have drawn on his work, which included extracts from primary sources, housed in the collections of the Manchester Historical Museum.

Histories published after 1895 do not include primary sources for the period of history that I have pursued.

Newspapers

I reviewed the "Beetle & Wedge," published by J. F. Rabardy in the 1870s, and the "Cape Ann Advertiser" from 1878-on and the Manchester "Cricket" from 1888-on, which have been digitized and so permit key-word searches.

Other

I reviewed many published biographies, memoirs, genealogies, college records, historical registers, etc., and footnoted them in the text.