

Historical Records of the Evangelical Congregational Church

Finding Aid

Last Revised: February 8, 2021

Collection Summary

- Collection number:** LH.082
Collection title: Historical Records of the Evangelical Congregational Church
Dates: 1717-2004
Size: 4.5 linear feet (6 boxes plus oversize box)
Creator/Collector: The Evangelical Congregational Church, Westborough, MA
Acquisitions info.: Donated to the Westborough Public Library by Helena Engberg (on behalf of the Evangelical Congregational Church).
Custodial history: Early records are from the “The Church of Christ in Westboro” (as Rev. Ebenezer Parkman called the church on the title page of his Church Records) and later records are from the Evangelical Congregational Church, after the first church split into the Unitarian and the Evangelical Congregationalist churches in 1834. All of the records were in custody of the Evangelical Congregational Church when they were donated to the Westborough Public Library.
Language(s): English
Repository: The Westborough Public Library
Processed by: Processed by Anthony T. Vaver, 2021

Rights and Access

Access restrictions: Collection is open for research.

Physical access restrictions: None, although researchers are encouraged to use any available digital images from the collection.

Publication rights: Copyright status not evaluated, although many of the early documents are in the public domain. No known restrictions on use.

Organizational History

The Evangelical Congregational Church was founded in 1834, when members of the first Congregational Church of Westborough split to form two separate church societies. A division in beliefs revolving around Trinitarian and Unitarian theories among the original congregation became severe when the church began to consider building a new meetinghouse for the growing church population. The division between belief systems prompted a call for an ecclesiastical council to consider the dispute, which was held on January 7, 1834. The council recommended that members holding Trinitarian views should form a new religious society, so on January 29, 1834, fifty-six members officially separated from the First Society to create the Evangelical Society.

Even though Rev. Elisha Rockwood, who was the pastor of the church when the break up took place, held views more in line with the Evangelical Society, the First Society continued to be the organization that officially employed him. After it became clear that the theological differences between the pastor and the congregation could not be worked out, the First Society dismissed Rockwood that same tumultuous year. Even though Rockwood continued to serve as the Evangelical Society's virtual pastor, the emotional split of the church made it difficult for him to continue in that role, so he was dismissed on March 11, 1835.

As part of the separation agreement, the First Society, which became the Unitarian Church, retained the meetinghouse and other ecclesiastical property, while the Evangelical Society received the records of the original church and the communion service plate. The Evangelical Society also built a new meetinghouse, which was completed on December 17, 1834.

Scope and Content Note

Some of the items in this collection pre-date the forming of the Evangelical Society, which became known as the Evangelical Congregational Church, in 1834. The most important of these is the first volume of Church Records (1724-1808) for Westborough, most of which were written by Rev. Ebenezer Parkman, Westborough's first minister. The first Church Covenant (1724) is also included, as are sermons and other writings by Parkman. Both the Church Records and many of Parkman's writings in this collection have been digitized and are available through New England's Hidden Histories digitization project at the Congregational Church Library and Archives. These digital images and a transcription of the Church Records can be accessed through the Ebenezer Parkman Project website: <http://www.ebenezerparkman.org/>.

The collection also notably includes extensive documentation of a case involving charges of domestic abuse brought by Persis Adams against her husband, Daniel Adams. These records provide intimate accounts of their relationship and include testimonials by people in and around town who knew the two of them. They shed light on domestic relations at this time and how the church treated domestic disputes. Parkman was involved with the case during the last couple years of his life.

Other notable records in the collection include letters written to children enrolled in the Sabbath School by soldiers serving in the American Civil War (folders 5.14-5.18). The letters describe life in camp and other experiences of soldiers during the war.

The rest of the collection covers the history of the Evangelical Congregational Church, from its formation in 1834 and up until the early 21st century. Records include documents and accounts relating to the separation of the church in 1834, records relating to the building of the new church and subsequent church repairs and renovations, and images of various ministers who served in the Church over the years.

Related Collection

- Historical Records of the Evangelical Congregational Church, Westborough, MA, 1784-1914 (OD.009)

Series Summary

Series 1: Parkman: Early Church Records, Sermons, and Papers

Church Records

Rev. Ebenezer Parkman Sermons

Ebenezer Parkman Papers

Series 2: The Daniel and Persis Adams Case

Series 3: Evangelical Congregational Church Records

Separation and Foundational Documents

Annual Meeting Reports

Finance

Sermons

Church Land, Building, and Repairs

Committees, Correspondence, and Miscellaneous

Church Publications

Series 4: Sabbath School

Series 5: Photographs

Series 6: Church History

Series 7: Miscellaneous

Collection Inventory

Series 1: Parkman: Early Church Records, Sermons, and Papers

Box 1

Folder

Church Records

1.01 The Church Covenant, 1724-10-28

1.02 Records of the Church of Christ in Westboro, 1724-1808 [Church Records, Volume One], written by Rev. Ebenezer Parkman

1.02A Receipt for Pulpit, 1723

1.02B Letter from Town Clerk Regarding Tax to Repair the Belfry, 1824

Rev. Ebenezer Parkman Sermons

1.03 Sermon, 1724-12-13

1.04 Sermon, 1725-12-19

1.05 Sermon, 1726-06-26

1.06 Sermon, 1727-02-12

1.07 Sermon, 1727-12-07

1.08 Sermon, 1728-05-26 (Fragment: pp. 25-28)

1.09 Sermon, 1733-11-04 (Fragment: Front, p. 15)

1.10 Sermon, 1734-11-07 (Fragment: Front, pp. 1-2, 7-12)

- 1.11 Sermon, 1739-02-11
- 1.12 Sermon, 1740-08-10
- 1.13 Sermon, 1743-05-15
- 1.14 Sermon, 1748-11-13
- 1.15 Sermons, 1749-06-18, 1746-08-10 (Fragment: p. 18-?)
- 1.16 Sermon, n.d., 1749-08-20 [see p. 12] (Fragment: pp. 7-18)
- 1.17 Sermon, 1751-03-03
- 1.18 Sermon, 1753-05-13
- 1.19 Sermon, 1755-01-03 (Fragment: pp. [1-4])
- 1.20 Sermon, 1755-06-28 (Fragment: pp. 1-2)
- 1.21 Sermon, 1756-06-06
- 1.22 Sermon, 1764-03-25
- 1.23 Sermon, 1764-11-04
- 1.24 Sermons, 1766-03-09, 1766-03-16, 1766-03-30 (Fragment: pp. 1-32)
- 1.25 Sermon, 1768-08-21 (Fragment: pp. 32-33)
- 1.26 Sermons, n.d., 1780-03-19, 1780-03-26, 1780-04-02, 1780-04-09, 1780-04-16 (Fragment: pp. 17-44)
- 1.27 Sermons, n.d., 1780-10-01, 1780-11-12, 1780-11-19, 1780-12-03, 1780-12-24, 1780-12-31 (Fragment: pp. 3-47)
- 1.28 Sermon, 1781-01-15
- 1.29 Sermon, n.d. ("God is not in all his Thoughts")
- 1.30 Sermon, n.d. (Fragment: pp. 3-6)
- 1.31 Sermon, n.d. (Fragment: pp. 7-12)
- 1.32 Sermon, n.d. (Fragment: pp. 9-16)
- 1.33 Sermon, n.d. (Fragment: pp. 13-14)
- 1.34 Sermon, n.d. (Fragment: pp. 19-22)
- 1.35 Sermon, n.d. (Fragment: pp. 19-22)
- 1.36 Sermon, n.d. (2 Fragments, no page numbers)
- 1.37 Sermon, n.d. (Fragment: no page numbers + insert)

Ebenezer Parkman Papers

- 1.38 Parkman Juvenilia, ca. 1717
- 1.39 Receipt, 1752 (Parkman receipt, 1753, on back)
- 1.40 Deed to Ebenezer Parkman, 1753
- 1.41 Land Survey, Ebenezer Parkman, 1767
- 1.42 Receipt, Parkman, 1776
- 1.43 Receipt for Ebenezer Parkman's Funeral, 1782
- 1.44 Salary of Ebenezer Parkman, n.d.
- 1.45 Parkman's Medical Remedies & Notes, n.d.
- 1.46 "of ye word morall," n.d.
- 1.47 "The Story of the Rice Boys," by Rev. Ebenezer Parkman, 1906

Parkman Family Papers

- 1.48 Receipt, Breck Parkman, 1783
- 1.49 Legal Execution, Breck Parkman, 1784
- 1.50 Correspondence, Hannah Parkman, 1789

1.51 Correspondence, Lucy Parkman, 1835

Oversize Box

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- OS.01 Alexander Parkman Letter to Breck Parkman, August 24, 1818
- OS.02 Military Appointment, Charles Parkman, 1812

Series 2: The Daniel and Persis Adams Case

Box 2

Folder

- 2.01 Parkman Letter to Daniel Adams, January 19, 1780
- 2.02 Parkman Letter to Daniel Adams, July 24, 1780 and August 28, 1780
- 2.03 Church Meeting Re: Daniel Adams, November 9, 1780
- 2.04 Daniel Adams Letter to Congregation, January 13, 1781
- 2.05 Parkman Letter to Persis Adams, February 19, 1781
- 2.06 Daniel Adams Letter to the Congregation, March 17, 1781
- 2.07 [Parkman] Letter to Daniel Adams, March 17, 1781
- 2.08 [Parkman] Letter to Daniel Adams, June 13, 1781
- 2.09 [Parkman] Letter to Daniel Adams, July 18, 1781
- 2.10 Letter from Daniel Adams to the Congregation, September 29, 1781
- 2.11 John [Field?] Testimony in Adams Case, November 4, 1781
- 2.12 Lydia Grout Testimony in Adams Case, November 26, 1781
- 2.13 Peter Ward Testimony in Adams Case, November 26, 1781
- 2.14 Sarah Ward Testimony in Adams Case, November 26, 1781
- 2.15 Susannah Whitman Testimony in Adams Case, November 26, 1781
- 2.16 Silas Warren Testimony in Adams Case, November 26, 1781
- 2.17 Abigail Graves Testimony in Adams Case, December 24, 1781
- 2.18 Sarah Grout Testimony in Adams Case, December 24, 1781
- 2.19 Parkman Letter to Daniel Adams, April 16, 1782 and to Persis Adams, April, 1782
- 2.20 Persis Adams Letter of Complaint, August 9, 1782
- 2.21 Parkman Letter to Daniel Adams, August 14, 1782
- 2.22 Easter Cook Testimony in Adams Case, September 18, 1782 [Original]
- 2.23 Easter Cook Testimony in Adams Case, September 18, 1782 [Copy]
- 2.24 Daniel Rice and Solomon Childs Testimony in Adams Case, October 4, 1782
- 2.25 Stephen Ball Testimony in Adams Case, October 24, 1782
- 2.26 Letter to Daniel Adams, March 14, 1783
- 2.27 Letter Sent to Daniel Adams, March 19, 1783
- 2.28 Persis Adams – Request to the Church, October 4, 1783
- 2.29 Daniel Adams Letter to the Congregation, September 15, 1784
- 2.30 Daniel Adams Letter to the Congregation, August 23, 1784
- 2.31 Persis Adams Letter to the Congregation, March 12, 1785
- 2.32 Letter to Daniel Adams by Elijah Brigham, June 1, 1786
- 2.33 Daniel Adams Letter to the Congregation, August 12, 1786
- 2.34 Letter to Daniel Adams from Elijah Brigham, September [9?], 1786

- 2.35 Letter to Daniel Adams from Elijah Brigham, November 7, 1786
- 2.36 Letter to Daniel Adams from Elijah Brigham, December 18, 1786
- 2.37 Daniel Adams Letter to Rev. W. Robertson, December 13, 1788
- 2.38 Committee Letter to Rev. John Robinson, February 19, 1803
- 2.39 Letter to Daniel Adams, n.d.
- 2.40 Levi Warren Testimony in Adams Case, n.d.
- 2.41 Minutes of Evidence Presented in Adams Case, n.d.
- 2.42 Elizabeth Adams Testimony in Adams Case, n.d.

Oversize Box

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- OS.03 Committee Report in the Adams Case, June 15, 1784
- OS.04 Committee Report on the Adams Case, September 6, 1784
- OS.05 Daniel Adams Letter to the Congregation, November 6, 1784

Series 3: Evangelical Congregational Church Records

Box 3

Folder

Separation and Foundational Documents

- 3.01 Book of Records/Separation of the Church, 1832-1833
- 3.02 Letters from Council, 1833-1834
- 3.03 List of Those Who Have Seceded from Rev. Rockwood, ca. 1834
- 3.04 Articles of Faith and Covenant, 1842; Articles of Doctrine, 1890; Constitution and By-Laws, 1957

Oversize Box

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- OS.06 Church Religious Association and By-Laws of the Evangelical Society in Westborough, 1834
- OS.07 Incorporation of the Church, 1888

Box 3

Folder

Annual Meeting Reports

- 3.05 Annual Meeting Report, 1962
- 3.06 Annual Meeting Report, 1965
- 3.07 Annual Meeting Report, 1998
- 3.08 Annual Meeting Report, 1999

Finance

- 3.09 Bills, Receipts, and Certificates of Membership, 1817, 1825-1833, 1904, 1907
- 3.10 Sunday School Donation, 1818
- 3.11 Subscriptions of the Westborough Branch of the W.C.S., 1827
- 3.12 Valuation of Members, 1869
- 3.13 Note on Raising Funds, 1874
- 3.14 Subscriptions to Pay Off Church Debt, 1876

- 3.15 H. Janette Howe Will and Church Donation, 1908-1909
- 3.16 Annual Fund Drive, 1933, 1934
- 3.17 Loyalty Dinner Letter, 1959
- 3.18 Standing Committee on Annie E. Rice Organ Fund, n.d.

Sermons

- 3.19 Sermon, [Anonymous], May 25, 1786
- 3.20 Sermons, 1819, 1827, 1856
- 3.21 Sermon: "A Dedication Sermon at the New Meeting-House," 1835
[Photocopy]
- 3.22 Sermons, 1835, 1837, 1838
- 3.23 Sermon, Rev. C. B. Kittredge, 1839
- 3.24 Sermon, 1993
- 3.25 Sermon, n.d. [Photocopy]

Church Land, Building, and Repairs

- 3.26 Meeting Minutes: Meeting House and Land, 1832-1833
- 3.27 Pew Deed, 1834
- 3.28 Chart of Pew Ownership, [c. 1834?]
- 3.29 Charles Parkman Deed for Church Property, 1834
- 3.30 Sarah Sanborn Deed for Church Property, 1834
- 3.31 Building Committee Reports and Records, 1835-1869
- 3.32 Meeting House Repairs and Bell Purchase, 1842, 1863, 1869
- 3.33 Chapel, 1859, 1964
- 3.34 Contract for Work on the Church, 1869
- 3.35 Bills for Church Repairs, 1869-1870
- 3.36 Bills for Church Repairs, 1869-1870
- 3.37 Report on Church Repairs, [1870]
- 3.38 Gifts and Pledges to Build a Parsonage, 1871
- 3.39 Bills for Parsonage Construction, 1871-1875
- 3.40 Parsonage, 1869-1875
- 3.41 Remodel Estimate, [1906?]
- 3.42 Specifications for Church Work, n.d.

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- OS.08 Meeting House and Land, 1834, 1837, n.d.
- OS.09 Architectural Plans and Drawings, 1834, n.d.
- OS.10 Pews and Pulpit, 1869, n.d.

Box 4

Folder

Committees, Correspondence, and Miscellaneous

- 4.01 Committee on the Choir, 1841-1904
- 4.02 Report of Committee on Organ, 1902
- 4.03 Committee Meeting Reports, Correspondence, and Miscellaneous Items,
1962-1964

- 4.04 Correspondence, 1849, 1903, 1964
- 4.05 Rewards of Merit, 1856, 1860, n.d.
- 4.06 List of Non-Resident Members, n.d.

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- OS.11 Passport for Rev. Daniel R. Cady and Cover, 1873

Church Publications

- 4.07 Program: Installation of Rev. Charles B. Kittredge, 1837
- 4.08 Programs: Order of Services, 1870
- 4.09 Manuals of the Evangelical Congregational Church, 1875, 1890, 1898
- 4.10 Ladies' Home Missionary Society 50th Anniversary, 1886
- 4.11 Program: Installation of Rev. W. Walcott Fay, 1888; Ordination of Mr. W. R. Buxton, 1892
- 4.12 Pew and Pulpit Newsletter, 1891, 1892, n.d.
- 4.13 Programs, 1894-1899
- 4.14 Printed Invitations and Greetings, 1903-1906, 1910, 1922, n.d.
- 4.15 Programs, 1917, 1924
- 4.16 200th Anniversary Documents, 1924
- 4.17 Historical Address (200th Anniversary), Rev. Lyndon S. Beardslee, 1924
- 4.18 Yearbook and Church Directory, 1931
- 4.19 The Evangel [Newsletter], 1953, 1963, 1999
- 4.20 Westboro Town Directory, 1957
- 4.21 Programs, 1958-1991, n.d.
- 4.22 Programs, 1964-2004
- 4.23 250th Anniversary Program, 1967
- 4.24 Education Programs, 1976, 1999
- 4.25 275th Anniversary Documents, 1999
- 4.26 Calendar for the Week, March 2-8, n.d.
- 4.27 Church Brochures, n.d.

Series 4: Sabbath School

Box 5

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- 5.01 Sabbath School Pupils, 1819
- 5.02 Sabbath School Treasurer's Book, 1819-1825
- 5.03 Establishment of a Sabbath School, 1825-1840
- 5.04 Constitution and Records of the Sabbath School Society, 1825-1839
- 5.05 Sabbath School Reports, 1841-1847
- 5.06 Sabbath School Reports, 1850-1858
- 5.07 Sabbath School Reports, 1860-1868
- 5.08 Sabbath School Reports, 1874-1878
- 5.09 Sabbath School Reports, 1880-1889
- 5.10 Sabbath School Reports, 1890-1895, n.d.
- 5.11 Books Bought for S.S., 1820-1829
- 5.12 Sabbath School Librarian Reports, 1841-1899

- 5.13 Sabbath School: Catalog of the Sunday School Library, 1888
- 5.14 Letters to S.S. from Civil War Soldiers – Edward P. Smith, 1863
- 5.15 Letters to S.S. from Civil War Soldiers – Porter Snell, 1863
- 5.16 Letters to S.S. from Civil War Soldiers – Julius D. Foote, 1864
- 5.17 Letters to S.S. from Civil War Soldiers – James P. Stone, 1864
- 5.18 Letters to S.S. from Civil War Soldiers – [W. T.?] Richardson and A. Middleton, 1864
- 5.19 Sabbath School Storage Envelope, n.d.

Series 5: Photographs

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- 6.01 Photographs of the Church, 1880, 1904, n.d.
- 6.02 Photographs of Congregational Church, 1938
- 6.03 Photographs of the Church and Kirkside [Black and White], n.d.
- 6.04 Photographs of the Church [Color], n.d.
- 6.05 Images of Pastors: Parkman, Robinson [?], Cady, Dean, Thayer, Walker
- 6.06 Images of Pastors: Richards, Holland, Beardslee, Palmer, Brooks, Spyker, Helm
- 6.07 Images: Dr. Francis E. Clark, n.d.; Rev. Harry Glad, 1991
- 6.08 Photographs of Internal Mechanism of the Gardner Parker Clock, n.d.

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- OS.12 Photographs: Sanctuary, 1880; Sanctuary, 1917

Series 6: Church History

Box 6

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- 6.09 List of Original Members of the Evangelical Church in 1834, n.d.
- 6.10 List of Former Pastors, ca. 1992
- 6.11 A Brief History of the Evangelical Church, 1957
- 6.12 Kirkside Documents, 1964-1995
- 6.13 Miscellaneous Church Histories, 1969-1971, 1990, 1999, n.d.
- 6.14 “A Sermon Preached at Westborough . . . at the Funeral of Rev. Ephraim Spaulding (Hawaii Missionary), 1840 [2021.01]
- 6.15 Hawaiian Missionary Documents, 1969, 1970
- 6.16 “Effects of the Throat Distemper Epidemic and the Great Awakening on Westborough, Massachusetts” by Glendyne R. Wergland[?], 1990
- 6.17 Parkman-Related Items and Photograph of Parkman’s Farmer House, n.d.

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Folder

- OS.13 Hawaiian Missionary Documents, 1838, n.d.

Series 7: Miscellaneous

Box 6

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- 6.18 Sermon, 1727 [Photocopy]
 - 6.19 Worcester South Conference, 1877, 1897, 1907, 1914
 - 6.20 First Methodist Church, 100th Anniversary, 1958
 - 6.21 Evangelical Congregational Church of Harvard, MA, 175th Anniversary, 1996
 - 6.22 Constitution of the Harmony Conference of Churches, n.d.
 - 6.23 "Joseph Smith Tells His Own Story," n.d.
 - 6.24 Payment Orders (Town), 1821, 1822, 1841
 - 6.25 Certification for Cultivating Wheat, Orestes Forbush (Town), 1839
 - 6.26 Photograph of the Park Building [and Westborough Center], ca. 1880
 - 6.27 Collection Labels, n.d.
- Oversize Box
- Folder
- OS.14 Tax Notice (Town), 1775
 - OS.15 Proclamations for Days of Prayer and Thanksgiving (MA), 1830-1844