

The Story  
of a  
Meeting - House

by

Robert Winthrop Adams

Robert Winthrop Adams was born in Royalston, MA on Oct. 17, 1881, son of Dr. Frank W. Adams and Fannie Russell Chase, daughter of Chauncy and Caroline (Morse) Chase.

He graduated from the Cushing Academy in 1900 and from the Worcester Polytechnic Institute in 1904, with the degree of Bachelor of Science. He engaged with the General Electric Company and in 1913 became a manager in Providence R.I.

The information above is extracted from the books of L.B. Caswell and H.C. Bartlett. We do not know the rest of his career.

In 1906 he married Pauline Whitney of Ashburnham. They had 2 children, Winthrop Whitney Adams and Margery Adams. He died on Sep. 29, 1969. He is buried with his wife in the Lawrence Brook cemetery in Royalston.

In addition to this brochure he also contributed an index of names appearing in the 1865 Royalston Memorial by Alexander H. Bullock.

This 6" x 9" booklet was scanned to text in November 2014. Efforts, perhaps still insufficient, were made to reproduce the original spelling and line justification.

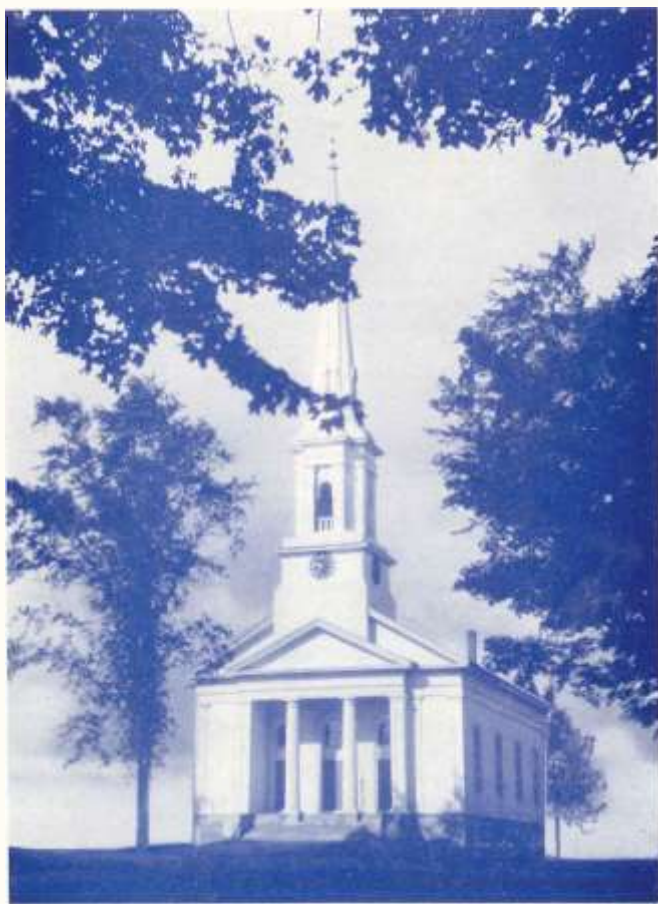
Pierre A. Humblet

# The Story Of A Meeting-House

A Narrative of the Antecedents and Career, to  
Date, of the Fourth Meeting-House of the First  
Congregational Church of Royalston, Massachusetts

by

ROBERT WINTHROP ADAMS



Say, then, that this house was  
built for me by those who love me.

— Viollet-le-Duc, *The Story of a House*,

ROYALSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

1952



## FOREWORD

A building, like a human being, grows old with the passing years. When our present meeting-house reached the ripe age of 95 it was evident that an extensive program of repairs was sorely needed.

At the Annual Parish Meeting in January 1947 a comprehensive plan of repairs and improvements was presented and adopted. The Parish Board of Trustees, numbering three, was enlarged to a representative group of nine known as the Repair and Improvement Committee. They were: Llewellyn S. Bolton, William F. Bowers, Elliott B. Chase, Mrs. Roger C. Chase, Rev. Frederick W. French, W. Russell Frye, Miss Mary E. Raymond, Elbridge A. Smith, Clifford H. Wilcox.

During the ensuing five years this Committee, with but two losses, one by withdrawal and one by death, sought to fulfill the wishes of the Parish (which in 1950 merged with the Church organization) in restoring and improving the house of worship.

The first major task of the Committee was to conduct a financial drive for a goal of \$15,000 estimated sufficient for the entire project. Planned by the Committee and directed by the Rev. Harold W. Curtis of Greenfield, a total of \$17,500 was pledged.

Actual construction work was begun with the painting of the outside of the building in August, 1947 and a year later, October 16, 1948, the Fellowship Hall was dedicated.

Due to the unforeseen expense of restoring the granite foundation walls and the rapid rise in the cost of material and labor, all available funds were exhausted. In consequence the work was interrupted with the exception of rebuilding the organ.

As 1952 approached it was hoped that the centennial year of the Meeting-House might be observed by the rededication of the completely renovated building. The newly constituted Church organization at its Annual Meeting in October 1951 re-appointed the Repair and Improvement Committee with authority to proceed with the project as funds became available. In January of 1952 on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the dedication of the present edifice, a preparatory service was held and plans laid for a Centennial observance in the coming Summer. Soon after this the Pastor volunteered to try and secure approximately \$2500 to complete the overall Project as originally adopted by the Parish. This was gradually accomplished by generous sums from the Ladies Benevolent Society, the Benefit Social Committee, Young People's Pilgrim Fellowship, Athol merchants, manufacturers and professional men, and our "Affiliated Members". Thus the Committee was enabled to complete its work of restoring and beautifying the Church building. The major units of the over-all plan of repairs and improvements include: outside of building repainted; foundation wall restored and reinforced; Fellowship Hall with stage and arrangement for six Church School classes; new heating, electrical and water systems; completely equipped modern kitchen and two lavatories; the 90 year old Johnson organ entirely rebuilt, improved, and equipped with electric blower; Auditorium redecorated and chancel and electrical fixtures improved.

Special mention should be made here of Miss Mary E. Raymond, Secretary of the Repair and Improvement Committee until her illness. She labored devotedly and enthusiastically for the progress of the project and a large share of its success is due to her efforts. We pay grateful tribute to her memory.

As Chairman of the Committee the Pastor thanks all the members for their continuous and faithful service in restoring and beautifying our century-old Meeting-House. It stands today as a monument to their effort.

*Frederick W. French, Pastor*  
Chairman of Committee

Royalston, Massachusetts  
July 25, 1952



# The Story Of A Meeting-House

THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 1852 was a red-letter day in an old New England town, for on that day was dedicated to the service and worship of God the new and graceful meeting-house of the First Parish or Congregational Society in Royalston, Massachusetts. This building was the fourth of its kind to dignify the "public square" established by the foresighted Proprietors in the center of the township, so this story properly begins with the laying out of the public square and the building of the first meeting-house.

The original public square consisted of a ten-acre plat, forty rods on a side. The surveyors laid it out in 1762, foursquare with the points of the magnetic compass, in the northwest corner of Lot No. 3 of the Proprietors' Grants. The site was well chosen, since it occupied the center of a level plateau, a rare feature in the hilly topography of Royalston, and commanded a pleasing view of nearby Little Pond, neighborly Frye Hill, and distant Grand Monadnock. The plat was laid out "for to build a meeting house, training field and burying ground." For nearly two hundred years it has served its original purpose as a center for the social, civic, and religious activities of the town.

On the easterly border of this public square stood the first meeting-house, built for the Proprietors in 1764 by Capt. Benjamin Ballard at a cost of £200, toward which Sir Isaac, Royal contributed £25 in 1752. Many years later the Reverend E. W. Bullard, in his *Historical Discourse in Commemoration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the First Congregational Church in Royalston*, was to describe this first house as "destitute of external pretensions or imposing internal appointments." The building was "45 feet long, 35 feet wide and 20 feet stud" and faced the public square. There were "horse stables" to the north and to the south of the meeting-house and a cemetery in the rear.

In 1771 the public square became no longer square but rectangular. The proprietors sold the western portion of the common land to the newly-arrived doctor, for a homestead. They made a good trade, for Stephen Batcheller turned out to be a tremendous asset to the town in its formative years. Three years later the Proprietors sold to Parson Lee the cemetery lot at the rear of the meeting-house, in exchange for a larger and more suitable lot on the Athol road.

As an offset to these losses in acreage the town acquired by purchase in 1802 a goodly extension of the Common toward the north. A smaller extension toward the south occurred in 1835 by deed of gift, perhaps through the influence of Lucy and Sarah Lee, since the tract had once been their father's garden, down which the good parson walked to officiate at the meeting-house. So the present Common is no longer in the form laid out by the Proprietors, nor has it quite as many acres, but it is more graceful in shape and better suited to the needs of the community. Those who love it are sure it has few equals and no superiors among the village greens of New England.

Our map shows the central and southerly portions of the Common, with neighboring structures as they existed in 1852. Names are those of the property owners in 1852 and dates are those in which they or their predecessors built the houses upon acquiring the property. Where two dates appear, the later one signalizes extensive alterations by the 1852 owner. Most of the data came out of research at the Worcester County Registry of Deeds and from local surveys; the rest is a matter of record in the Town histories and other documents. This little map is merely a black-and-white "still" of the colorful, ever-shifting stage upon which four Royalston meeting-houses have played their significant roles in the social and spiritual life of the town.

In 1795 the forward-looking Proprietors voted "to build a new Meeting House." The following year they voted "to have the new Meeting House on the west side of the common opposite the old one." They also voted "to see if the town will accept the plan of the Bolton Meeting House as produced by the committee excepting that a cupola be erected instead of a Spire." It seems that the committee's plan was accepted, so if we wish to see what Meeting-House No. 2 may have looked like we have but to open the *History of Bolton* at page 65 and imagine that the building pictured there has a cupola instead of a spire—and no portico, for the Bolton portico was added in 1844-45.

History records that the Bolton meeting-house was "fifty-six feet long, and the Width in Handsom proportion thereto," but it was a plain structure, as originally built. It had no pillared portico or towering steeple, but its counterpart, the second meeting-house in Royalston, erected in 1797, was "greatly in advance of the first," according to Reverend Bullard and is glowingly referred to by Parson Lee in his *Half-Century Discourse* of 1818 as "the present elegant house." No doubt it seemed elegant to him, in comparison to the rugged simplicity of Meeting-House No. 1, where he embarked on his long and fruitful Royalston ministry.

Meeting-House No. 2 faced the south. Perhaps the Proprietors faced it that way out of deference to the wishes of Parson Lee. We can almost see him at his study window, due south of the chosen site, taking note of the progress of the building. When it was completed, how he must have enjoyed looking at its benign facade, right opposite his own front door. When the big church doors were opened before a service perhaps he could, from his own doorstep, look inside the building and even catch a glimpse of his beloved pulpit. As the worshippers began to arrive, by carryall, on horseback, or on foot, he could probably identify them — the distance was so short. Then he could, if need be, tailor his remarks to fit his prospective audience as, with pleasurable anticipation, he betook himself down the Common to minister to his devoted flock.

Meeting-House No. 2 was kept in good repair by the town, according to Reverend Bullard, and served its purpose faithfully for forty-three years, with only two recorded improvements. In 1811 a bell was hung and in 1819 it was found necessary to increase the seating capacity of the audience room by the addition of four pews on each side of the gallery and five pews on the lower floor, "the north pew on the west side of the pulpit to be reserved for old people." In this preferred location they could more distinctly hear the words of Parson Lee and at the same time set a good example in conduct for the livelier members of the congregation.

Twenty years later the town was approaching the peak of its population (1,667 in 1840) and the leaven of progress was at work. At a meeting of the First Parish or Congregational Society in 1839, during the pastorate of Ebenezer Perkins, it was

Voted to choose a committee to take into consideration the propriety of moving and repairing this house or to take this down and build a new one and to see where they can obtain land to put one on etc. and to make report at an adjourned meeting from this and also to explain to the Parish the most proper and convenient plan for a meeting house. Chose Joseph Sawyer, Daniel Hubbard, Salmon Goddard, Elmer Newton, Samuel Morse, James Clark, George Peirce, George F. Miller, William Chase and Jonathan Gale a committee for said purpose.

On January 1, 1840 the committee made the following report:

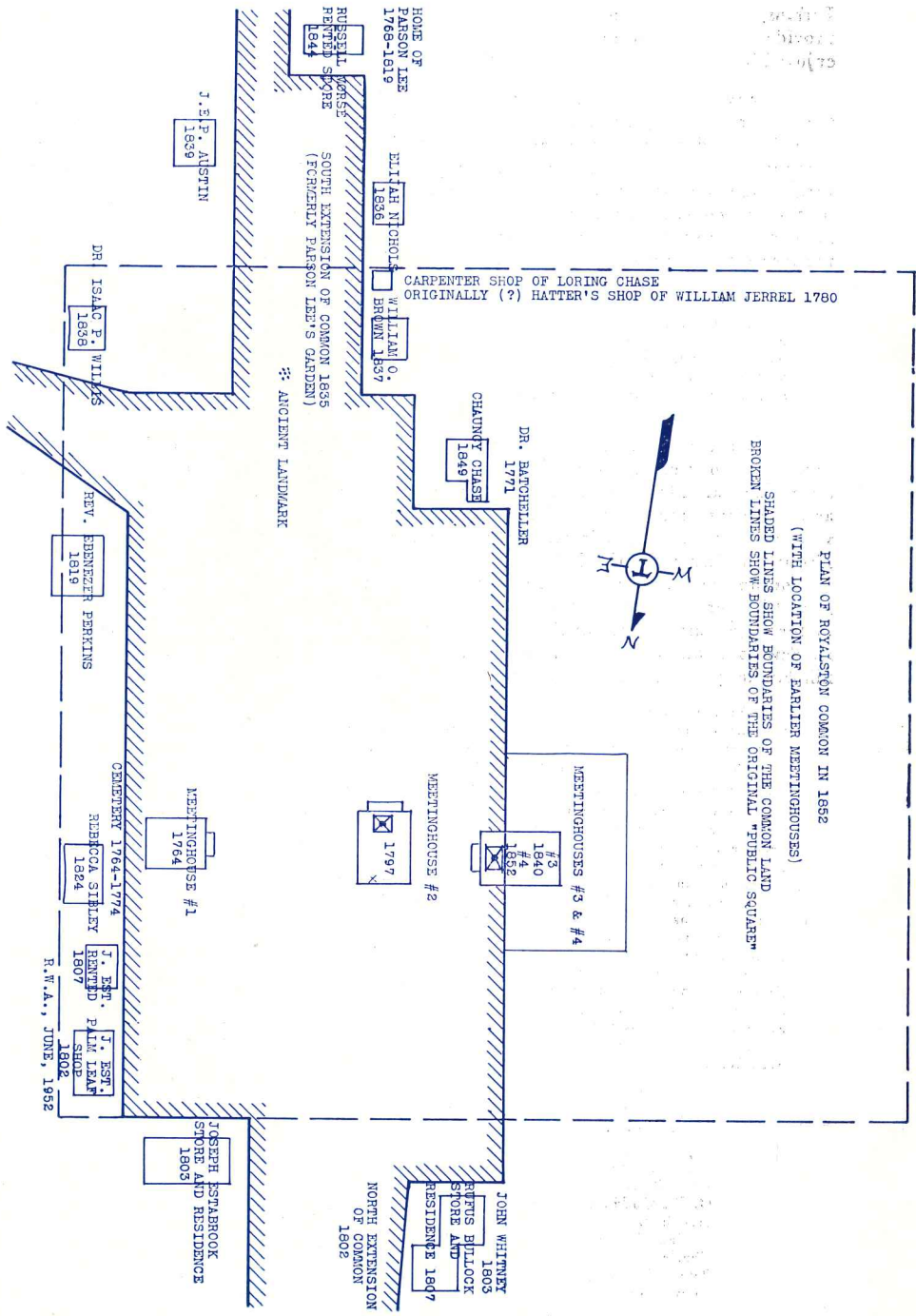
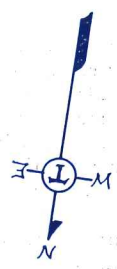
Agreed that this Parish need a new house and located in a different spot. We think it advisable to set it west of the present house and the front even with the front of the stables the other end running west into Dr. Batcheller's land. We have liberty from the Dr. to say that he will give the land to set the house on, and will sell land sufficient to build as many stables on as they may wish together with a sufficient space around the house so that it shall not exceed \$5 a stable for 30 stables providing the old stables are removed. Voted to accept the report of said committee so far as regards building a new house and in a different place.

The choice of the new location, with the building facing eastward toward a Common busy with activity at that time, was a stroke of genius on the part of the committee. Perhaps they were helped to reach their wise decision by the Reverend



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PLAN OF ROYALSTON COMMON IN 1882  
(WITH LOCATION OF EARLIER MEETINGHOUSES)  
SHADED LINES SHOW BOUNDARIES OF THE COMMON LAND  
BROKEN LINES SHOW BOUNDARIES OF THE ORIGINAL "PUBLIC SQUARE"



The First Church In Royalston Westward Takes Its Way

Perkins, whose spacious residence, almost directly across the Common, would then provide him with a direct front view of the scene of his pastoral labors, such as was enjoyed by his predecessor in office, Parson Lee.

At any rate, the present site is ideal for this public building and we should banish the unworthy thought that some future parson, living for example in the ancient William Raymond house at the very north end of the Common, might wish to bring the meeting-house back to the center of the Common and twist it around another quarter turn so that he too could drink in its beauty from his own front doorstep. That dire possibility was eliminated in 1874 by the establishment, at the south end of the Common, of a permanent official residence for the parson, from which the noble front of the meeting-house is still plainly visible — when the leaves are off the trees.

After further deliberation the committee reported:

We think that this house might be moved on to the proposed spot and the west end underpinned with the stones that are now under it. And put in a new floor so that it will have twenty feet for the house and the remainder for the vestry and cut the side posts off at the top of the vestry and build the sides up with stones and put 14 feet on to the east end for the entry and belfry and take two thirds of the lower room for the Sabbath School.

This concise report was accepted by vote of the Parish, January 15, 1840 and summarizes our official data on the structural plans for Meeting-House No. 3. Some unspecified architect — presumably Chauncy Chase — must have had a hand in the actual reconstruction, since the Reverend Bullard states that the previous structure was removed and "rebuilt after a more modern model." He goes on to say, in his *Historical Discourse* of 1866, "the dedication occurred Dec. 16, 1840; and in his sermon on the occasion — a published copy of which now lies before me — the pastor, Rev. Mr. Perkins, pronounces it a 'noble and beautiful house, \* \* every way adapted to the high purpose for which it was designed.' " It survived only ten more years in its new location when it was destroyed by fire and the undaunted community made immediate plans for its replacement, as dutifully recorded in the Parish records:

On the morning of Jan. 15, A.D. 1851 the meeting house was burned down the fire was discovered at about 2 o'clock no cause of origin of the fire could be traced and it is supposed it was done by incendiary or incendiarys.

Then on the 14th of March 1851 the following organization and agreement was formed for the purpose of building a new meeting house:—

We who have hereunto subscribed our names citizens of Royalston feeling desirous of building a meeting house in place of the one recently burned down do hereby voluntarily become associated and form a mutual company for the purpose of building said meeting house under the following scales and form of organization — first there shall be a meeting called to choose an acting building and financial committee whose duty shall be to contract for materials and the building of said house in manner form and size like unto the former house with basement or vestry under the same with walls built of stone as before with stone steps and recess stone and front stone as before and in every way similar to the former house leaving out the singers hall so called and subject to such other alterations of inside work and finish number form and size of windows and side galleries as may be decided on by a committee of counsel which shall be chosen by said company to advise and instruct said building committee in regard to such alterations from the former house as said advising committee may judge best . . . .

In witness where of we have hereunto subscribed our names this 14th day of March A.D. 1851.

Ashbel Goddard  
Isaac P. Willis  
Russell Morse  
John Wood  
Elmer Newton  
Amos Whitney  
O. W. Goddard  
Joseph Estabrook  
William Chase  
Charles Goddard  
Peter Woodbury  
Joseph Bliss  
Samuel Morse  
Shebna Paine  
Seth Holman

George Chase  
Francis Chase  
John Frye  
William O. Brown  
John Leathe  
Samuel Clark  
Benjamin Frye  
Stephen Richardson  
George Whitney  
Willard Newton  
Ebenezer Pierce  
Rufus Bullock  
Barnet Bullock  
Joseph Raymond

Seven at least of these subscribers, William Chase, Francis Chase, John Leathe, Benjamin Frye, Willard Newton, Barnet Bullock, and Russell Morse, are still represented in the Town of Royalston by grandsons, great grandsons, or great great grandsons, namely Charles Chase, Elliott Chase, Hollis Chase, Roger Chase, John Leathe, Russell Frye, Leon Newton, Willard Newton, Harold Newton, Hugh Bullock, and Robert Adams. The record continues:

Agreeable to notice given by the preacher at meeting on Sun. April 27th the above named members of said company met at the town hall on Mon. Apr. 28th in the afternoon and voted to choose a building committee of three members of said company — chosen Russell Morse moderator and made choice of Elmer Newton Obadiah Goddard and George Whitney said building committee and made choice of Barnet Bullock Russell Morse Stephen Richardson Ashbel Goddard Joseph Estabrook and Peter Woodbury for the advising committee and voted that said building committee make a plan or model of the house and put the same under contract as soon as may be done.

To prepare an architectural plan for the new meeting-house the committee chose Chauncy Chase of Boston and subsequently paid him \$50 for his plan. Mr. Chase, listed as a carpenter and builder in the Boston Almanac of 1851, was a native of Royalston, 50 years of age, and son-in-law of Russell Morse. According to the minutes of the following meeting:

The building committee procured an architectural plan for said meeting house and notified the advising committee to meet — they met and examined the plan presented and agreed to adopt said plan for the house and ordered said building comm. to contract for the building on the lowest terms that might be proposed Lamb and Foster of Worcester being the lowest bidders it was contracted to them according to the articles of agreement made and concluded on the 17th of June A.D. 1851 including lumber materials and carpenter work of said house and vestry for the sum of six thousand four hundred dollars. . . . Agreed that the house should be dedicated on Thurs. the 15th of Jan. 1852.

A newspaper clipping on file at the Worcester Antiquarian Society has this to say about Captain Edward Lamb: "His occupation was that of a builder; and there was no one who better understood his business or conducted it with greater fidelity, judgment and taste than he; as the numerous private and public buildings he erected, in this city, and other towns in the county, bear witness. . . . He probably built more churches than any other man in this vicinity." Captain Lamb died May 8, 1868 at the age of 56, so he was thirty-nine years old when he built Meeting-House No. 4.

Work on the meeting-house proceeded according to schedule and on January 2, 1852 "Said building committee reported that the (carpenter) work of the house had been examined by Chauncey Chase as by the agreement contract and that they had settled up with Lamb & Foster." The joint efforts of Chauncy Chase and Captain Lamb, with the splendid backing of the committee, had resulted in a well-built meeting-house of authentic Colonial design, 58 ft. long, 48 ft. wide, 28 ft. stud, with a graceful steeple rising  $131\frac{1}{2}$  feet above the ground in front and  $116\frac{1}{4}$  feet above mean sea level. Today, as we stand at any point of vantage and admire the fine proportions and structural detail of this building we well may agree with Schelling that "Architecture is music in space, as it were a frozen music."

At the January 2nd meeting the building committee summarized the cost of the building and "appointments." The latter included such evidences of progress as "furnaces and smoke pipe," "carpeting for the whole floor of the audience room of a like color except carpet for pulpit and platform to be of another color," "cushings of uniform color to match," and "painted settees for the vestry." Those who braved New England midwinter weather to attend the dedication two weeks later must have been cheered both bodily and aesthetically by these delightful novelties. The total cost of building and appointments was \$8880.00.

This sizeable sum had been underwritten by the subscribers and was liquidated, in part at least, in the customary manner. The building committee was authorized-"to sell at auction on bids for choice of said pews or slips and deed the same to the purchasers." : Two such 'deeds .of 1852 are in the possession of Donald M • Esq. They record, in full legal phraseology, the sale of pews numbered 17; 8, 40, and 36 to Rufus Bullock for the sum of \$615.50. Pew No. 17 brought \$227.00 and Pew 'No: `36 — the least desirable — \$85.00.

It' was some years later that the Reverend Ebenezer Bullard,. in reminiscent vein, delivered his *Historical. Discourse*. He pays a well-deserved tribute to the role which Royalston's four meeting-houses have played in the life of the community. His glimpses into the treasured past remind us, too, of contented days spent in a pleasant old New England town.

On Jan. 15, 1852, the first anniversary of the destruction of their former house, this edifice, excelling all the others, stood complete and its dedication was, kept with, Joy. Amateurs have admired it as a model of what a rural sanctuary should be, — beautiful for situation, beautiful in itself, and sustained in all its parts and appointments. It certainly is *the feature* of this comely village; an honor to our town, and a witness to the good taste and liberality of its proprietors. And now, after almost fifteen years' occupancy, there are added to its architectural and material attractions those sacred associations and memories, which most of all hallow and endear the habitations of the Most High. In this respect, to be sure, this house may be no more beautiful, or dear to us, than was the first meeting house upon the common to the fathers of 1797, or the second to their children of 1840, when those structures were respectively superseded by improved models.

It would indeed be worth the seeing, and the study too, could all these successive structures be reproduced, and set in order before use, to-day, upon this common! What a series in the development of ideas, of art, and of resources! And then, if the successive generations of worshippers were also to come thronging to their respective temples, in their proper, costumes, vehicles and bearings, and, one congregation after another, in the presence of all, go through with their accustomed Sabbath services, — what a panorama, — what a living history of Royalston life! It would need good vouchers that all was indeed real, — that such were the sanctuaries, services, and people, once in lawful possession here; and in all respects as home-like, as respectable, as happy, and as good, as we are..

Today, in a-world of rapidly changing values, we may not claim to be "as home-like, as respectable, as happy, and as good" as the Reverend Bullard and his stalwarts, but, we can all join with him in his high regard for this meeting-house and all it represents. And we can equally relish his delightful whimsey of a panorama that would conjure up the-past of life on Royalston Common. If this brief *Story of a Meeting--House*; contributes even a tiny bit to such an imaginative treat its purpose will have been achieved.

There was one appointment of the meetinghouse that calls for special mention. Its voice heralded the dedication exercises in 1852 and it has faithfully played an important part in village affairs ever since. Its story links with that of a national hero and has never yet been fully told. The story begins on May 6, 1811 when "a church bell was first suggested to be given and hung without expense to the Society." Two weeks later an invitation was extended to the benevolent Inhabitants of the Town of Royalston, to subscribe money for procuring a Bell for the East meeting house, in said Town . . . . a bell of medium size with Bells in common use in Country towns, and one that can be warranted good if possible." The sum of \$453.00 was promptly raised and a suitable bell was purchased from the now-famous foundry of Paul Revere.

This purchase is recorded in the original stockbook of Paul Revere & Son, now in the possession of Mr. Edward H. R. Revere of Canton, Mass. In this book there is listed for the year 1811 a bell for the "Town of Royalston, 930 lbs." In Dr. A. H. Nichols' book *Revere Bells* the Royalston bell is listed as the 128th of Revere manufacture and it is stated that "this bell was melted when the church (Meeting-House) No. 3) burned." Nevertheless there is good evidence that the metal cast into that bell by Paul Revere has for over a hundred years been serving its original purpose in the belfry of the present meeting-house.



Paul Revere Bell, Recast by Henry N. Hooper & Company

The present bell is inscribed "Henry N. Hooper & Co. Boston 1851." The Hooper firm succeeded to Paul Revere's bell business in 1830, as stated by Eva A. Spere. in *Historic Bells of New Hampshire*, p. 39. Let's see what the Proprietors' book has to say about the purchase of the Hooper bell.

September 4, 1851 . . . Voted to purchase a bell of about 1200' pounds and hang on said meetinghouse and appropriate the proceeds of the old bell towards the new one and include the balance with the expense of the house and chose Barnet Bullock, Russell Morse and Ashbel Goddard to look up the proceeds of the old bell.

January 2, 1852 . . . H. N. Hooper for bell, \$386.50. Luther Harrington for bell rope, \$2.50 . . . Proceeds of old bell \$223.78.

Does this mean that the gross price of the new 1200 lb. bell was only \$386.50 — a lower price than the same foundry charged for the Paul Revere bell of only 930 lbs.? The record can be interpreted in two ways:

1. Price of the new bell \$386.50 (32¢ per lb.) Credit for the old bell \$223.78 (23¢ per lb.) Net cost to the Town of the new 1200 lb. bell \$162.72 (13½¢ per lb.) an absurdly low price.

2. Price of the new bell \$386.50 plus credit for the old bell \$223.78, total \$610.28 (51¢ per lb.) This price per pound is in line with, the prices charged by the Revere foundry (38¢ to 54½¢ per lb.) according to data published in Dr. Nichols' book.

It is therefore clear that the Proprietors' record should be interpreted: "Paid H. N. Hooper for bell \$386.50 net cash chargeable to the expense of the meeting-house. Credit was allowed for the metal of the old bell in the amount of \$223.78." This is in full accord with the Proprietors' vote of Sept. 4, 1851.

Now what justification have we for assuming that the metal of Paul Revere No. 128 was actually recast into the Hooper bell?

1. The present bell bears the date 1851, as it would if recast especially for Royalston. The committee was given authority to act on September 4 of that year and rendered its accounting on January 2, 1852. Four months afforded plenty of time for the committee to deliver the metal to Boston and for Hooper to recast it, along with additional metal, into the new 1200 lb. bell.

2. Recasting of bells was a common practice with old-time bell founders. At least four bells cast originally by Paul Revere are known to have been recast by his successor, Henry N. Hooper & Co. The following particulars are culled from the Nichols and Speare records.

<i>Bell No.</i>	<i>Cast</i>	<i>Destination</i>	<i>Weight</i>
48	1801	Town of Medford Recast by Henry N. Hooper & Co.	1244 lbs.
282	1823	Jaffrey, N. H. Cracked in the fifties. Recast by Henry N. Hooper & Co.	
	1825	Greenfield, N. H. Recast by Henry N. Hooper & Co., twice, 1827, 1847	903 lbs.
366	1827	Westmoreland, N. H. Cracked 1847 and recast by Henry N. Hooper & Co.	930 lbs.

3. When the evidence from the Proprietors' records was communicated to Mrs. Eva A. Speare, a keen student of bell lore, she offered these comments and her conclusion:

One point that I learned in my several years of study about the Revere bells was that suitable metal for bells was not easy to obtain. Copper varied in quality and was imported from several countries. I suspect that for this reason, the metal was recast whenever possible.

At that period, a bell could be recast because the metal for one bell could be melted in a crucible. Today, the process of melting Metal for one bell is so expensive that small crucibles are no longer used. Instead sufficient metal for many bells is prepared at the foundries.

Your recent letter was read with real pleasure, because your research to ascertain the complete story of the real Paul Revere Bell of Royalston adds 128 to the list of Revere bells that are yet ringing in New England.

4. Mrs. Speare's conclusion is the same as that of Mr. Edward H. R. Revere, great-grandson of Paul Revere. Mr. Revere is the acknowledged authority on Paul Revere bells and his opinion is frequently sought in matters pertaining to them. When the evidence from the Proprietors' records was submitted to him he stated that "undoubtedly the old Paul Revere bell was recast into the present Hooper bell, probably with silver added, according to the custom, to improve the tone."

So it is a fair conclusion that the pleasant-toned bell now on its second century of service in the belfry of the meetinghouse is actually "Paul Revere bell #128 of 1811, recast with additional metal by Paul Revere's successor, Henry N. Hooper & Co., Boston, 1851."

The bell of Paul Revere is not the only appointment of Meeting-House No. 2 that has, after venturing in foreign parts, returned to Royalston for further service in Meeting-House No. 4. The story goes that when Meeting-House No. 2 had been completed in 1797 there was found to be a tidy balance of sixty-five dollars in the building fund. The committee used this money to embellish the sanctuary with a statuette of the Angel Gabriel. This was carved from a solid block of native pine by a skillful artist, whose name, regrettably, has not come down to us.

For over forty years the blithe figure of Gabriel, the Herald of Good Tidings, smiled down upon the worshippers from his niche over the pulpit, but when Meeting-House No. 2 was dismantled Gabriel, in sad reward for faithful service, was consigned to a pile of waste. Rescued through the enterprise of Seth Holman, Gabriel languished in exile for the next sixty-three years. This involuntary exile deprived two generations of Gabriel's company, but it worked to his advantage (and ours) for he did not suffer, like Paul Revere's bell, the ravages of the fire of 1851.

In 1903, on the occasion of Royalston's first Old Home Day, Mr. George W. Holman of Fitchburg, where Gabriel had been sojourning, returned him to the Parish and he was welcomed back to an honored place in the sanctuary. So it happens that two personages, one revered by early Christians and one forever honored by his compatriots, join here in conferring a certain distinction on this meetinghouse of 1852.

Throughout the century following its dedication Meeting-House No. 4 has been fortunate in its friends. Kind hands have ministered to its physical needs and generous hearts have supplied funds for upkeep and improvement. It would be impracticable to enumerate all the worthy projects and impossible, at this late date, to mention all the worthy people who have contributed in one way or another to the building's welfare. A few of the principal improvements, listed in chronological order, will have to stand as evidence of the affection and loyalty that has been freely given this house of worship by its many friends.

First in order of time, and certainly not last in order of importance, was the gift by Emily Ripley, in 1863, of the organ whose voice is still heard at every church service. Her letter of gift was addressed to the Parish Committee of the First Congregational Society of Royalston, Mass.

I have long been impressed with the conviction that the accompaniment of an organ to the vocal choir of our congregation would promote its moral and religious character, stimulate the young members to increased efforts to sustain and perfect all this department of sanctuary service and afford increased interest and encouragement to the Pastor and congregation in attendance.

Influenced by these considerations I have procured to be built and by your permission have caused to be set up in the church an organ built by Mr. W. A. Johnson of Westfield Mass. from specifications prepared with special reference in size and tone to the dimensions of the church.

This organ being approved by a competent organist I now take pleasure in presenting through you Gentlemen to the Society by you represented for their use and benefit as long as the following conditions are complied with –

- 1st That it shall be accepted by the Society.
- 3rd That it shall be kept in good repair.
- 2nd That it shall be used in religious service of the Sanctuary as conducted by the 1st Congregational Church in Royalston and for no other purpose without the approbation of the Parish Committee.
- 4th That it shall never be sold but held as the property of the Society above named and for the purpose afore said.
- 5th That it shall be kept secured by insurance from liability of loss from fire.

(Signed) Emily B. Ripley





William A. Johnson Opus 142



It is on record that the above conditions were duly accepted by the Society on June 12, 1863 and appropriate resolutions voted, for transmittal to Mrs. Ripley. In these resolutions it was stated that the cost to Mrs. Ripley exceeded \$1000.00. The committee promptly voted "to raise \$100 to procure a player on the organ the remainder of the year and as much of it to be used as necessary before the next annual meeting."

With rare good judgment Mrs. Ripley chose the product of one of America's foremost organ builders and Johnson Opus 142 in Royalston has the unexcelled tone quality for which Johnson's instruments are cherished today by their owners throughout the musical world. In 1946 this organ was inspected by John Van Varick Elsworth, a fine musician and a recognized authority on Johnson organs. Mr. Elsworth made suggestions as to its renovation and subsequently made mention of his Royalston visit in a leading article in *The American Organist* of May, 1947, p. 155: "The Congregational Church dominates this small town, with its impressively large and nicely landscaped colonial houses . . . This organ's tonal qualities and voicing proved most excellent."

Following Mr. Elsworth's visit the organ has been thoroughly renovated at the hands of Joseph W. Smith. A modern electric blower now furnishes an unfailing wind supply. A new pedal board has been installed, with additional pipes, and other improvements made, in line with Mr. Elsworth's recommendations. Opus 142 is now rounding out its own first century of usefulness and looking forward to many more years of faithful service.

It was twenty years after the arrival of the organ that the meeting-house enjoyed its next important acquisition. On November 14, 1883 the Town purchased from E. Howard & Son a "No. 2 Striking Town Clock with three five-foot dials" for installation in the "Orthodox Church," as noted in the Howard orderbook. This acquisition, too, has given excellent service throughout the years, taking time out for repairs only when the Hurricane of 1938 treated it so harshly.

In the following year central heating made its advent. A new furnace was installed, with funds raised by popular subscription. It solved, for the time being, a heating problem that had been vexing the Parish Committee since 1870, according to the records. This made possible the removal of a chimney that encumbered the southwest corner of the meetinghouse, along with some of the "smoke pipe" provided by the conscientious building committee in 1852.

During the next decade or two the interior of the building was embellished in several ways, largely through the unremitting efforts and good will of the Ladies Benevolent Society, whose loyal members have ever had the welfare of the meeting-house at heart. A new carpet was laid and the cushions were re-covered. The plaster walls and ceiling, which had given evidence of collapse, were reinforced with steel sheathing, in decorative design. A handsome chandelier was installed, with auxiliary fixtures to match, replete with kerosene lamps. The latter were "electrified" when central station service came to town in 1927.

In 1926 the steeple, which had suffered from inroads of the weather, was groaning at the northwest gales. Its beams were found decayed and had to be repaired. Funds for this work were raised in part from a "mild carnival" on the Common which netted nearly \$1200.00 on August 31, 1927. The steeple, thus rejuvenated, endured until that fateful day in September 1938 when the worst hurricane in recorded history laid low scores of structures and thousands of trees in Royalston and vicinity. Some

New England steeples, toppling in that hurricane, have never been restored. Our meeting-house might have suffered the same fate but for the generosity of a Royalston family which, for over a hundred years, has given liberally of its substance to the needs of the community.

The steeple was rebuilt, in exact replica of the original design, except for small but important changes that make it now secure against the inroads of rats, bats, and weather. Little & Russell of Boston were the architects and Custance Bros. of Lexington the builders of the new steeple. It was dedicated with appropriate ceremonies August 27, 1939 and the heartfelt thanks of the community to its donors are fittingly recorded on a tablet of enduring bronze at the entrance to the meetinghouse.

TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN  
LOVING MEMORY OF HIS MOTHER  
MARY EDGELL BULLOCK  
THE PRESENT SPIRE WAS ERECTED TO REPLACE  
THE ONE DESTROYED BY THE HURRICANE SEPT. 21st 1938  
BY  
CALVIN BULLOCK  
AND BY HIS SON  
HUGH BULLOCK  
DEDICATED AUGUST 27, 1939  
THIS TABLET WAS ERECTED BY THE PEOPLE OF  
ROYALSTON IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The First Church in Royalston has seen many pastors come and go. Five of these have served at momentous periods in the career of this meeting-house and its predecessors. Parson Lee officiated in the first meeting-house throughout its career and certainly left his impress on the second, built during his long pastorate of fifty years. Ebenezer Perkins, a pastor for twenty-seven years and a resident of the town for fifteen years thereafter, must have inspired and helped to plan the third structure, so far in advance of the second. Then, too, he was a sort of elder statesman in the town when the fourth house was planned and consummated, so he probably contributed much to the project, though Norman Hazen, his successor in the pulpit, preached the dedicatory sermon and is said to have been buoyed up in rapidly failing health by his interest in the new building. The Reverend Thomas MacAnespie was pastor in 1938, when the hurricane crashed the steeple to the ground, and no doubt contributed of his time and energy to its restoration. He preached the dedicatory sermon on August 27, 1939.

To the present pastor, Frederick W. French, came the dream of a meeting-house, strengthened in its foundations, rebuilt within, and newly equipped to better serve the current needs of the community. With unquenchable enthusiasm and exhaustless energy, and with the help of countless loyal parishioners and well-wishers, he has made his happy dream come true. His efforts in raising funds far exceeding the original cost of the building and his zeal in prosecuting the work of rehabilitation have given the community a meeting-house and appointments of which it may well be proud:

Gone are the unsightly rows of "horse stables" that once shut off a pleasing view of nearby Little Pond and pine-clad western hills. The long-deserted sheds have given place to a slightly parking area for the motorcars undreamed-of by Ebenezer Perkins and his committee.

Gone is the smoky wood-burning furnace that scorned the ministrations of the janitor and did its best to chill or suffocate the worshippers. A modern heating system with thermostat control now keeps the congregation warm and cosy on the coldest winter days.

Gone are the "painted settees for the vestry," upon which four generations of youngsters fidgetted and squirmed through Sunday School and "evening meeting." Those reminders of the early days have been replaced by comfortable folding seats in the new and well-appointed Fellowship Hall.

Gone, too, is the wheezing bellows with its clattery pump handle, at which many a Royalston boy, including your historian, has sweated through the heavy going of full organ on a hot summer day. In the organ loft, as elsewhere, primitive' methods have bowed to technical progress. 'A modern electric blower' now guarantees that William Johnson's Opus 142 will never again startle the congregation by collapsing with a tired groan at the climax of a fortissimo passage.

Gone are many other outmoded relics of the olden days, but there still remains the calm, pervading "spirit of place" that has throughout the years enveloped this meeting-house like a benediction. May this spirit continue to endear this building to all comers throughout the next century – and the next.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This Story of a Meeting-House would have been sadly incomplete but for the generous help of several people. So the sincere thanks of the author go to Mrs. Edward B. Luce, Georgetown, Mass., Mrs. Arthur A. Shurcliff, Boston, Mrs. Eva A. Speare, Plymouth, N. H., and Mr. Edward H. R. Revere, Canton, Mass., for valuable assistance in assembling the story of the Paul Revere bell; to Mr. H. Daland Chandler of Boston for his help in locating the 1939 steeple plans; to Custance Bros. of Lexington for their welcome gift of the plans; to Mr. William F. Bowers of Royalston for his photographs of the bell and organ; to Mr. Donald M. Hill of Waban and Royalston for his loan of the Rufus Bullock pew deeds; to Mrs. Frances LaBonte for her help in transcribing the MS of this story; and especially to Mrs. Alice F. Chase of Royalston for her most welcome help in deciphering and copying many crowded pages of the early Proprietors' "rechords."

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