

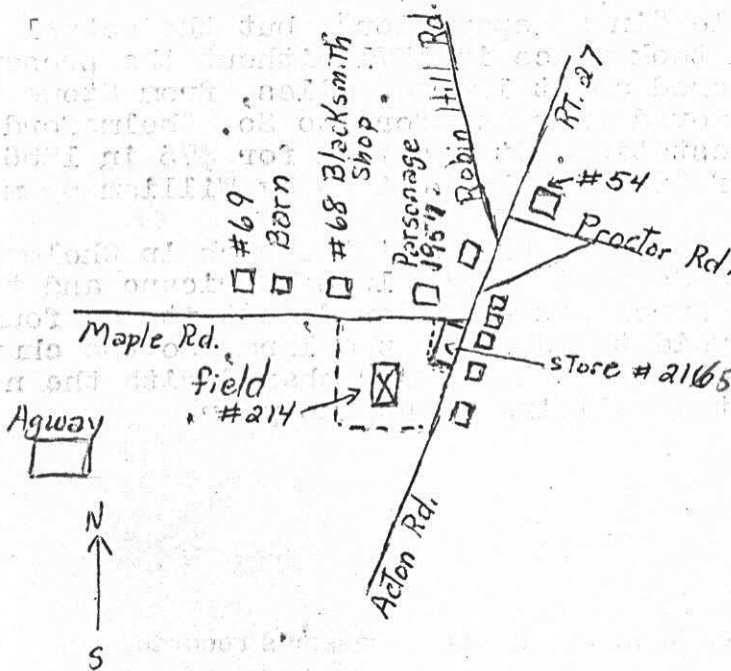
FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, State House, Boston

In Area no.	Form no.
	214

2. Photo (3x3" or 3x5")
Staple to left side of form
Photo number 11-7

4. Map. Draw sketch of building location
in relation to nearest cross streets and
other buildings. Indicate north.



DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE
USGS Quadrant _____
MHC Photo no. _____

1. Town Chelmsford
Address 2-4 Maple Road
Name First Baptist Church of Chelmsford
Present use church

Present owner First Baptist Church

3. Description:

Date 1836

Source Waters, "History of Chelmsford," died

Style _____

Architect _____

Exterior wall fabric lapped clapboard

Outbuildings (describe) None

Other features _____

Altered See attached sheet
Date 1912, 1954, 1967

Moved _____ Date _____

5. Lot size:

One acre or less Over one acre _____

Approximate frontage 160 feet Maple Rd.
70 feet Acton Rd.

Approximate distance of building from street

50 feet

6. Recorded by Jane B. Drury

Organization Chelmsford Historical Commission

Date September 19, 1973

7. Original owner (if known) The Baptist Society of Chelmsford

Original use Church

Subsequent uses (if any) and dates _____

8. Themes (check as many as applicable)

- | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-------|----------------------------|-------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Aboriginal | _____ | Conservation | _____ | Recreation | _____ |
| Agricultural | _____ | Education | _____ | Religion | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Architectural | _____ | Exploration/
settlement | _____ | Science/
invention | _____ |
| The Arts | _____ | Industry | _____ | Social/
humanitarian | _____ |
| Commerce | _____ | Military | _____ | Transportation | _____ |
| Communication | _____ | Political | _____ | | |
| Community development | _____ | | | | |

9. Historical significance (include explanation of themes checked above)

The religious climate at the time of the founding of the 1st Baptist Church was that of a single town church (1st Parish Congreg.-now Unitarian). The civil government owned the meeting house and paid the minister's salary. The 1st Baptist Church was the first church in Chelmsford to be separate from the town government. Rev. Ebenezer Bridge was the minister at this time (1740 -1792), and he did not ever acknowledge any other church in Chelmsford other than the original "Church of Christ."

In 1740 Bridge listed 21 people "in a separation", but the actual organization of the 1st Baptist Church took place in 1771 without the presence of any minister. The territory served covered about 100 sq. miles, from Stowe to Mason, N.H. The 1st meeting house was moved from Westford to So. Chelmsford in the middle of the night to prevent molestation. It was sold for \$75 in 1836 and the present building built at a cost of \$2300 on land given by William Byam in the center of the South Village.

In 1846 the church split, and the Central Baptist Church in Chelmsford Center was formed. The horse sheds were damaged by the 1938 hurricane and torn down. In 1957 a change to a Community Church was considered, but it was found that any change in denomination would void the deed to the land, so the church moved ahead as a Baptist Church. In 1969 the building was shared with the newly formed Jewish congregation, which used the building about one year.

10. Bibliography and/or references (such as local histories, deeds, assessor's records, early maps, etc.)

- 1831 map
- 1875 Burr Atlas
- Deed. North Midd. Co., Book 13, pg. 447 - William Byam to "1st Baptist Church in Chelmsford", May 31, 1836.
- "Chelmsford Newsweekly" 1955
- "Lowell Weekly", Oct. 24, 1896
- Waters, History of Chelmsford
- 200th Anniversary Directory + History, 1st Baptist Church

First Baptist Church
2-4 Maple Road

Altered:

- 1871 Bell put in the steeple; church originally didn't have one.
- 1912 Steel ceiling installed in sanctuary; electric service added.
- Sometime in the 20th Century: vestry & kitchen put in under Sanctuary. Until then, it was just a basement.
- 1954 Extensive remodeling - in vestry, kitchen, bathrooms, Sunday School room, furnace; steeple reinforced.
- 1967 Steeple unsafe, so it and the bell were removed. It is hoped that these will be replaced when the church is again renovated.
renovated

Chelmsford "Newsweekly" (1955):

"The interior of the building has undergone many changes. The pulpit was originally much higher, with a sounding board over it. The gallery at the rear ('the singing seats') was also higher. Music was furnished for choir and congregational singing by a bass viol. In 1951 the small parlor organ which had been used for more than 75 years was replaced by an electronic organ."

First Baptist Church
2-4 Maple Road

Visit with Rev. Gary Dusek, minister 9/11/73
By Jane Drury

Exterior

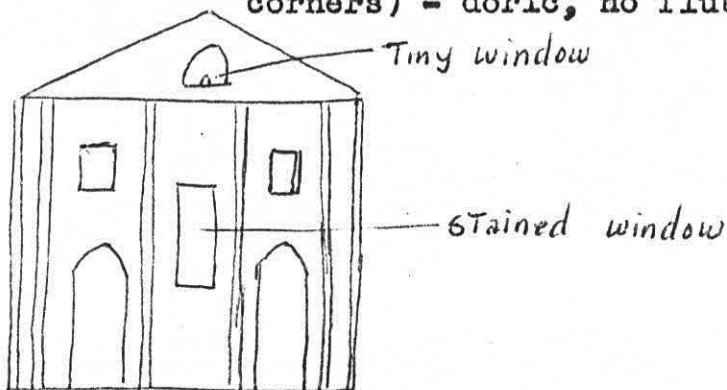
Foundation: low, granite blocks topped by painted brick to top of basement windows.

Windows: stained (most)
3 bay by 3 bay.
Rear - 2 (1 each side of pulpit)

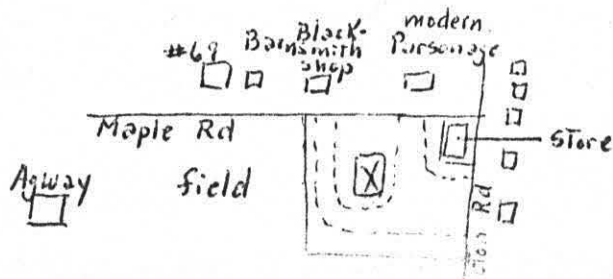
Chimney: 1
narrow, brick, at the rear slightly right of center (when inside, right of the pulpit)

Distances:
Frontage
Maple Road - about 160 feet
Acton Road - about 70 feet
From street - about 50 feet

Facade:
2 doors (each with wooden stairs leading up to it) - 1 on each side with a small window above each door.
1 large stained window between the doors
4 plain pilasters plus 2 as cornerposts (these also at the rear corners) - doric, no fluting.

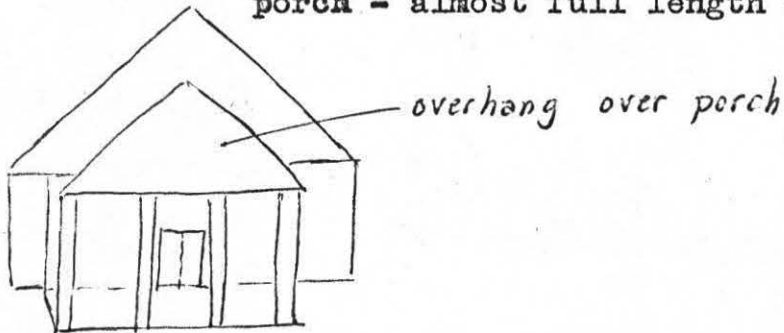


Gravel driveway in U around the church - also goes out to Acton Rd.



Proposed Revovation:

Facade - 1 entrance door in the centre (double door & 1 set of steps).
porch - almost full length - 4 columns



Steeple & bell to be replaced

Renovation - is one proposed by a church architect - would change the facade from its original design. Proposal was not yet voted on 9/11/73.

Interior - no balcony

Woodwork: butted, very plain

Doors: panelled, Georgian



Floor boards: fairly wide boards of ~~un~~ varying widths (about 6-12")

Dado: horizontal, wide, painted boards to the bottom of the windows
walls plastered above the dado

Ceiling: steel, painted

Lamp - in the middle of the ceiling, once had kerosene lights and could be lowered.

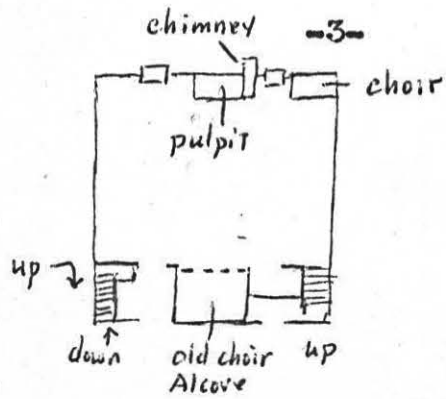
Front wall (as enter):

Entry on each side of an alcove (old choir loft). Stairs go up from each entry (Right- to a small room; Left - to where the steeple was. Stairs also go down to the basement from the left entry).

Alcove - contains comfortable chairs and bookcases now; was once the choir loft. Open to sanctuary, with a waist high railing in front of it. Some people believe (others argue this) that the choir loft was raised up more than it is now. Old wood stove once was here. Now dado is formed with old panelled doors.

Rear wall (faces entrance):

Pulpit in the center, stained window on each side of pulpit. Chimney and present choir ~~left~~ alcove right of the pulpit.



Basement:

1 room - kitchen, Sunday School room.
 Cement floor & walls.

First Baptist
Church
South
Chelmsford,
Mass.



Postcard Courtesy of Paul Pettazoni



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
CHELMSFORD, MASSACHUSETTS
1771 - 1971

The religious climate at the time of the founding of First Baptist Church in Chelmsford, Mass. was that of a single town church, the Church of England (Congregational). The civil government owned the meeting houses and determined the salaries of the ministers and paid them. The selectmen of a town could stop a child any time and examine him in the catechism. The Justices and General Court had authority to make decisions in matters of theological doctrine. The churches were supported by a tax levied in the same manner as other taxes. "Notwithstanding, that the rights of conscience might be preserved inviolable, the Constitution exempts any man from contributing towards the support of any minister, regularly settled, in the town where he lives, provided he cannot conscientiously attend on his ministry, and provided, also, that there be any other minister of a different persuasion on whose ministry he does attend."

The following periods of change were serious matters to those who engaged in them. It is by such controversies that principles of right are established.

Beginning in 1740, a revival spread across New England. The preaching of one George Whitefield (pronounced Whitfield) occasioned widespread disorder and controversy. He was an English evangelist and founder of the Calvinistic Methodists. He produced a strong sensation of a religious nature in the people on the seaboard from Maine to Georgia. He had a most sonorous and commanding voice, and this, united with a ready utterance and captivating attitudes, secured him a world of admirers. These followers were mostly Calvinistic Methodists, but many became Baptists, or rather, anti-paedo-baptists, that is, opposed to the baptism of children. They were also called Anabaptists because they rebaptized those baptized in infancy. They were called Separates, because they formed separate congregations, at first in private houses; then, becoming sufficiently numerous, they built meeting houses. They differed from most Christians in holding that immersion was the only valid form of baptism. They were also called New Lights, because they claimed to have special divine guidance. They preached and exhorted without permission from the parochial ministers.

The minister in Chelmsford at the time of this revival was Parson Ebenezer Bridges of the Church of Christ, the established church in Chelmsford. He was the fourth pastor in the town. The period of his ministry was a peculiarly trying time. He did not ever acknowledge any other church in Chelmsford other than the original 'Church of Christ'.

The rise of the First Baptist Society dates from this period and the preaching of Whitefield. Parson Bridges said "By persons of this description many members of this church were seduced and beguiled from the simplicity and order of the gospel, to the great grief of their brethren and of their stated pastor."

One biographer refers to Bridges in this manner: "To deal with them required both patience, meekness and wisdom. In several trials of this sort, the virtues of Mr. Bridges shone conspicuously and triumphed over his enemies." We will find that this estimate differs greatly from the founders of our church - the first "other" church in Chelmsford.

In 1740, according to Parson Bridges, the following people "were in a separation":

Gershom Prockter and Rebeca his wife

John Kidder and his wife

Thomas Spaulding and his wife

John Spaulding and his wife

Job Spaulding and his wife

John Barrat and his wife

Jonas Robbins

John Burge

David Kidder

Ephraim Keyes

Esther Cory - wife of Josiah Cory

Hannah Shed - wife of Zach Shed

Widow Abigail Keyes

Widow Mary Barrat

Widow Sarah Swallow

Gershom Prockter for one, invited "one Dutton that says he is a minister of ye gospel, was so in England, but now goes from town to town selling books and preaching, to preach in his house."

The following are from the record of The Church Of Christ in Chelmsford, 1741:

A BOOK OF THE RECORDS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN CHELMSFORD, 1741.

November 4, 1743.

Whereas of Late ye Chhs. in This Land have bin much Infested with Lay Exhorters, and Some ministers who have left their own Parishes & Charges, and undertaken To play ye Bishop in another man's Diocese, To The great disturbance of Towns & Chhs. and to ye breach of Christian Communion, in Such places where they have Come; and Whereas This Town and Chh have bin sorely disturbed by ye Conduct Of such persons coming among us, & preaching & exhorting in private houses--without Consent Of ye Stated pastor Of this Chh--

And Whereas One Pain, a Lawyer belonging To ye Colony of Connecticut, hath very lately bin Jntroduced into ye town by John Burge & Gershom Prockter Two of The bretheren of This Communion and Invited by em and Allowed To Exhort Jn their houses; To the offending the greatest part of ye. Chh.

Therefore at ye motion and request of Abraham Byam, & Peletiah Adams, Two Other Brethren, a Chh meeting is Called--and accordingly having mett on This day--After Prayer To God To Guide & lead us into the things wch. make for Peace--The Chh proceeded To Question John Burge & Gershom Prockter wth. Respect to this Affair--And They gave The Chh Satisfaction by Saying They were Sorry that They had so done, and designed not To do so Again--Moreover, Gershom Prockter in Discoursing wth. ye Pastor About Pains Coming, and being advised To ye Contrary, Said yt. Sd Pain should not Come & preach Jn his house--Jonas Clark & Sampson Stoddard, two of the Brethren Of our Communion, being Witnesses--He Acknowledges his fault Jn This Respect also--To the Satisfaction Of chh--

But it appearing To this Chh That Diverse female Membrs. had followed Sd. Pain an Exhorter, and an Jlliterate one Too, To Westford on ye. Lord's day where they had a Separate meeting-- It was Judged proper That this meeting be adjourned till Monday 7th Jnstant, 1 o'clock P. M. accordingly ye meeting was adjourned to yt time & ye Sisters warned to appear.

Novr. 7. 1743.

The Chh meeting by adjoument, having opened their meeting wth. Prayer and The Sisters who have Offended ye Chh appearing ---viz. Rebecca the wife of Gershom Prockter, Sarah ye wife of John Burge, widdow Mary Barrat, Widdow Thankful Foster, Elizabeth ye wife of Benja. Barrat, Sarah ye wife Of Jsrael Prockter & Sarah Burge, Junr.: The Chh proceeded to question em about ye matter of Pain's exhorting Jn her house because he was Jnvited there by her son, a married man, & ye male head of ye family without her knowledge. BUT she with ye Others seemed to Vindicate their going after him To Westford on the Lords day--Except Eliza. ye wife of Benja. Barrat & Sarah ye wife of Israel Prockter, who gave the Chh Satisfaction By Saying yt they did not Justify the thing, and would be more Watchful and To Endeavr to do Otherwise for ye future.

The Others in a Very Audacious manr. Justified Their Conduct.

Wherefore After much Endeavr To bring em To a sense Of their Mis-conduct & mattr. Of grievance to this Chh, & Seeing all methods Jneffectual, They dismissed em; and The Chh Agreed yt They Should not be admitted To ye Lord's Table until they would give satisfaction. Our Sacramt. being putt Off last Sabbath on this Acct. it was Thot propr. by the Chh that Jt Should be administred next sabbath God willing--and if those sisters or Either Of them Should see their follys--and go to ye Pastor & make Such Acknowledgmt as he thot. was proper To lay before the Chh--if it was so done and The Chh Shod. think it satisfactory--it being offer'd before ye Sacramt was administred--They might be Admitted as before--

Accordingly on Saturday Widdow Mary Barrat, Sarah ye wife of John Burge, widdow Thankful Foster & Sarah Burge, Junr, Came to the Pastor and left an Acknowledgmt with him to be read before the Chh.

And on The Lord's day--before ye Administration of ye Sacrament Of ye Supper it was read to ye Chh--As Thus We acknowledge to

"this Chh That Jn our late Conduct, we Thot not Of offending our
"Christian Brethren, and are sorry That they were offended
"And do resolve and purpose for the future yt. we will be watch-
"ful, and take heed lest we do Offend em in this Mattr. again.

Each of these persons acknowledged it, and the Chh was satisfied with this slight acknowledgment, since it was the first time they had Offended herein. and out Of a Desire to preserve peace.

June 22. 1747, The case of Mary Stedman was considered.

"She gave in a Paper containing, as she said, her Reasons, wch was read by ye Pastor, and afterward by Deacon Epm. Spaulding to ye Chh"

To ye Revd. Pastor & Chh in Chelmsford--Revd. & Beloved.
Having this Opportunity to Lay before you the Reasons Why
I have Withdrawn from ye Communion in this place I shall now
Improve it.

1. It is my Real & Solid belief yt God hath in a Very glorious
Manr. poured out his Spirit upon his pple to Convince & Convert
them to himself--

2. It is my belief that God, in the Carrying on Of this
glorious Work did Impower Mr. Whitefield, Tennant and Many Others
Of his faithful Ambassadors as Instruments in his hand to Carry on
ye Glorious Work, and since it is ye Unhappiness Of ye Pastor &
Chh in this place to Look upon these Men as Deceivers, & ye Work
wch. is Carried on by em, to be a piece Of delusion is Matter Of
great grief to my Soul. Knowing that he yt speaks against +
True Ministers, and ye Work Of his holy Spirit, speaks Agt +
himself.--

3. It is my Opinion That Mr. Bridge in his Publick preaching
is much wanting, because he delivers his discourses promiscuously,
not Dividing the Word aright, giving to each one his portion in
season.

4. I Cannot profit by Such Preaching, wch lays me Undr. a
Necessity to Separate.

Signed Mary Stedman.

After eighteen years, on June 18, 1764, she acknowledged she
had been mistaken, and was sorry, and she was restored to the Chh.

Reasons of Job and Lydia Spaulding why they absented them-
selves from Public worship of God on ye Lord's days among us--
read before the Chh.:

To The Pastor & Chh of Chelmsford--Feb. 6. 1745-6.

Revd. Sr. & Beloved Brethren these lines contain ye Reasons
why I have Gone unto Concord meeting Of late--is because Yt. I am
better Edified & Enlightened into Gospel Truths by hearing Mr.
Bliss than by hearing Mr. Bridge.

Signed--Job. Spaulding.

To the Pastor & Chh Of + Jn Chelmsford. Feby. 6. 1745-6

Revd. Sr. and Beloved Brethren These lines contain ye
reasons Why I have gone unto Concord meeting so much of late, is
because J find That J am bettr. Jnlightened into ye Gospel
truths by hearing Mr. Bliss than by hearing ye Rev. Mr. Bridge.

her

signed Lydia X Spaulding
mark

The Church esteemed "what they offered as a Contempt cast
upon ye Chh." Against the vote of the church they approached
the Lord's Table on the next Sacrament day and obliged the Church
to desire their absence.

Oct. 30, 1748 Zach. Emery did boisterously Interrupt The
Rev. Mr Swan when preaching and Charged him in a bold and daring
manner with preaching falsely. He afterwards made confession of
his fault before the whole congregation and asked forgiveness.

Job Spaulding, who charged Mr. Bridge with preaching false
doctrine, af er twenty-six years acknowledged himself to blame
and was restored. The pastor declared his forgiveness in 1772.

These examples well illustrate the mode of procedure against

the like offenders. Allen gives an account of these cases and says: The church's censure of the abovesaid offenders was not for going to hear preaching "more enlightening and edifying than what they could hear in their own church"--but for violating covenant engagements in withdrawing without previous notice given to the church or attempts to remove the hindrance to edification, &c.

It is interesting to note that only those cases where they returned to the fold of the Church of Christ are mentioned. Others in that first list held on and were the nucleus of our first beginnings! Obviously this group increased its influence and different converts were added. So devoted were some is shown in the following incident some twenty-five years before the church was officially established:

Daniel Locke and his wife of Chelmsford rode on horseback to Boston for communion. He went at least once on snowshoes to Boston for communion. He was called a "New Light"--spoken of earlier. Was called "Ye separate speaker" at the South End, referring to South Chelmsford.

Also, we find that the records of the First Baptist Church in Haverhill show Rev. Hezekiah Smith baptized candidates in Chelmsford as early as 1768-69. This church is sometimes referred to as our mother church.

This brings us to the actual organization of the First Baptist Church in South Chelmsford on October 22, 1771. A number of men and women, baptized on profession of faith by immersion, assembled at the house of Daniel Locke, in Chelmsford. Letters from nearby Baptist Churches in Boston and Haverhill were received for members who wished to join. The nine men and fifteen women who signed the covenant were as follows:

Edward Spaulding
Hannah Spaulding
John Spaulding
Susanna Spaulding
Ebenezer Bailey
Elizabeth Bailey
Mary White
Mary Hutchins
Mercy Hutchins
Mark White
Rachel Adams
Daniel Locke
Abigail Locke
Susanna Chamberlain
Mary Crosby
Nathan Crosby
Thomas Barnes
Mary White, II
Rachel Longley
Elizabeth Barrett
Hannah Hardy
Asaph Fletcher--named clerk.

They were Calvinistic in Doctrine. No record of any minister at the church. Thus, the church starts out in true Baptist independence, recognizing no other head or leader than Christ. The church had no pastoral care for two years but was not inactive. It was ministered to by Rev. Samuel Honey and Dr. Greene and others. Sixteen were added by baptism and others by letter and they doubled in growth.

As early as 1761, there was an article in the warrant for the Town Meeting to see if the Town will take action regarding those who are called Anabaptists, relating to ministers rates. They refused to pay, on the ground that they hired their own preachers.

Records of a church meeting held April 30, 1772, "Chose Mark White, John Spaulding and Asaph Fletcher by vote, to be a committee to give certificates to those of the Baptist persuasion, which usually assemble with the Baptist Society in Chelmsford, thereby to free them from paying taxes to support different denominations". The records of the town show this was a serious question as late as 1795 when the men at the Baptist Church refused to pay the ministerial tax to the town minister, Mr. Packard. Instead, they paid their part of the tax to Rev. John Peckens, the Baptist minister.

Going back now to 1772, the first Baptist meeting house was located in the south west corner of what is now Heart Pond Cemetery, near the junction of Hunt Road and Parkerville Road. Meetings had previously been held in private homes. This 1772 meeting house had been built as the first Congregational Church in Westford about 1724, and stood near the site of the present First Parish Church in that town. In 1768, Westford voted not to repair this building again but to construct a new one, which was first occupied in December, 1771. The old church was sold to Aaron Parker, Jr., for whose family the Parker Village section of Westford is named. He apparently acted on behalf of the Baptists of the South End of Chelmsford and the purchase created such excitement 'That the building was entered and robbed of its pews and finish. The house was hastily taken to pieces by the purchaser, and probably from fear of molestation the Baptists went by night, with ox-sleds, and brought it load after load, upon the snowcrust, in a direct line over the tops of walls and fences to the site selected. Two days only (January 14, 15) were occupied in erecting it upon the new ground.' The site of this building is now occupied by the Spaulding and Byam lots in the Heart Pond Cemetery. This building could not have been very pretentious, judging by the length of time needed for its re-construction. It had no ceiling, we know, and rude benches instead of pews.

Parson Bridge records:

There was a new burying place began in the year 1774 near the Baptist meeting house, south end by ye burial of a child of one Elisha Rich a baptist teacher, as well as a blacksmith by trade, & who was presently ordained. viz. 5th Oct., 1774, over the Baptist meeting--so called--

However I did not look upon myself as called to keep a record of ye burials in yt. burying place--so I left off early.

This was the beginning of Heart Pond Cemetery—a direct connection with the Baptist Church there and unacceptable to Parson Bridge.

In 1796, pews were installed and sold to the church members. The proceeds were used for making further improvements in the building.

In 1804, according to George H. Allen, pastor of the church during its centennial, "the wave of discord, staid for a time, seems to have gathered force; and now again its bitter flood poured in upon the church, so that on October 11, 1804, a faction consisting of five men and eleven women led by Pastor Peckens, formed themselves into a new church, which they styled "The Baptist Church of Christ in Chelmsford". The seceding party retained the possession of the meeting house. The original church had no pastor during the period of separation, about eighteen years, but Rev. John Spaulding, among others, officiated frequently. The factions remained separated until September 8, 1822. They were known as First and Second Church until united.

During this period of separation, in November, 1817, "The Heathen School Society", a missionary organization was formed. It was one of the earliest missionary societies in New England. This marks the beginning of the Ladies Group in the Church.

In 1822 or 23, after the Church was united, a Sunday School was begun.

In 1837, the Burmah School Society was organized and this eventually merged with the Heathen School Society.

1836. The meeting house was sold to James Robbins for \$75 and it was moved to his farm at the corner of Hunt Road and Garrison Road and converted into a barn. It was located a short distance behind the barn on the property of Mrs. Anne Clarke, 50 Garrison Road. This farm had close connections with the Church when the Tucker and Betty families lived there. The "noon house" was here—where those attending church from a long distance could eat lunch between noon and evening services. Dr. John Betty gave the adjoining land for the burying ground.

During the year 1836, the present Church was built at a cost of \$2300. There was no apprehension this time outside the church as the first time. However, documents show that the church was definitely split as to the location of the new building. Locations suggested were a. the original, b. on the "Hill" c. Byam's corner, and d. Chelmsford Center. Byam's Corner was selected and the land given by William Byam. The pews in the church were sold to individuals.

During this period, Rev. John Parkhurst was the minister. He was the great-great grandfather of Mr. Eustace Fiske of Chelmsford today. He was a fully ordained minister and a graduate of Harvard. He graduated in 1811 as a Unitarian minister but eventually became a Baptist.

In 1846, the Church split and Central Baptist Church in Chelmsford was formed. An ecclesiastical council was held in an attempt to hold the church together but this failed. Rev. Parkhurst went with the seceding group and became the first pastor of Central Baptist Church.

The Burmah Society also split and the group of ladies at the South church became known as the "Ladies Social Circle".

In 1847, a parsonage was acquired at the corner of Maple and Acton Road. The first occupant was the Reverend J. C. Boomer. It was during the ministry of Rev. Boomer that the Church obtained a silver-plated set of communion ware by Reed & Barton for \$22.50. It was received in March, 1853. The communion set was eventually placed in the Adams Library for a time and is now kept on loan in the Chelmsford Historical Society.

In 1871, the First Baptist Church celebrated its One Hundredth Anniversary. The bell was added at this time to commemorate the anniversary and is inscribed as follows:

"Cast by William Blake & Co. formerly H.N. Hooper & Co., Boston A.D. 1871. First Baptist Church, South Chelmsford, Mass. for a Centennial Memorial, October 22, A.D. 1871".

In 1876, an organ was purchased from Brattleboro, Vermont. This organ was used by the church for 75 years and is still in working condition and kept in the church building.

1911 marks the date the Church was legally incorporated and the name changed from The First Baptist Society to The First Baptist Church.

1912 was a year of physical change in the Church. In March, electric service was added to the church for the first time. About the same time a steel ceiling was installed, the interior of the church was painted and the pews grained.

In 1918, there was a move to change the Church to a Community Church, so arranged that any person of good moral character who attends the church service and contributes to the support of the church may become a member. This move was defeated and all friends of the church were welcomed but full membership required the original Baptist beliefs held by the Church.

During this year we find records of the church wood lot which was located across the street from the original site of the church, at the corner of Garrison and Parkerville Roads in South Chelmsford. Throughout the years chopping bees were held to supply the church with wood. Money was raised by subscription during 1918 to buy shingles and repair the roof.

On December 12, 1919 it was decided to buy \$2000 insurance on the Church but none on the parsonage. Two years later, the parsonage burned down.

On September 28, 1922, the Church voted to hold Sunday services in the vestry during cold weather to save fuel.

The 1938 hurricane took its toll on the church building. Shingles needed repair and the horse sheds were torn down. The big elm tree was also uprooted during the storm.

In 1942, it is noted that emergency supplies, due to the war, were kept in the vestry and black-out curtains installed for use by the Canteen workers.

In 1947, Central Baptist Church voted to have services at 10:30 am instead of 11:00 am. Since both Churches were being served by the same pastor, Rev. Savage, he suggested he resign and have a student pastor serve the South Church. It was arranged to have Ralph Brown supply our pulpit.

In 1951, the last wood-chopping bee was held. The conversion to coal was made in 1952. Also in 1951 a motion was made to buy a Vega Vox organ to replace the small parlor organ used for 75 years.

In 1954, a new heating system was installed, converting to an oil furnace. At the same time the wood lot was sold for \$1600. It comprised four acres. The money was used to secure funds to repair the church foundation and make improvements. This extensive remodeling took three years. Improvements were made in the vestry, kitchen, bathrooms, Sunday school rooms, and furnace. An outdoor floodlight was also added by the V.I.A. in 1955. Also, after several month of deadly silence, the church bell was heard again. Mr. Daniel Hoxie, with some moral support from Rev. Benner, climbed the steeple and reinforced the supports of the bell.

1957 was certainly a year of decision in the Church. In January, a community survey was taken to see if interest in the church was of such to continue as a Baptist Church in service to the community or change to a Community Church. It was found that any change in denomination would revert the property back to the original doners. It was unanimous to move forward as a Baptist Church, adopting a church budget, getting a resident minister, and breaking ground for a new parsonage on March 28, with the blessing of the community. Rev. Blair Benner moved into the parsonage in October.

On February 23, 1960, the Church Council decided to put all known Church documents, books, and valuable papers in a safety deposit box for safe keeping, where they are still kept.

In 1961, the Vega-Vox organ was sold and the present Hammond organ bought to replace it. Also, the Senior BYF presented the Church with a beautiful wooden cross to be placed on the wall behind the pulpit.

In 1964, the interior of the Church was completely redecorated. Unfortunately, the steeple was found to be an unsafe load on the Church. On August 16, 1967, the steeple and bell were removed. The bell has been retained in hopes that some day it will be used again.

In 1969, a privileged corporate agreement with the newly formed Jewish congregation with reference to the use of our Church building to hold meetings was reached. They used the building approximately one year.

Now, in 1971, as we look back over the years with interest in our beginnings and history, we must not forget the spiritual outreach and support of so many loyal members of First Baptist Church. It is only as we labor together in Christian love and understanding that our witness for Christ can be effective in a society so needful of direction.

OUR PASTORS

Rev. Elisha Rich	1773-1777
Rev. Abisha Crossman	1778-1789
Rev. John Peckens	1792-1804
Rev. John Parkhurst	1821-1845
Rev. J.C. Boomer	1847-1858
Rev. J.E. Wiggins	1858-1863
Rev. J.T. Farrar	1863-1865
Rev. G.H. Allen	1865-1873
Rev. W.A. Depew	1873-1875
Rev. W.A. Worthington	1876-1879
Rev. W.S. Phillips	1879-1880
Rev. J.H. Tilton	1881-1884
Rev. E.H. Hayden	1885-1886
Rev. A.A. Bickford	1886-1890
Rev. J.E. Dinsmore	1890-1891
Rev. E.D. Bowers	1891-1894
Rev. T.G. Lyons	1894-1897
Rev. A.A. Bickford	1897-1899
Mr. A.R. MacDougall	1899-1901
Rev. C.W. Williams	1901-1907
Mr. G.R.M. Wells	1908-1909
Rev. J.E. Dame	1909-1913
Rev. Daniel J. Hatfield	1914-1918
Rev. Geo. H. Nickerson	1918-1925
Rev. Charles Fowler	1925
Mr. Clarence Sanger	1925-1927
Mr. Porter	1927-1929
Rev. C.H. Ellis	1929-1937
Rev. W.A. VanArsdale	1937-1942
Rev. H.E. Levoy	1943-1945
Rev. Kenneth Savage	1945-1947
Mr. Ralph E. Brown	1947-1950
Mr. Gordon W. Danielson	1950-1953
Rev. William Mortham	1953-1954
Rev. Blair Benner	1954-1958
Rev. Joseph Bayles	1958-1962
Rev. Edward Brinkman	1962-1965
Rev. Van Lewen	1965-1966
Rev. Guy Brockett	1966-1967
Rev. Warren Russell	1967-1968
Rev. Roy Johnston	1968-1970
Rev. Gary A. Dusek	1970

Lay preachers: Mr. Lord and Mr. Brodeur

BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION
Schedule of Activities

October 17 - Old fashioned hymn sing and musical program

October 21 - Old fashioned pie social

October 23 - Roll call supper

October 24 - Regular Sunday morning worship

Afternoon - Church Open House with guided tours

Evening - Vesper Commemoration Service

ANNIVERSARY HYMN
Tune: St. Peter

(1)
Long years ago our fathers cleared
The forest from the sod,
And built a house where they and theirs
Might meet to worship God.

(2)
Today descendants of them join
With others gathered here
In ties of friendship and of love,
Their memory to revere.

(3)
To the mind's eye of each appear
Many a form and face
The faithful ones who labored here
Whose influence we trace.

(4)
Oh, may the mantle of their trust
Their zeal and steadfastness,
Rest on the hearts within this house,
And future hours bless!

(Written for the church's 175th anniversary by the late Ednah F. Parkhurst)



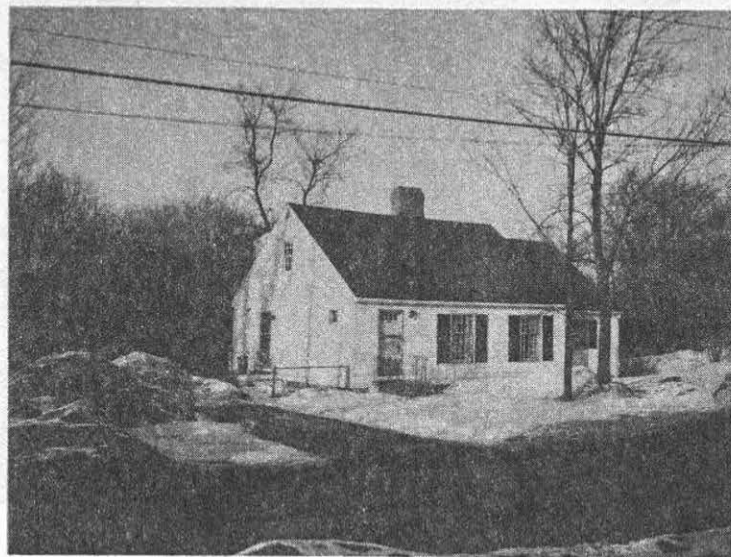
First Organ - Purchased 1876



Church Building - 1971

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
Schedule of Activities

Sunday:	Sunday School	9:45 am.
	Church	11:00 am.
	Jr. High Youth	6:00 pm.
	Sr. High Youth	6:00 pm.
Tuesday:	Women's Federation	1st Tues.
	Sunday School Teacher's	2nd Tues.
	Church Council	3rd Tues.
Wednesday:	Mid-week Fellowship	7:30 pm.
	Deacons	Wed. before Communion.
Thursday:	Jr. Choir	6:30 pm.
	Sr. Choir	7:45 pm.
	Religious Education Committee	2nd Thurs.



Parsonage - 1971

OUR CHURCH COVENANT

As we trust we have been brought by Divine grace to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the influence of His spirit to give ourselves up to Him, so we do now solemnly covenant with each other, as God shall enable us, to walk together in brotherly love; that we will exercise a Christian care and watchfulness over each other, and faithfully warn, rebuke and admonish our brethren as the case shall require; that we will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor omit the great duty of prayer, both for ourselves and others; that we will participate in each other's joys and endeavor, with tenderness and sympathy, to bear each other's burdens and sorrows; that we will seek Divine aid to enable us to walk circumspectly and watchfully in the world, denying ungodliness and every worldly lust; that we will strive together for the support of a faithful evangelical ministry amongst us, and through life, amidst evil report and good report, seek to live to the glory of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.



Communion Set - 1853



BAPTIST CHURCH, SO. CHELMSFORD, MASS.

Postcard courtesy of Paul Pettazoni

First Baptist Church:

...."It is a typical country church, with plain, straight backed pews, with the choir in an enclosure at the rear end facing the preacher, as he stands in his pulpit....."

Rev. John Farrar of Lynn, another former pastor, was the next speaker. He said it was 33 years since he was called to the pastorate of the church, and it was a happy period indeed, that he spent there. Chelmsford, he said, was always a household word in my family. I remember coming to the church when a boy, but at that time it was located a little farther west. I have understood that the name of this church had something to do with the naming of Baptist Pond in this town. Would that a Baptist Church could be located near every pond in the country....."

Exerpts from a newspaper article in the possession of the First Baptist Church in Chelmsford in 1973

A picture of the South Chelmsford Baptist Church is included with the article - looks very similar to the church in 1973.

125th Anniversary

....."An abstract of the discourse (by Rev. T.G. Lyons) follows:

The Baptists early found their way into Chelmsford. The records of the First Baptist Church in Haverhill show that Rev. Hezekiah Smith baptized candidates in Chelmsford as early as 1768-69.

The church was organized October 22, 1771 at the house of Daniel Lock, with 8 male and 15 females members, 23 in all. These members were dismissed from the First Church in Haverhill and the Second Church in Boston, and resided in the towns of Chelmsford, Carlisle, Billerica, Acton, Westford, and Tyngsboro. There is no record of any minister being present at the organization or council of recognition. Thus the church starts out in true Baptist independence, recognizing no other head or leader than Christ.

It had a large field in which to operate, 10 miles toward Haverhill, 11 miles toward Boston, 20 miles toward Leicester to meet these neighbors half way and was bounded on the north only by the north pole.

The church had no pastoral care for the first 2 years of its existence but was not inactive during this period. It was ministered to by Rev. Samuel Honey, Dr. Greene and others. 16 were added by baptism and others received by letter, so that its membership was about doubled. Some of these early members resided in Hollis, New Ipswich, and Mason, New Hampshire.

The members did not escape the peculiarities of their times. The records of a meeting held April 20th, 1872 have this item: Chose Mark White, John Spaulding, and Asaph Fletcher by vote, to be a committee to give certificates to those of Baptist persuasion, which usually assemble with the Baptist Society in Chelmsford, thereby to free them from paying taxes to support different denominations.

The church has been a mother in Israel. It has dismissed members to form churches in Hollis and Hudson, New Hampshire and in Littleton, Billerica, Dunstable, Tyngsboro, Lowell, and Chelmsford, Central Chelmsford, besides contributing many members to swell the ranks of strong city churches.

In its early history the discipline was very strict, but was met by those disciplined in a Christian spirit.

The names of Spaulding, Fletcher, Hutchins, Byam, and Chamberlain have run through the whole history of the church, and been prominent in its affairs.

The Church has received donations for the support of the gospel, which amount at the present time to about \$1500. We trust it may still be remembered by its friends."

The Church has been served by 17 pastors whose labors have commenced and ended as follows:

Rev. Elisha Rich, March 15, 1773 - Dec. 15, 1777
Rev. Ahisha Crossman, March 15, 1787 - June 6, 1789
Rev. John Perkins, June 6, 1792, closed over the whole church by division of the church, 1804
Rev. John Parkhurst, Nov. 13, 1821 - Feb. 12, 1845
Rev. J.C. Boomer, Jan. 20, 1847 - July 7, 1858
Rev. J.F. Wiggins, Oct. 1858 - June 28, 1863
Rev. T.J. Farrar, Nov. 1, 1863 - May 21, 1865
Rev. G.H. Allen, Oct. 22, 1865 - April 1, 1872
Rev. W.A. ~~Depew~~ Depew, Sept. 1, 1872 - Oct. 30, 1875
Rev. W.A. Worthington, Jan. 2, 1876 - Feb. 18, 1879
Rev. W.S. Phillips, May 1, 1879; closed by death Sept. 10, 1880
Rev. J.H. Tilton, July 1, 1881 - sometime in 1884
Rev. E.H. Hayden, Dec. 4, 1885 - Oct. 1886
Rev. A.C. Bickford, Dec. 5, 1886 - April 7, 1890
Rev. J.E. Dinsmore, Aug. 24, 1890 - Aug. 24, 1891
Rev. E.D. Bowers, Dec. 1, 1891 - July 1, 1894
Rev. T.G. Lyons, Dec. 16, 1894 -

The longest pastorate was that of Rev. John Parkhurst, 23 years and 3 months. The shortest, Rev. E.H. Hayden's, 10 months. The church has had pastoral care 89 years and has been without 36 years. It has been licensed 6 members to preach the gospel and ordained 2.

The church had seasons of religious depression and trials, the most notable of which were the period of the revolutionary war, and during its divided state, 1804 - 1822. It has also had many seasons of refreshing. The most notable have been 1772, 1822 - 1831, 1837, 1840, 1860. 652 persons have belonged to the church....."



The First Baptist Society
Waters, Page 700 - 703

Some account of the early Baptists has been given in connection with the First Parish Of Chelmsford. Their rise in this vicinity dates from the preaching of Whitefield and other revivalists about the middle of the eighteenth century.

From the First Parish records and Town records, the names of a number of Baptists are known. These belong to the period following 1740, and, according to Parson Bridge, "were in a separation."

Gershom Procter and Rebeca his wife, John Kidder and his wife, Thomas Spaulding and his wife, John Spaulding and his wife, Job Spaulding and his wife, John Barrat and his wife, Jonas Robbins, John Burge, David Kidder, Ephraim Keyes, Esther, the wife of Josiah Cory, Hannah, the wife of Zach Shed, Widow Abigail Keyes, widow Mary Barrat, widow Sarah Swallow.

Parson Bridge mentions "one Sam Hyde," an exhorter, who was at the South Village with his family, a tailor by trade. "One Green of Leicester was a 'lay Baptist teacher' at Westford."

Gershom Procter in vited "one Dutton that says he is a minister of ye Gospel, was so in England, but now goes from town to town selling books and preaching, to preach in his house."

In the court files at Cambridge is a document dated 1772, which certifies that Stephen Hastlen, Oliver Adams, Nathan Crosby, Jr., Benj. Crosby, Thos. Barnes, Gershom Proctor, Henry Proctor and Ammi Andrews were "regular attendants at the Baptist meeting."

In 1774, the Town refused to abate the minister rates of Thomas Spaulding, Jonas Robbins and others by reason of their hiring preaching among themselves. Five years later, Thomas, Job and Zebulon Spaulding, John Jonathan and Mary Robbins and Simeon Barrett were served the same way.

In 1785 Henry Plazdell's rate was abated, 10:6:2:0
In 1786 Isaac Patten's was abated, 0:14:0:0
Zebulon Head's was abated, 0: 3:6:0
In 1787 Mr. Jonathan Adams received 0:18:4:2
"his minister's rate for 1785 which was not getable by reason of his subscribing to the baptist Society and procuring a Certificate from that Society"

Mr. Timothy Adams had his tax abated 10:17:10:0
Oliver Hildreth had his tax abated 0:15: 5:2
In 1791 Benj. Kelley had his tax abated 0: 5: 2:1.

In 1795, these men paid their part of the ministerial tax to Mr. John Peckens instead of to Mr, Packard, the minister of the Town:

John Adams	John Spaulding
Robert Adams	Henry Spaulding
Benj. Adams	Samuel Spaulding
Joel Barritt	Henry Spaulding, Jr.
Solomon Byam	John Spaulding, Jr.
Aaron Chamberlain, Jr.	Samson Stevens
Sarg. Joseph Haywood	Lt. Joseph Winn
John Mansfield	David Dutton
Benj. Pelsue	Joseph Foster

In 1807, John Bateman was treasurer of the Baptist Society.

What follows is taken from the pastor's historical sermon in 1896:

The records of the First Baptist ~~Society~~ Church in Haverhill show

Rev. Hezekiah Smith baptized candidates in Chelmsford as early as 1768-69.

The church was organized in South Chelmsford, Oct. 22, 1771, at the house of Daniel Lock, with nine male, 15 female members, 24 in all. The names of the first members were: Edward Spaulding, Ebenezer Bailey, Mary White, Mary Hutchins, Rachel Adams, Mark White, Daniel Lock, John Spaulding, Nathan Crosby, Thomas Barnes, Hannah Spaulding, Elizabeth Bailey, Mary White, 2d, Rachel Longley, Elizabeth Barrett, Hannah Hardy, Abigail Lock, Susanna Spaulding, Susanna Chamberlain, Mercy Hutchins, Mary Crosby and Asaph Fletcher. These members were dismissed chiefly from the Second Church in Boston, and resided in the Towns of Chelmsford, Carlisle, Billerica, Acton, Westford, and Tyngsborough. They were Calvinistic in doctrine. There is no record of any minister being present at the organization, or council of recognition. Thus the church starts out in true Baptist independence, recognizing no other head or leader than Christ.

The church had no pastoral care for the first two years of its existence, but was not inactive during the period. It was ministered to by Rev. Samuel Honey, Dr. Greene and others. Sixteen were added by baptism and others received by letter, so that membership was doubled. Some of these early members resided in Hollis, New Ipswich and Mason, N.H.

The members did not escape the peculiarities of their times. The records of a church meeting held April 30, 1772, have this item:

"Chose Mark White, John Spaulding and Asaph Fletcher by vote, to be a committee to give certificates to those of the Baptist persuasion, which usually assemble with the Baptist society in Chelmsford, thereby to free them from paying taxes to support different denominations."

The church has been served by 23 pastors whose labors commenced and ended as follows:

Rev. Elisha Rich	March 15, 1773 to Dec. 15, 1777
Rev. Abisha Crossman	March 15, 1778 to June 6, 1789
Rev. John Peckens	June 6, 1792, over the whole church until division of the church in 1804
Rev. John Parkhurst	Nov. 13, 1821 to Feb. 12, 1845
Rev. J.C. Boomer	Jan. 20, 1847 to July 7, 1858
Rev. J.E. Wiggins	Oct. 1858 to June 28, 1863
Rev. J.T. Farrar	Nov. 1, 1863 to May 21, 1865
Rev. G.H. Allen	Oct. 22, 1865 to April 1, 1873
Rev. W.A. Depew	Sept. 1, 1873 to Oct. 30, 1875
Rev. W.A. Worthington	Jan. 2, 1876 to Feb. 18, 1879
Rev. W.S. Phillips	May 1, 1879 closed by death Sept. 10, 1880
Rev. J.H. Tilton	July 1, 1881 to sometime in 1884
Rev. E.H. Hayden	Dec. 4, 1885 to Oct. 1886
Rev. A.A. Bickford	Dec. 5, 1886 to April 7, 1890
Rev. J.E. Dinsmore	Aug. 24, 1890 to Aug. 24, 1891
Rev. E.D. Bowers	Dec. 1, 1891 to July 1, 1894
Rev. T.G. Lyons	Dec. July 16, 1894 to May 1897
Rev. A.A. Bickford	July 4, 1897 to Oct. 29, 1899
Rev.	
A.R. MacDougall	Dec. 1899 to April 14, 1901
Rev. C. W. Williams	July 1901 to May 31, 1907
G.R.M. Wells	April 1908 to July 11, 1909
Rev. J.E. Dame	Nov. 1909 to Oct. 1913
Rev. Daniel J. Hatfield	Oct. 1914 to -

The longest pastorate was that of Rev. John Parkhurst, 23 years and 3 months. The shortest, Rev. E.H. Hayden's, 10 months. The church has had

pastoral care for 89 years and has been without 36 years. It has licensed 6 men to preach the Gospel and ordained 2.

The Society has had times of trial, the most notable of which were the period of the Revolutionary War, and during its divided state, 1804-1822. It has also had seasons of prosperity. It has dismissed members to form churches in Hollis and Hudson, N.H. and in Littleton, Billerica, Dunsatable, Tyngsborough, Lowell and Chelmsford.

In its early ~~dectrine~~ history the discipline was very strict, but was met by those disciplined in a Christian spirit.

The names of Spaulding, Fletcher, Hutchins, Byam and Chamberlain have run through the whole history of the church, and been prominent in its affairs.

The church has had a membership in 6 associations, namely: Warren, Dublin, Boston, Salem, Lowell and the Merrimack, where it now holds its membership.

The Sunday School was organized in June 26, 1823, and has had its place in the church work ever since.

The church has owned 2 meeting houses. The first, which was taken down and moved there from the town of Westford in December, 1771, stood near the cemetery. Allen says it was erected near Heart Pond, January 14 and 15, 1772. The present house in the South Village was built in 1836, and the old one sold for \$75.

The church received gifts which, at the present time, amount to about \$1500.

In 1775, Elisha Rich published by request, "The Number of the Beast, Found out by Spiritual Arithmetic," &c. It was printed by Nathaniel Coverly. He also published, in the same year, "Poetical Dialogues calculated for the help of Timorous and Tempted Christians."

In 1871, Gorge H. Allen, the pastor, published a "Centennial Address" from which the following items are taken:

.....the wave of discord, staid for a time, seems to have gathered force; and now again its bitter flood poured in upon the church, so that October 11th, 1804, a faction consisting of 5 men and 11 women, led by Elder Peckens, formed themselves into a new church, which they styled "The Baptist Church of Christ in Chelmsford." The seceding party retained possession of the meeting house. The original church had no pastor during the period of separation - about 18 years, but Rev. John Spaulding, among others, officiated frequently.

The first meeting house, as before stated, was moved from Westford, and was built probably before 1728. Some excitement followed the announcement that it had been sold for use by the Baptists, and it was "robbed of its pews and finish." It was taken to pieces by the purchaser, and "the Baptists went by night with ox-sleds, and brought it, load after load, upon the snow crust, in a direct line over the tops of walls and fences, to the site selected."

The First Baptist Church
Chelmsford Newsweekly, 1955

....."On Tuesday, October 22, 1771, a number of men and women baptized on profession of faith by immersion, assembled at the house of Daniel Lock, in Chelmsford....being assisted by Mr. Bartlett of New Town, who was chosen therefor by the church of Leicester, under the pastoral care of Elder Thomas Green.' Letters from the nearest Baptist churches...in Boston and Haverhill...gave permission to those of their members who wished to be dismissed in order to form this new church, and after the 9 men and women signed the covenant which set forth 'the cardinal truths of the faith which was once delivered unto the Saints' the organization of the Chelmsford church was completed with the naming of Asaph Fletcher as clerk. 'Thus, with the sanction of no Synod or Council, with no bishop save the Great Head of the Church to preside over the important proceedings, and even without the presence of a clergyman, a church of Christ began its existence, illustrating the severe simplicity of Baptist Churchpolicy, and the absolute independence of Baptist Churches.'

A year later, the first Baptist meeting house was located in the south west corner of what is now Heart Pond Cemetery, near the junction of Hunt Road and Parkerville Road. Meeting had previously been held at private homes. This 1772 meeting house had been built as the first Congregational church in Westford about 1724, and stood near the site of the present First Parish Church in that town. In 1768, Westford voted not to repair this building again but to construct a new one, which was first occupied in December 1771. The old church was sold to Aaron Parker, Jr. for whose family the Parker Village section of Westford is named. He apparently acted on behalf of the Baptists of the South End in Chelmsford and the purchase created such excitement 'That the building was entered and robbed of its pews and finish. The house was hastily taken to pieces by the purchaser, and probably from fear of molestation the Baptists went by night, with ox-sleds, and brought it, load after load, upon the snowcrust, in a direct line over the tops of walls and fences to the site selected. Two days only (Jan. 14, 15) were occupied in erecting it upon the new ground....'

This building could not have been very pretentious, judging from the length of time needed for its re-construction. It had no ceiling, we know, and rude benches instead of pews. In 1796, pews were installed and sold to the church members, and the proceeds were used for making further improvements in the building. In 1836, however, the structure was sold for \$75 to James Robbins, who moved it to his farm nearby at the corner of Hunt Road and Garrison Road, and converted it into a barn which was standing at least as late as 1883 a short distance behind the present barn on property now owned by Mrs. Anne Clarke, 50 Garrison Road. Mr. Robbins' great-granddaughter, Mrs. Benjamin Heald, Center Section, still remembers this old barn.

The Robbins farm has a particularly close connection with this first church for the Tucker and Betty families mentioned by Mr. Bridge lived here, and the front part is said to have been a 'noon house' where those attending the church services from a long distance could eat their lunch between the morning and afternoon sessions. (At this time the territory served by the church was about a hundred square miles, and members came from Stowe, Billerica, Acton, what are now Lowell and Carlisle, and also from Hollis, New Ipswich and Mason, N.H.) The church itself was set on land originally belonging to the Tucker-Betty farm, and Dr. John Betty gave in 1774 adjoining land for a burying-ground. The

first grave in this cemetery was that of the first pastor's daughter.

The building of the second (present) meeting house in the center of the South Village in 1836 caused no such apprehensions as the first, and a long period of steady growth followed. One of the earliest Sunday schools had already been organized in 1822, and a vestry and parsonage were later additions. The First Baptist Church thus came to take a respected place in the community - with a duly ordained minister who had graduated from Harvard College, a large congregation, and an inviting future.

The present membership is 37. The first minister to receive a stated salary (L30 yearly) was the Rev. John Peckens, and also during his pastorate, a farm was purchased for his use at the cost of L200. This farm at 19 Elm Road is now owned by Albert R. Simpson. In 1847 a parsonage was acquired at the corner of Maple Road and Acton Road. Its first occupant was Rev. J.C. Boomer. It was destroyed by fire in 1921 and has not yet been rebuilt (It was rebuilt before 1972 -J.B.D.) The land for the present church building was given by William Byam. The horse sheds on the west side of the property have long since been torn down and the hearse house was moved to Heart Pond Cemetery and serves as a tool house. The interior of the building has undergone many changes. The pulpit was originally much higher, with a sounding board over it. The gallery at the rear ('the singing seats') was also higher. Music was furnished for choir and congregational singing by a bass viol, restrung as necessary at church expense. In 1951, the small parlor organ which had been used for more than 75 years was replaced by a Vox Vega Vox electronic organ. The silver communion service of the church is now at the Adams Library for exhibition and safe-keeping, replaced by an individual service given by Mrs. Hannah Byam in 1904.

In November, 1817, one of the earliest missionary organizations in New England was formed at this church and called 'The Heathen School Society', while 20 years later another society -- the Burmah School Society -- was organized. These later united as the Burmah Society, but this group was divided in 1846 when the Central Baptist Church in the Center was formed and the members there eventually took the name of the Mirriam Warren Missionary Society Circle while those in the South Village were known as the Ladies' Social Circle. This group has done much to help in meeting church expenses and in improving the physical plant of the church. At present a long range program is underway for the improvement of the vestry and kitchen."

During the 205th anniversary service held at the First Baptist Church on Sunday, October 24, Mrs. Otis D. Brown, oldest active member of the church and 87 years young, read a paper containing her reminiscences of the church and the South Village in earlier days. Mrs. Brown has graciously given the Newsweekly permission to publish her paper.

Good morning, friends, and a Happy Birthday to our Church on its 205th Birthday Anniversary.

I am very pleased to stand here today in this Historic First Baptist Church. Why? Because—if I may use this expression—I have been going here ever since I was knee-high to a grasshopper.

Now I am going back 60 years to the horse and buggy days to tell you how we got to and from church. I came in a two-seated surrey with a square top decorated with fringe with my neighbors George and Elizabeth (Byam) Mansfield. Their daughter, Grace (Mansfield) Parker Harris, died recently after celebrating her 100th birthday. This style of carriage was built in 1864 in Flint, Michigan. Mr. Baldwin, former local resident and 4-H leader, now owns one of these and last December he drove it up Maple Road to the Garrison House and back.

Other people came to church in those days in a buggy or a Democrat wagon. In the wintertime they came in a sleigh or a pung. Of course all of these were horse-drawn. The horses were left in the horse sheds out where you have parked your cars today along the stone wall. Each horse occupied one stall. The 1938 hurricane blew the sheds down and the wreckage was carried away to be burned, but I can still remember seeing Deacon Adams, Mr. Mansfield, Charles Fadden, Leon Fisk and Deacon Dawes tying their horses up before the services began.

Now we are about to enter the Church. We will come in those two

doors many of you used until changes were made in 1974. We can see in that corner a Sunday School class taught by the late Mrs. Nettie (Byam) Hall. Up in the choir was another class taught by Mrs.

Deacon Dawes. The choir sat in the loft at the back of the church and when they sang, the congregation stood up and turned around and faced them. The organ which is in back of the piano today was in the choir loft, too, but it was later moved to the front of the church. Mrs. John Parker was the organist for many years. She and her husband lived in the house where the Johnstons now live, next to the fire house. She had a very strong voice and led the congregation in singing as she played.

Now to speak of our pastors: the Rev. Charles Ellis, pastor of this church for several years and of its daughter, the Central Baptist Church in the Center, for 40 years. The Rev. Charles Williams and the Rev. George Nickerson, who was the last pastor to live in the old parsonage at the corner near the watering-trough opposite the church. The Rev. Daniel Hatfield baptized several candidates of which I was one in October, 1915, in Baptist Pond. In October, 1916, he married my late husband and me at my Robin Hill Road home. Among the other pastors I recall, the Rev. Mr. Brinkman was a more recent one. His wife took special pride in the flowers she planted around the new parsonage.

The Ladies' Circle was not a social organization but a sewing circle, making aprons by the dozen and tying quilts. At 5 o'clock after these meetings a public supper would be held, serving home baked beans, rolls, brown bread, relish, potato salad, cold slaw, pies and coffee. There would be 3 or 4 pies on every table and you might have as many pieces as you wished. The price of this supper? It was 25¢! Today we cannot buy even a cup of coffee for that!

The Ladies' Federation is the successor to the Ladies Circle. It has worked hard to provide new carpeting, new lights, new kitchen cabinets, and a new front entrance to the vestry.

For many years the church was heated by 2 furnaces in the cellar that burned wood. Every year the men of the church went to the church wood lot at the corner of Garrison Road and Maple Road facing Parkerville Road and chopped the wood. Later it was hauled to the church and stacked by the horse sheds to dry. Finally a gasoline-powered machine sawed it into smaller pieces and the men threw them into the cellar. The last

chopping bee was held in 1951, after which the woodlot was sold to Raymond Kroll, one of our members. Several new homes now stand where the woodlot was.

Ten years ago, our church attendance was only 15 and it was very difficult to continue. The Deacons thought it best to hold services in the vestry. Then the building was condemned because of the unsafe condition of the belfry. The bell was removed by a large crane and stored across the street by Arthur Jones in his barn. Services were held in the Grange Hall on Proctor Road.

In 1974 a committee was formed and decided to put the bell and the belfry back and to add some new Sunday School classrooms. Rededication ceremonies were held January 19, 1975.

The bell means more to me than to anybody else present, I am sure, because it helped save my old home from being destroyed by fire about 60 years ago. It was late one afternoon and I had come down to the church to get it ready for the Sunday service. Suddenly I had a feeling that I could not stay—that I must go back home—so I walked down Robin Hill Road and when I got near my house, the roof was all ablaze! Mr. Noel, who lived across the street, rode his horse back to the village and gave the alarm by ringing our church bell which was the only alarm there was. The volunteer firemen came and saved the house and I have always remembered how the bell rang and called them to help.

Today, everything has changed. We don't walk to church or use horse-drawn vehicles but we go by car. Dresses are short if they haven't been replaced by pants when our dresses used to touch the ground. The Fire Department has men at the station all the time instead of volunteers who had to leave their farm work when the church bell gave the alarm. The church building itself has changed and there is an attendance of over 100 instead of the 15 who came here 10 years ago.

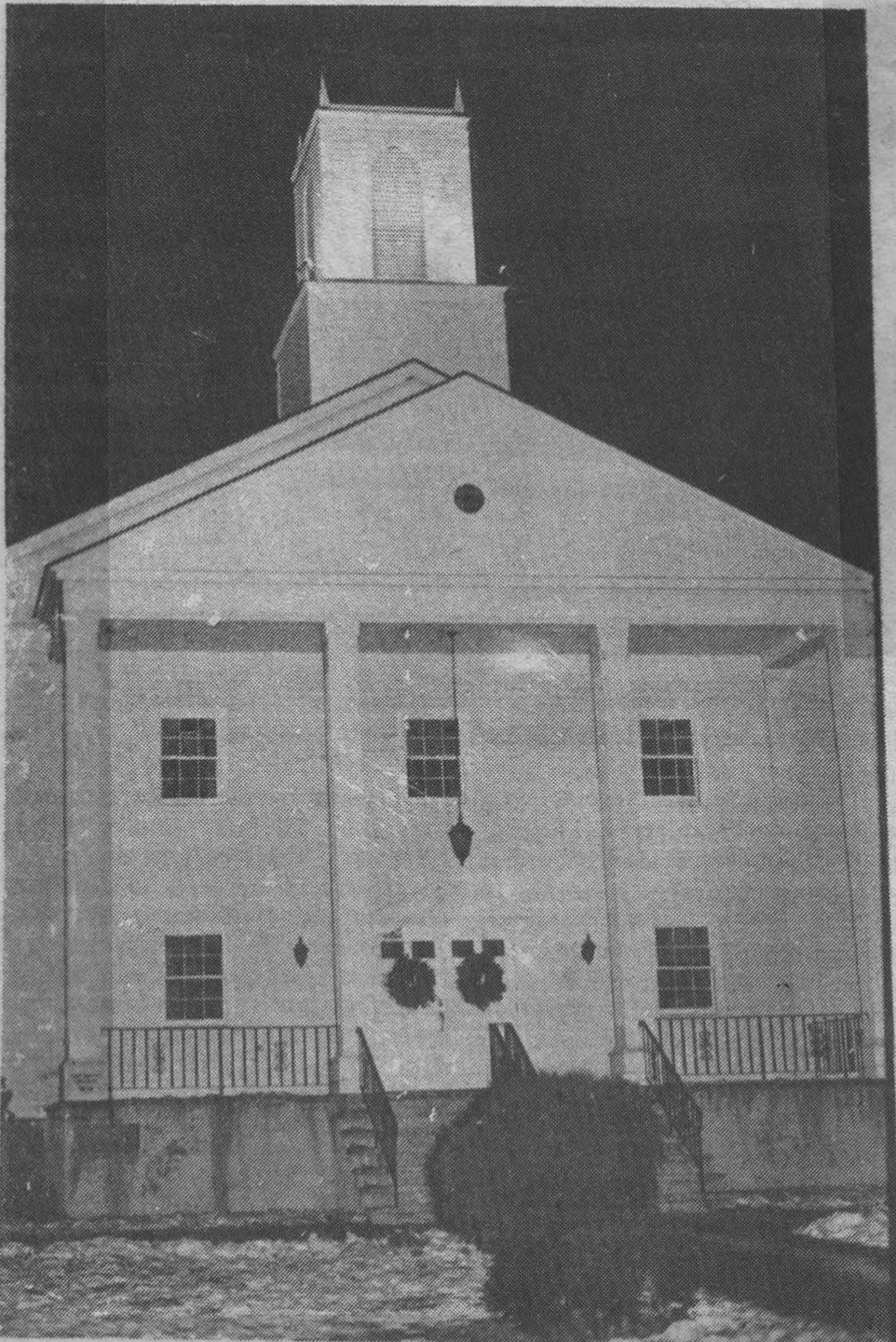
The progress we have made must be very gratifying to our pastor, Mr. Dusek, and we should all be pleased. I am not going to say, as some people do, that changes are always bad things. I am sure you can see from what I have told you today that many changes are for the best and I hope that the people of the church on its birthday to come will be able to look back again and see how much more it has grown since this 205th Birthday.

Now I shall close by saying Mizpah and Amen—Amen!!



2-4 Maple Road

2/6/1975



BAPTIST CHURCH, South Chelmsford (Photo by Regina Linsley)

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
CHELMSFORD, MASS.
ESTABLISHED — OCT. 21, 1771
BUILT — 1836
REMODELED — 1974







