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## Celebrating the 150-year History of Crawford Memorial United Methodist Church

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### The Founding Family – Lucinda and John C. Mason

Ragnhild M. Bairnsfather, February 2021



Portrait of Lucinda Elizabeth True Mason  
FindAGrave.com

She was a strong-willed woman who set her sights on seeing that Methodists would find a presence in Winchester. Lucinda Elizabeth True was born in Derby, Vermont, November 14, 1829. She studied to become a teacher at Tilton School in N.H. (founded in 1845) and taught in Lowell schools for eight years. She married John Clark Mason, a widower, in 1860. John was born in 1826 in Meredith Village, N.H. and came to Charlestown when he was in his late twenties. He found work with a spice and coffee dealer and was with the company for over thirty years, retiring because of ill health.

Lucinda was “keeping house” as the census takers would record a wife’s occupation in early censuses. She was occupied raising four children – her stepdaughter, Martha born 1857, John born 1861, Adda born 1862 and Mary born 1864, all in Charlestown. It was about 1865 when the family moved to Winchester, which had become a town just fifteen years prior. There were Congregational, Unitarian, Episcopalian, and Baptist churches. Lucinda set about to gather together people who wanted to establish a church for Methodists.

On April 15, 1871, she and John invited a “few friends of Methodism” to their house at what is now 10 Hillside. The house was on Winthrop St. at that time, but when new streets were laid out, their house was on Hillside where it remains today, a large high-style Italianate villa design that is on the National Register of Historic Places. John was successful in his business and his property encompassed some ten tillable acres. He was a gentleman farmer and had three cows, one pig, forty chickens, and an apple and peach orchard. Lucinda probably wasn’t tied down to the kitchen canning and making butter and cheese, as they had an Irish maid and a farm worker to help. Her vision was beyond the four walls of their house.



John C. Mason House, 10 Hillside Ave, Winchester  
Photo by S. Hilliard

When not tending the running of the house, Lucinda was organizing and attending prayer meetings, scheduling pastors, and encouraging others to lend a hand. Her faith was unwavering in establishing a Methodist Church. Her journal reflects her spirit. “Now as I look back upon the fifteen years of this church life I can forget - without much effort - the many discouragements, and remember with great pleasure, how willing have been the workers when they have seen what was needed to be done.”

She was the first president of the Women’s Home Missionary Society, which “for twelve years the claims of this work have lain upon her heart and to it she contributed largely of her time, her strength and her money.” *The Story of Methodism in Winchester, Mass. from 1872 to 1897 prepared for the Silver Anniversary, April 25, 1897.* Sarah A. Emerson, editor.

In reading her obituary, one sees how much devotion she had to causes besides her church. She was active in Good Templars, a temperance organization; The Fortnightly, a local charitable organization; and a member of Woman’s Charity Club of Boston. She gave of her time to the Immigrants Home of East Boston and the Medical Mission in the North End. She was on the board of directors that established the Winchester Home for Aged People (later reorganized as Mt. Vernon House). She was on the local board of Overseers of the Poor, as well as on the board of the Woman’s Home Missionary Society of the New England Conference. She was a charter member of the Women’s Auxiliary of the Young Men’s Christian Association in Winchester, which was headed by Robert M. Armstrong, a friend and one of the founding members of the Methodist Church in Winchester. “She was interested in the work of the Freedmen in the South and visited one of the schools for the colored people at Holly Spring, Miss. Of this school she has been a devoted and generous patron for many years.” (Her obituary, *Winchester Star*, August 20, 1909). She clearly devoted much of her life

to those less fortunate. Lucinda died at age 79 at her home at 26 Mt. Pleasant St. She desired that her funeral “be of a very simple character and held at her home.”

John C. Mason did not become a church member until 1882. However, along with Lucinda, he was dedicated in supporting the Methodists spiritually and financially. When the growing, fledging Methodist community needed a larger place to hold its services, he purchased a lot in the summer of 1875 on what is now Mt. Vernon St. across from the Northmark Bank. Earth was turned over for the foundation of the building in October and the first service was held in its vestry on May 7, 1876.



Mason Monument  
Wildwood Cemetery, Winchester  
Photo by S. Hilliard

It was written, “he was a most excellent man, of few words but abounding in every good work.” He had been in poor health for many years and he died November 5, 1892. His obituary in the *Winchester Star* of November 7, 1892 said, “the town loses one who has been most active in its advancement and improvement.” He had been a member of the Board of Selectmen, belonged to the William Parkman Lodge of Masons, and “in politics, although not seeking office, he had been an active and life-long Republican.” Both he and Lucinda are buried in Wildwood Cemetery.

The Mason children’s lives were inextricably intertwined with the church. John N. married Emma Mansfield, the daughter of John Mansfield, the minister from 1884 to 1887. She was honored in 1919 for her many years as superintendent of the Sunday school. *Winchester Star* reported she was given roses and a silver vase. Adda married Walter Marsh, an early member and supporter of the church, who “at his personal expense increased the register of the organ and added a water-motor.” Mary married Joel M. Leonard, minister of the church from 1882 to 1884.

Son John North settled on the Mason property in a house built by his father about 1889. The Queen Anne style house is at 26 Mt. Pleasant St. and Lucinda, as a widow, lived there and it’s where she died. John was involved in the life of the church, serving on various boards and committees before he and Emma moved to Claremont, California, where he died in 1935 and she died 1939. Their names are memorialized on the Mason monument in Wildwood Cemetery.