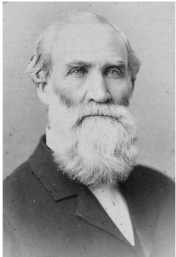

Celebrating the 150-year History of Crawford Memorial United Methodist Church

Our Founders: Dedicated and Determined

Ragnhild M. Bairnsfather, March 2021



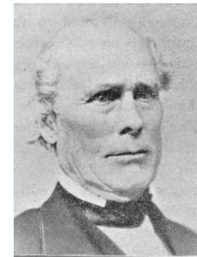
John Mason



Lucinda Mason

There was a small circle of dedicated women and men determined to see that their town had a Methodist Church. For it wasn't a building they first strove for, but a gathering place for prayer, singing and spiritual renewal every week. It began with Lucinda Mason inviting James Owen to the Mason's house on April 15, 1871 to lay plans for a Methodist meeting. He was about 30 years old at that time, a native of Prince Edward Island and a carpenter. He was married to Ella Warren. They don't appear in the 1900 U.S. Census, so it isn't known what happened to them.

Lucinda wrote of Father and Mother Houghton, that is Cyrus and Leonora. They came from Waterfield, Maine, where he was a farmer, but he was a cabinetmaker while he lived in Winchester. At those first meetings at the Masons he was 70 and she was 65, both considered elderly, thereby given the honorific "father" and "mother." Similarly "brother" was used for someone who was active in the church. As Cyrus was the oldest founding member (at age 74), he was given the honor of turning over the first spade of earth for the construction of the church on Mount Vernon Street October 1875. By 1880 he and Leonora were living with their daughter and son-in-law – Cordelia and Joseph Shattuck – and their two children. Cyrus and Leonora are buried in Wildwood Cemetery in the Shattuck lot.



Cyrus Houghton



Leonora Houghton

Lucinda noted in February 1872, a meeting was attended by Mr. & Mrs. Scudder. They were Ferdinand and Eliza Scudder. He was born on the Cape and was a mariner like his father, but when he came to Boston, he entered the restaurant business. He married Eliza, who was born in Nova Scotia, the daughter of Samuel Armstrong. In 1870, the Scudders and Samuel, a widower who was born in Ireland, were living in South Boston. They would have commuted to Winchester by train. It is quite possible they were part of the praying band from South Boston that Lucinda Mason said visited them December 1871. The Scudders did not stay long in Massachusetts for they were living in Santa Barbara, California by 1895 when he died. Both Ferdinand and Eliza are buried in Santa Barbara.

Elizabeth Oliver attended those early meetings, noted simply as Mrs. A.A. Oliver. Research on her revealed she was born in Canaan, Maine in 1837 and married Benjamin Weeks about 1854 in Vasselboro. They had two children, Francis and Marilla. Elizabeth was left a widow in 1864 and later married Alfred Allen Oliver who was of Bowdoin, Maine. By 1880 they were living in Winchester, where he was a stonemason and had a farm on Highland Ave., close by the Mason's property. Highland was mostly open land and the Oliver's thirty acres had a horse, a cow, two pigs and ten chickens and they raised corn and potatoes. They were prosperous enough to have living with them a farm worker and a servant. Both their children were married by 1880. Daughter Marilla Weeks married Robert Mitchell Armstrong. It was Robert's sister, Eliza Jane Armstrong, who married Ferdinand Scudder. It's evident there is an intermingling of families that make up these early Methodists. Both Elizabeth and Alfred Oliver died in Winchester; he at 65; she at age 83. Her obituary noted she was a charter member of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the first president of the local auxiliary of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. "Mrs. Oliver flooded her surroundings with joy and gladness, the aged finding her a lovable companion and the young climbing her knee in delight." They are buried in Vasselboro.

The Armstrong family roots run deep within the church's history, beginning in the late 1800s and up to the early 1990s when some of them retired to Maine and Florida. There are some current day members who remember the recent-day Armstrong's. The earliest Armstrong's were Samuel and his son Robert Mitchell, both born in Ireland, and Robert's wife Marilla, born in Maine.

Robert M. Armstrong came to Boston from St. John, New Brunswick when he was 18. In 1883 he began working for the YMCA, which would become his life's work. He retired as the Y's secretary for Massachusetts & Rhode Island, but was made an Honorary State Secretary, as they didn't want his connection to the Y to be severed.

Robert organized the Sunday school and was its superintendent from 1872 to 1875, when he moved to New Bedford. He returned in 1887 and took up duties as both steward and trustee. Robert and Marilla raised their six children at their home at 125 Highland Ave. and her elderly mother, Elizabeth Oliver, lived with them until her death in 1920. Robert died in 1925 and Marilla in 1930. Both are buried in Wildwood Cemetery.

The Armstrong's neighbors on Highland were the Arthur French family whose son Evander was a noted football player at the high school and Tufts. Both father and son were architects with the Boston firm Hutchins & French. It was Arthur French who designed our church. Evander was the architect of Parkhurst School, the remodeling of Winchester National Bank (now Bank of America) and the Home for Aged People (now Mt. Vernon House) and most notably, Gifford Hall.

Robert and Marilla's son, Robert Weeks Armstrong, was received into the church in 1895. He married Edith Kizzie Creighton of Lynn and she joined the church in 1912. Robert W. was founder and president of Armstrong Knitting Mills. He bought Winchester Conservatories (now the building at Mahoney's Garden Center, situated near Wildwood Street) and he raised turkeys at his farm in Friendship, Maine. He was a former president of Winchester Hospital and a trustee and treasurer of Crawford's board. He died in 1952 and is buried in Wildwood Cemetery along with his wife Edith.

Robert W., wife Edith and their five children lived on Wedgemere Ave. Their son Robert Weeks, Jr. graduated from Bowdoin and in 1942 joined the Army and was sent to Yale to study Malay languages before being deployed to the Far East Theater. He took over the family business, Armstrong Knitting Mills, when his father died. Then with his brother John, they founded Armstrong Laboratories. He retired in 1979 but remained active in Winchester and Friendship, Maine where he eventually retired and died. He was a selectman, member of the finance committee, trustee and president of Mt. Vernon House, and trustee of our church. He held many other positions in organizations in Winchester and in Maine. Edith Kizzie (Creighton) Armstrong was one of Crawford's oldest members in terms of membership and age. She died in 1982 at age 96. Her obituary states she was an avid sailor and bird watcher, and community worker with the Red Cross and YMCA. Surviving her were four children. Some current day members recall her and her son Robert, mentioned above who retired to Maine in 1985.

Other early members were listed in *The Story of Methodism in Winchester, Mass. from 1872 to 1897* by Sara A. Emerson, editor.

The Knox family, Warren Lord Knox and his wife Louise joined in 1880. His occupation was a broker in the finance industry, which may be why he became the treasurer in 1893 for the newly organized YMCA. "It was spoken of him 'By his Christian zeal in welcoming strangers, many were induced to join our Society who otherwise might have gone into one of the more prosperous churches.' " (*Through the Years, a History of the Crawford Memorial Methodist Church 1871-1951* by Albert B. Bent)

Frederick Orren Snow (1842-1929) and his wife Harriet Orinda (Hatch) Snow. Frederick, a native of Eaton, N.H., was a member of the East Boston Meridian Street Methodist Episcopal Church in 1869 - another possible link with the East Boston praying bands that came to Winchester in the early 1870s as noted in Lucinda Mason's diary. On January 13, 1878, Frederick was received by letter to the Methodist church in

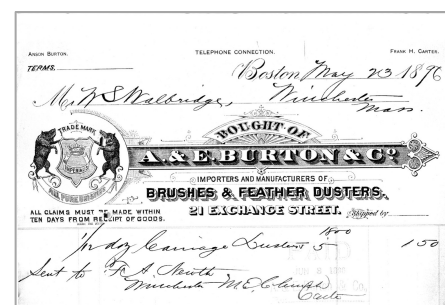
Winchester. Harriet was vice president of the newly formed Woman's Home Missionary Society in 1885. He was president of the Metallic Window Screen Manufacturing Co. of Boston, before moving it to Winchester.

The Hatch family. The Snow's neighbors on Forest Street in 1920 were the Hatch family. William S. Hatch was married to the Snow's daughter, Lillian Orinda. She joined the church in 1883; he in 1892. According to William's obituary (*Winchester Star*, March 22, 1935), he went to work in East Boston making window screens for Frederick Snow. When the shop moved to Winchester about 1891, he came as foreman. The shop was located at what is now the southwest corner of Main Street and Mystic Valley Parkway. By 1923 William opened his own cabinet shop next to his residence on Forest Street "so well known to his many patrons. He was an artist in his work, making a specialty of restoring and reproducing antique furniture." William married Lillian Snow in 1892 and they had five children, one of whom, Ralph W., is remembered by today's members. He was a member for 71 years – from 1909 until he died in 1980. He served as chairman and treasurer of trustees and was active in many of the church's programs. He was vice president of Winchester Savings Bank when he retired in 1965. He was a town meeting member from 1929, when the town first began holding representative town meetings, until 1979. He served the town as Cemetery Commissioner, the Finance Committee, treasurer and director of Winchester Hospital, Board of Trustees of the Winchester Seniors Association, served on the Council of Aging and was active in the building fund for the Jenks Senior Center. The list goes on. He is remembered as a quiet, unassuming gentleman, a devout Christian who attended every church event. Ralph's first wife, Mildred, died in 1952, and he married second Olive Hatch, who was a member from 1954 until her death in 1987. Ralph and Mildred are buried in Wildwood, as are Frederick Snow and his family.

Thomas Morris (1836-1921) came here in 1859 from England; his wife, Sarah was from Prince Edward Island. Their next-door neighbors on Mystic Ave in 1880 were James and Ella Owen. James, as noted above, was one of the first to meet with Lucinda Mason at her home. So it's likely James invited Thomas to join the society of Methodists. Thomas conducted a furniture and upholstery store in Woburn. He was treasurer of the church in the 1880s and '90s. Note there is income from pew rentals collected by C.S. Sherman, the sexton (see right). The membership was approximately 142. In 1879 the official board set a rental plan where a single seat was \$6.00/yr. and a four-seat pew was \$20/yr., payable monthly.

July 31, 1898		Aug 21, 1898	
M	Dr.	M	Dr.
Bro Collection	220	Bro Collection	104
Pew Rents	1362	Weekly Offering	65
Widely Offering	1108	Pew Rents	1800
	2896		1969
Rec'd above from C.S. Sherman, Collector		Rec'd above from C.W. Sherman, Collector	
The Morris' Pans			

William Walbridge lived at 25 Central Street He acted as the collector, was a Steward and a Trustee. Early in his career, he was a bookkeeper, but later was in the carpet and furniture business in Boston. By 1900 he had moved from Winchester and was living in Toledo, Ohio. (See right, his signature on a receipt for feather dusters purchased for the church.)



William and **Ellen Fitch** married at a Methodist Church in South Boston in 1865 and then lived in East Boston before moving to Winchester in 1871. He and Ellen were received by letter in 1876 and became actively involved in the church. He was superintendent of the Sunday School for nineteen years. In May 1876, the Winchester chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union was organized and Ellen was its vice president. William had been a postal clerk before he became postmaster in Winchester in 1889, but he was forced to resign four years later when the Democratic administration replaced a Republican one in Washington. His obituary in 1911 stated he was a well-known resident of Winchester where he'd made his home for forty years. He and Ellen and their family are buried in Wildwood.

Our more recent long-time members and their memories will be featured in a future column.