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

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### Places of Worship

*Ragnhild M. Bairnsfather, April 2021*

Lucinda Mason was a gregarious person, who was actively involved in community causes and who had the ability to organize people. So it was natural that she would invite people she knew who would be interested in forming a Methodist Society to meet at her and John's house on April 15, 1871. Four or five of them met there, at what is now 10 Hillside. It has been cited as being on Winthrop St., which it was at that time. That part of town was sparsely populated with houses that had large gardens growing corn and potatoes, and hired help took care of the cows, chickens, and pigs. In 1893, a year after John Mason died, his son, John N. sold off some of the large property and Hillside became a street. The house, of high-style Italianate design, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places due to its architectural and historical significance.



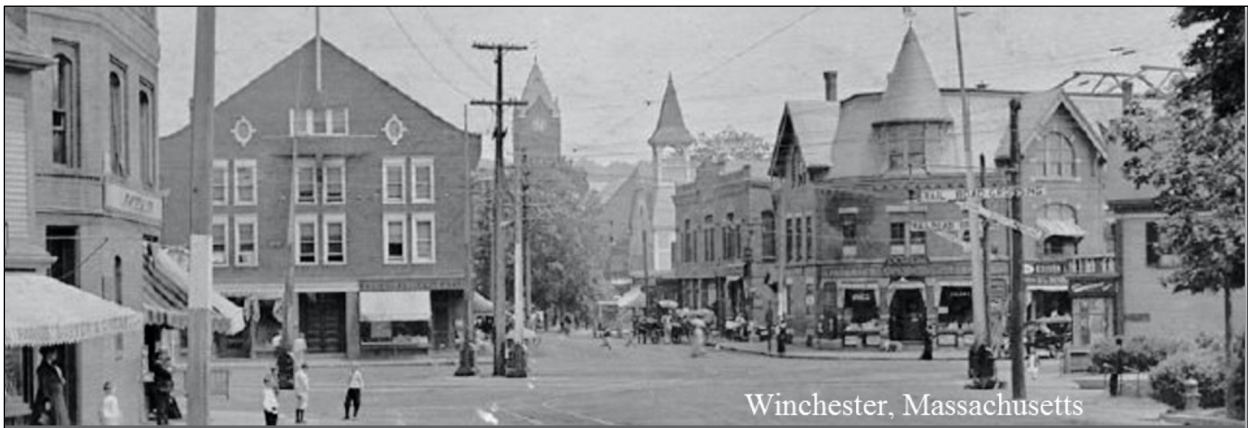
John and Lucinda Mason's home at 10 Hillside.



Sanderson's store ca 1890s, where Methodists met upstairs in Union Hall.

Within a week, notices were composed and sent to the three churches in town (Congregational, Unitarian and Baptist) asking it be read at their service. It said there would be Methodist preaching at Union Hall over Mr. Sanderson's store next Thursday evening April 20 at 7:45. About sixty people showed up on that rainy evening. Edmund Sanderson's store today would be found at the corner of Main and Park St., site of a former gas station.

A few months later the services moved to Lyceum Hall at the corner of Main and Mt. Vernon Streets. Lyceum Hall, built in 1851 in the ornate Gothic style, served many purposes. There were businesses on the lower floors and meeting rooms of various sizes on the upper floors. Lyceums were popular in the era – places where the public could attend educational lectures and performances. Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes spoke there in 1859. The precursor to the public library was in the building – it was called the Library Association and members paid a fee of one dollar a year to take out books. The building caught fire December 14, 1950, taking down the third floor. Today it looks nothing like the 1850s building.



Winchester, Massachusetts

A photo of Lyceum Hall with the church building in the background, taken about 1910.

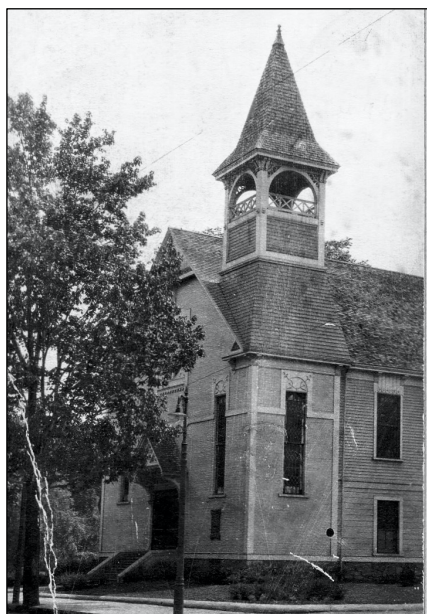
The Methodist Society continued holding services at Lyceum Hall until 1874 when they moved to Adelphian Hall that was on the top floor of Hotel Winchester. Adelphian Hall is not to be confused with Adelphian Club aka Back Log Club, which was a literary club that met in Rangeley Hall on property owned by David Nelson Skillings. There are no good photos of Hotel Winchester. You can visualize it today on Main St. where the News Shop, Mediterranean Grill and other businesses are located.

There were problems with all the halls - Union, Lyceum, and Adelphian. According to Lucinda in her journal, Union Hall was too small, Lyceum Hall too large, and Adelphian Hall too high, "being 52 steps from the street."

As early as 1872 there was talk of a permanent church building, but nothing came of it until John Mason bought a piece of land on what is now Mt. Vernon Street in the summer of 1875. Efforts to raise money were going nowhere until the summer of '75 when a lady from Bromfield St. Church in Boston handed Lucinda a fifty dollar bank note expressing her interest in the welfare of the society. The society sprang into action and proceeded to work, raising enough money by early September 1875 to begin construction. Father [Cyrus] Houghton, as he was called, was the oldest member, at age 74, and a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church for more than forty years. He was given the honor of digging the first shovel of earth for the cellar on the morning of October 20. The foundation was paid for by a series of lectures given in Lyceum Hall. The men of the church helped in excavating, doing it themselves or by proxy. The carpenter work was done by Mead & Mason, a New Hampshire firm, and the furnishings were paid for by the women of the society, the Sabbath School, and Mr. Mason. [Lucinda's journal of Nov. 26, 1887]



Mead, Mason & Co Business Card



The church building was on Mt. Vernon St. on what is now an empty lot across from Northmark Bank and the town's Safety Building.

The church was built facing the river, it being the only way due to the size of the lot. The total cost was projected to be \$9,400, but subscriptions fell short. John Mason, who had already pledged \$1,000, stepped up and assumed the remainder of indebtedness until the Society could liquidate the debt. Later on, he added another \$1,000. In Lucinda's journal, she said, "if all the money pledged had been paid, there would not be one dollar of debt today. It is such a mistake to promise to do and then to leave undone. If we could just remember that it is the Lord's money that we give to the church..." She goes on to "thank our friends in the other churches, especially the Congregational and Unitarian in town and Mr. [David N.] Skillings, a real friend." Skillings obtained his wealth in the lumber business and was known for his civic mindedness and generosity toward charitable causes. He turned a collection of tenement houses and scraggly woods into a park-like setting of houses he had built for himself, his family, and his friends. Though his mansion was torn down in 1933, there are many that can be found in the Rangeley development, which is opposite the site of our current church.

On May 7, 1876, the first service was held in the vestry. A minister from Boston preached the afternoon sermon and a minister from Charlestown gave the evening sermon. The new church was dedicated June 1, 1876. The interior was described as being simple yet warm in tone. "The result is an expression of the exquisite taste and skill of the pastor and his able

wife, who were wisely deferred to in the matter of decoration."

In 1891 additional land was purchased and the building was turned to face the street and refurbished outside and inside at a total cost of \$6,120. Zion's Herald noted, "Methodism in Winchester has come to stay. It has



enlarged its borders, driven its stakes down deeper and deeper, and beautified its home without and within. March 19, 1891 was a red-letter day. It signalized its transformation from an unattractive building to a gem of a structure.”

There is no record of where the ministers lived up until 1897, when the house at 17 Myrtle St. was purchased for the parsonage. It remained such until 1925.

Membership was growing and the church building was found to be too small. In the spring of 1920 Frank Crawford met with the owners of the Pattee estate regarding the purchase of the mansion and stable. Lewis Pattee was engaged in the manufacture of agricultural implements through the Pattee Plow Co. and his investments in railroad stock rewarded him the means to build a fine residence about 1875 in a choice part of Winchester. He was president of the Winchester Cooperative Bank, a trustee of the Savings Bank, served as chairman of the Board of Selectmen and was a generous supporter of the Unitarian Church. Lewis died in 1900 and it was his son and daughter, Fred and Alice with whom Frank Crawford spoke. Lewis Pattee and his family are buried in Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge.

Meanwhile, by the fall of 1920, New England Laundry had expressed an interest in purchasing the church building to use as offices and recreation space. The sale was considered and the planning committee approved of the price of \$18,000. And if the building were vacated by June 30, 1921, they would receive a bonus of \$5,000. Some income was realized from rental fees of the stable/garage at \$6 a month. The pews were given to the New Hope Baptist Church. The African-American community had purchased the old Washington school in 1920 and remodeled it to serve as their church. Today it is a residence at 12 Cross St.

The pipe organ was sold in 1923 for \$750. It must have seen its better days because it had been purchased in 1891 for \$1,300, money mostly raised by the women of the church.

With no building in which to worship, the trustees found a place not too distant from where the new church would be undergoing construction. It was in Waterfield Hall, the second floor of the building at the corner of Church St. and Waterfield Rd. Rent was \$10 per Sunday. Services were held there beginning September 1921. The wood-frame building suffered a fire in 1961. Craddock’s Pharmacy occupied the first floor for many years. Ruby White, a longtime member recalled, “many a turkey dinner women cooked and lugged up the stairs in clothes baskets along with dishes, etc. to raise money for our new church. Our family dinners were renowned.” Olive (Seller) Wilkins, another longtime member, said that her mother made a boiler full of potatoes and squash and then we put it on heating things in my brother’s car and we drove down Washington St. where a train would be coming through. We’d have to wait anxiously while everything would be getting cold. She exclaimed, “It was awful!”

*Photos are courtesy of the Winchester Archival Center.*

*Next month’s column will be on the construction of the present church.*



The Pattee Estate, site of our present day church, with the carriage house – now the parsonage – on the right.

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| R. W. Armstrong, Treas.,<br>Trustees Winchester Methodist Episcopal Church<br>Winchester, Mass. |                |
| TO <b>A. MILES HOLBROOK, DR.</b><br>REAL ESTATE AND<br>INSURANCE                                |                |
| 28 CHURCH STREET, WINCHESTER, MASS. August 19, 1924<br>TEL. 1250 WINCHESTER                     |                |
| Waterfield Hall engaged by Mr. Vincent Clarke for a<br>Christmas Party, Dec. 22, 1923.          | \$12.00        |
| Waterfield Hall engaged by the Methodist Church for<br>a supper Feb. 29, 1924.                  | 12.00          |
| Waterfield Hall engaged by Hamilton M. Gifford for an<br>entertainment April 25, 1924.          | <u>12.00</u>   |
|   | <b>\$36.00</b> |

Receipt for rental paid for use of Waterfield Hall.