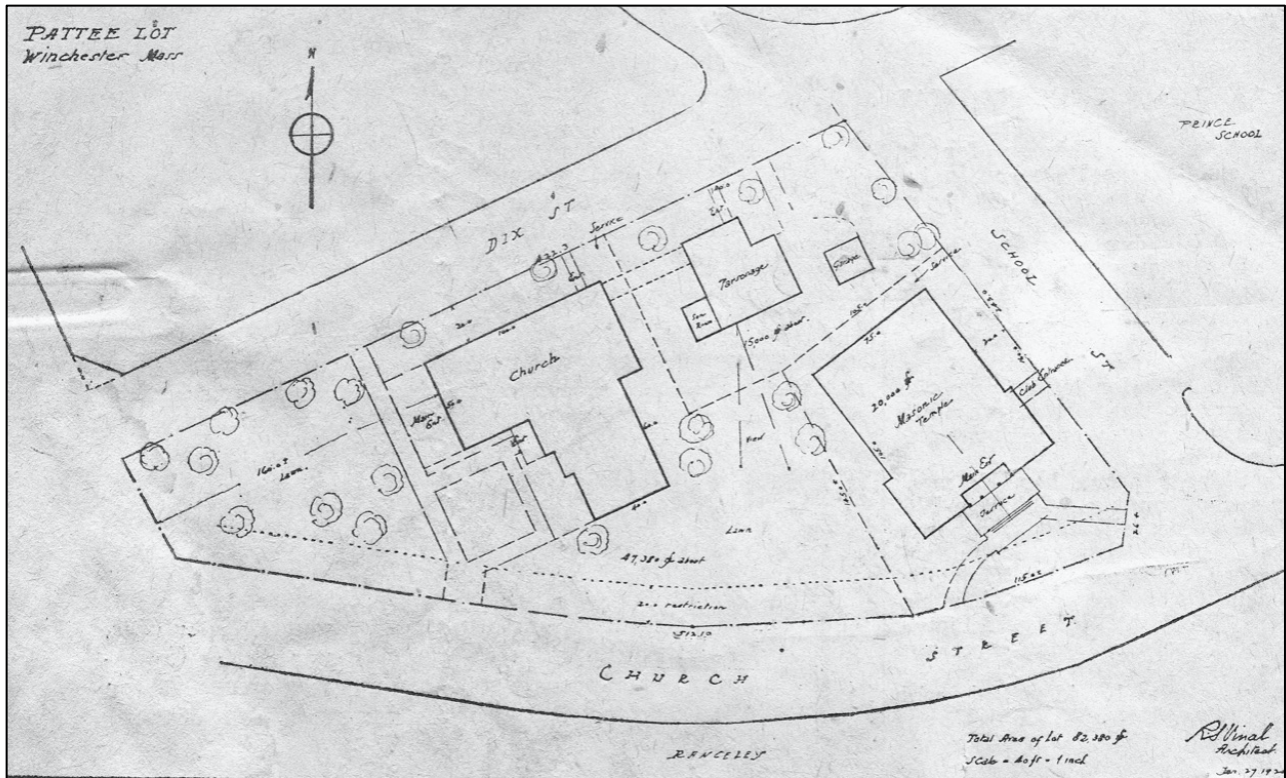

Celebrating the 150-year History of Crawford Memorial United Methodist Church

Our Church at Dix Street

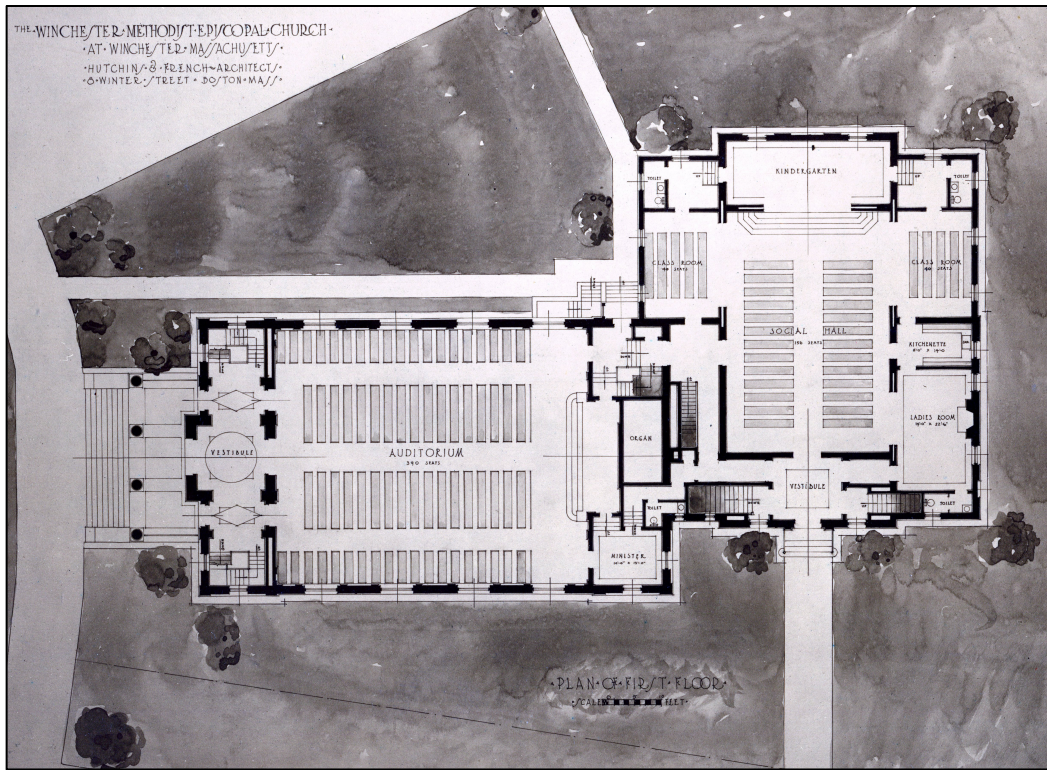
Ragnhild M. Bairnsfather, May 2021

In 1920 there was hanging in the old church a watercolor of the proposed building. It was of Gothic design and was to be built of Quincy granite. The picture cost \$25 – the first expenditure toward the new building, excluding the cost of the Pattee lot, which was \$25,000. Lewis Pattee had originally asked \$35,000, but after some negotiation, he lowered it, possibly because his parents had been Methodists, though he was a member of the Unitarian Church. The Gothic design was not to every one's liking – the style didn't suit the site and granite was too expensive.



Architect Vinal's plot plan dated Jan. 27, 1920. It is interesting as it shows the Masonic Temple (not built) and Prince School (razed in 1924).

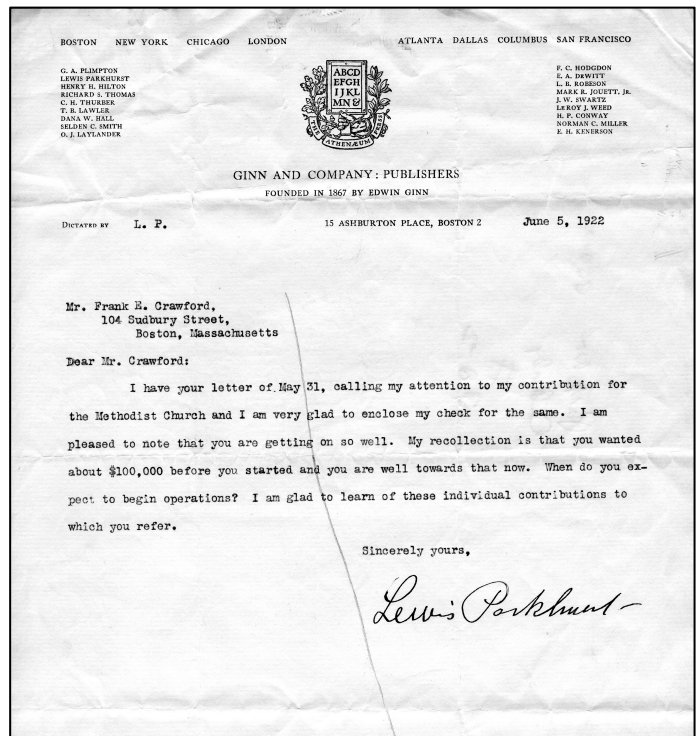
The Planning Committee was not making much progress in 1921. The old church property had been sold to New England Laundries the year before and services were being held at Waterfield Hall at the corner of Church and Waterfield Streets. It was not convenient and the sooner they could leave the better. On October 1921 the Planning Committee decided to retain the Boston architectural firm of Hutchins & French, both men being Winchester residents. (They made generous contributions to the building fund.)



Hutchins & French 1st floor drawing

There is a back-story that I discovered among a large folder containing documents, letters, tallies, drawings and such. There was an undated, unsigned four page handwritten letter to an unnamed individual. He asked rhetorically, “why are we building a new church? It isn’t because we are turning people away, but because Methodism is at a standstill in Winchester. Good, strong Methodists who have prospered are moving out of Boston and they are used to large churches. They look at our building once and then go to the Congregational Church or other churches.” He ventures there are over thirty Methodist families in the Winchester Congregational Church today. (Most likely this was written about 1920.) He goes on to say that to prevent our going out of business, we decided to attempt to build.

In May 1922 the Trustees appointed the Building Committee, which included John N. Mason (son of Lucinda and John Mason), Frank E. Crawford, Robert W. and Robert M. Armstrong (father and son), Norman V. Osborne (who was in charge of construction), plus four other members. The task now was to raise money for the construction. To date \$23,000 was realized from the sale of the old church and the bonus for leaving early. There was a plan to seek pledges that would extend three years, beginning June 1922 to June 1924. When the trustee realized that the members had pledged all they could afford, it was decided to seek pledges from their friends in town. The list reads like a who’s who of Winchester, businessmen and civic-minded, among them Lewis Parkhurst, Preston Pond, Jere Downs, David Skillings, and William Beggs. As often occurs, the ladies of the church stepped up and the Ladies Aid Society pledged \$5,000.



Lewis Parkhurst's letter to the Building Committee.

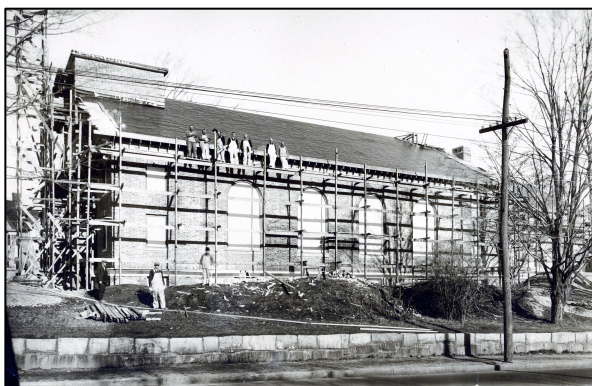
In the meantime, the Building Committee was shocked when the construction bids came in so high. They decided to eliminate a community hall that was to have a bowling alley, no less. In the end, they rejected all the bids and decided to construct the building themselves. The firm of Osborne & Crouch were to be in charge of the work and were to begin construction as soon as possible. Norman Valentine Osborne (Feb. 14, 1880-1970) was received into the church in 1908. Leon Edward Crouch (1874-1952) was also a member of the church.

The cornerstone was laid October 7, 1923 (*see right*). The contents included a Bible, a Methodist hymnal, an issue of The Winchester Star, the 127th session of the New England Conference, pictures and a silver dime that had belonged to John D. Rockefeller.

The cornerstone from the old church was relocated to Dix Street and can be found to the left of the entrance off the parking lot (*see right*). A quartet from Ives' Band of Boston performed at the service of the cornerstone laying and the hymns "Christ is Made the Sure Foundation" and "Christ the Head and Cornerstone" were sung. Pastors from all the churches in town took part in the service.

Funds were running low in the winter of 1923, so it was decided to stop construction until the spring of 1924. Services continued to be held in Waterfield Hall until the fall of 1924. It was in April 1924 that the first mortgage was placed for \$25,000 payable in three years, and the parsonage on Myrtle St. was sold. (It no longer stands.) Things were moving quickly. In June 1924 Pattee's brick barn/garage (built about 1875) was remodeled to be the new parsonage and was ready for occupancy by the fall of 1925. Some of our pastors reported seeing remnants of hay in the basement. In 2006, Amy Bruch (wife of then pastor Eric Dupee) found two pitchforks in the basement and they now decorate one of the bedrooms.

The first service was held September 14, 1924, in an unfinished social hall and rooms in the rear of the building.



Church under construction, circa 1923

Fundraising was halted in early 1926, "to give our people a chance to recover from the severe financial sacrifices that they had been making over a period of years." (Report of the secretary of the Planning Committee, Edward I. Taylor.) Construction on the auditorium was to be completed, but funds were needed to do that. Again, the ladies came through and a parish supper was held and nearly \$10,000 in pledges was brought in. They also assumed the payment of the interest and as much as possible on the principal of the mortgage. In his report, Taylor acknowledged the untiring efforts of the chairman Frank E. Crawford, the unity of the congregation, and the patience of the ministers and that despite many periods of discouragement, never a vote taken which was not unanimous.

If one is interested, there exists an itemized list of prices paid for each piece of construction. The total cost of which was \$148,399.03. At the November 1927 Board of Trustees meeting it was said that the Society was in position to pay \$10,000 toward the mortgage of \$40,000 and that Mr. Crawford planned to pay the entire remaining \$30,000 during a stated period of time with the proviso that the church be named for his wife, i.e. Crawford Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church of Winchester. However, no action was taken.

During the early months of 1928, payments totaling \$10,000 were made on the mortgage, reducing the indebtedness to \$30,000. Then on Easter Sunday April 8, the pastor electrified the congregation at the morning service by announcing that he had that morning received from Mr. Crawford an Easter offering in the sum of \$15,000. The next day the Fourth Quarterly Conference held a meeting and accepted Crawford's donation of \$30,000 and the name of the church was changed.

The service of Dedication was held Sunday October 10, 1926, with Pastor H.W. Hook presiding. The Hymn of Dedication was composed by member Myrtie Low Hodge and sung to the tune of Duke Street, which was composed by John W. Hatton (1710-1793). (Duke Street was where he lived in Lancashire, England. The hymn with words by Isaac Watts, Jesus Shall Reign, may be familiar.) The Winchester Star reported the cornerstone service on its front page October 12th. Nearly 1,000 people were in attendance. It said the copper box from the 1875 cornerstone was opened and found were assorted church records, a copy of The Woburn Journal and other religious papers and documents – all well preserved. "Among those present was Anne Dodd, aged 77, the oldest member of the church. She was presented to Bishop Edwin Hughes who congratulated her on her religious zeal and seeming good health at her advance age."

The church's new organ, Tellers-Kent, was the gift of Mrs. George E. [Bertha] Henry and the Trustees of George's estate. The grand sum of \$25,000 included installation. It had 2,313 speaking pipes and a four-manual console. There were Great, Choir, Swell and Pedal Organs. The Echo Organ and Chimes were located in the room over the entrance portico; the Harp attachment was in the Choir Organ.

The steeple bell was cast by the well-known Boston firm Henry N. Hooper & Co. in 1844 for the Bowdoin Sq. Baptist Tabernacle, which was founded in 1840. It was purchased from Swift-McNutt Co. who had demolished the tabernacle in 1924. It cost \$600 for the bell and \$145 for its installation. It is 47" high and ranges from 32" to 61" at its base. It weights 4,000 lbs. and the steel support with the wheel weighs 1,500 lbs. It was said its clear, rich tone due to its long period of use, is difficult to duplicate in newer bells. The bell was given as a memorial by the children and grandchildren of John C. and Lucinda Mason.