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

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### Who Were the Crawfords?

*Ragnhild M. Bairnsfather, June 2021*

Frank Ellis Crawford was born May 11, 1875 in Franklin, Pennsylvania. He married Lucy Winnifred Middleton in 1896 in Emlenton, Pennsylvania. She was born November 4, 1874 in Emlenton. They had one child, Georgiana Bell, who was born April 14, 1900 in Emlenton. The Crawfords moved to Winchester in 1910 and resided at 7 Wildwood, which today is within walking distance of the Methodist Church.

Frank invented the banker's electric protective system and from his WWI draft registration card of 1918 (he was 43), we learn he was manager and treasurer of Bankers Electric Protective Association in Boston. When he retired from his company, he became financial manager of Winchester Hospital and successfully led them out of financial difficulties. He was also active in the community. He was a stockholder of the Winchester Savings Bank and a National Bank director from 1928 to 1962. He served as president of the Winchester Home for the Aged (today the site of Mt. Vernon House) and of the Winchester Historical Society. He was a life member of the William Parkman Lodge of the Masons in Winchester, and held memberships in the Mystic Valley Lodge where he was a charter member, and in the Woburn Royal Arch Chapter and the Aleppo Temple.

Winnifred was very active in affairs of the church, was a member of the town's Fortnightly Club, and served in the Auxiliary of Morgan Memorial.

While Frank Crawford's generous donations in 1928 and 1929 allowed the mortgage to be paid off with the request the church be named Crawford Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church in memory of his wife, Winnifred was also generous. A room on the first floor of the newly completed building in 1924 had a fireplace and was designated as the Ladies Parlor. Winnifred was an active member of the Ladies Aid Society and she selected and paid for the furnishings of the room. A dedication ceremony was held December 11, 1924. The Winchester Star reported that Mrs. Crawford invited the ladies of the church to a luncheon and some sixty-five women enjoyed her hospitality. Messages of congratulations were read, recitations were given, a group of songs were presented, and piano playing was enjoyed. Mrs. Crawford then presented the keys to the room to the president of the Ladies Aid Society. It was less than a year after the dedication that Winnifred died on October 21, 1925, at age 50. She was a forward-thinking woman for in her will she established a fund of \$5,000 that was to be held by the Trustees for the upkeep and maintenance of the room. In 1928 a friend of Winnifred's living in NY state presented to the Ladies Aid Society a photograph of Winnifred as a young woman to be hung in the parlor. On Frank Crawford's 85th birthday May 11, 1960, the Trustees held a reception to honor his service to the church and presented him with his portrait that hangs in what is now called the Crawford Room. Frank died September 28, 1967 in Lynnfield, at the age of 92. He and Winnifred are buried in Emlenton, Pennsylvania.

An historical note: In 1939 there occurred the union of Methodist Episcopal Churches North and South and Methodist Protestant Church. Our church became Crawford Memorial Methodist Church of Winchester. In 1968 it became Crawford Memorial United Methodist Church when the Evangelical United Brethren Church and the Methodist Church united. In the 1940s the Winchester Star's weekly listing of churches with their programs for that week, Crawford Church billed itself as "The Friendly Church at the Fork of the Road."

Over the years, the Crawford Room has undergone a number of redecorations that reflect changing tastes and functions; the most recent one was in 2011. Wallpaper was removed and paint applied, new furniture in a different arrangement, a large wall-mounted screen TV installed, and bookcases now on the wall opposite the Crawford portraits. The kitchen has seen heavy use, although the silver tea service and original china no longer graces a table.



Portraits of Frank and Winifred Crawford, as they hang in the Crawford Room

In 1924 the large hall (called Osborne Hall) with a kitchen on the lower floor (the space most recently used by the United Methodist Nursery School) was being used for services, Sunday School classes, and social functions.



1956 Sunday School Class taught by Harry Emmons who - in this photo - is shown seated, far right. Janet Herman is a student in the class... can you find her?

It was an important Sunday March 31, 1929 when the mortgage was burned prior to Bishop William F. Anderson's sermon. The program bulletin does not do justice to what happened, as reported in the Winchester Star. "The Rev. Hiram Hook, pastor of the church, held a tray on which rested the mortgage. Just as Robert W. Armstrong, treasurer of the trustees, applied the match the clang! clang! of bells and the wails of fire apparatus sirens were heard. 'I hope no one has called the fire department,' remarked the pastor, 'for this is one time that we want the fire to burn to the end.' The paper burned merrily while the firemen extinguished a grass fire nearby."

As the church was growing, a planning committee was appointed in 1956 to develop plans for more and larger classrooms, a room for youth fellowship, and a social hall with a stage and large kitchen. The architect, Evander French of Winchester, was selected and the contractor was Robert W. Custance, who was directed to keep the cost at \$150,000. In the fall of 1956, ground was broken for the new wing. The lower floor was classrooms with folding walls to separate rooms by age group. Children first met in their rooms and after classes ended, they gathered in one of two assembly halls where junior and intermediate classes each had their own worship service to allow for "lively discussions and sermonettes." Steve Wilson recalls how proud and excited he and the children were to have their own room. Steve said the nursery was on the second floor of the original building where the choir rehearsal room is now. In the middle of the nursery room was a sandbox – the choir rehearsed in the other part of the room.

At the same time, the main building was renovated and the heating system was changed from coal to oil. The ladies of the church were adamant an electric dishwasher was essential. Norman Stafford helped obtain a rebuilt dishwasher and the ladies paid for the installation and steel counter trays. Consecration of the new wing and social hall was at the Sunday service October 20, 1957. Bishop John Wesley Lord preached the sermon,

Evander French (the architect) and the builder Robert W. Custance participated in the service, as did Ralph Hatch, who was Chairman of both the Board of Trustees and the Building Committee. The benediction was given by former pastor Rev. Alliston Gifford (1918-1925) for whom the hall was later named. The coffee hour following that was well attended. The celebration climaxed with a banquet on Friday October 25<sup>th</sup>.



Coffee Hour in the social hall following the consecration of the new wing October 20, 1957.

The church had another mortgage burning ceremony. This one was April 6, 1961 on the occasion of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the church's founding. The *Winchester Star* (see photo and excerpt below) reported Bishop James K. Mathews will lead the congregation in a ritual of the dedication of the now debt-free church and that no Methodist Church property may be dedicated until it is free of debt. It noted the new wing was built and paid for within some 4½ years at a cost of over \$150,000. It was, to be precise, \$152,323.



1960 Couples Club Dinner in Gifford Hall  
Frank Crawford is pictured at the table in the lower right corner,  
seated between Herman and Doris Erikson

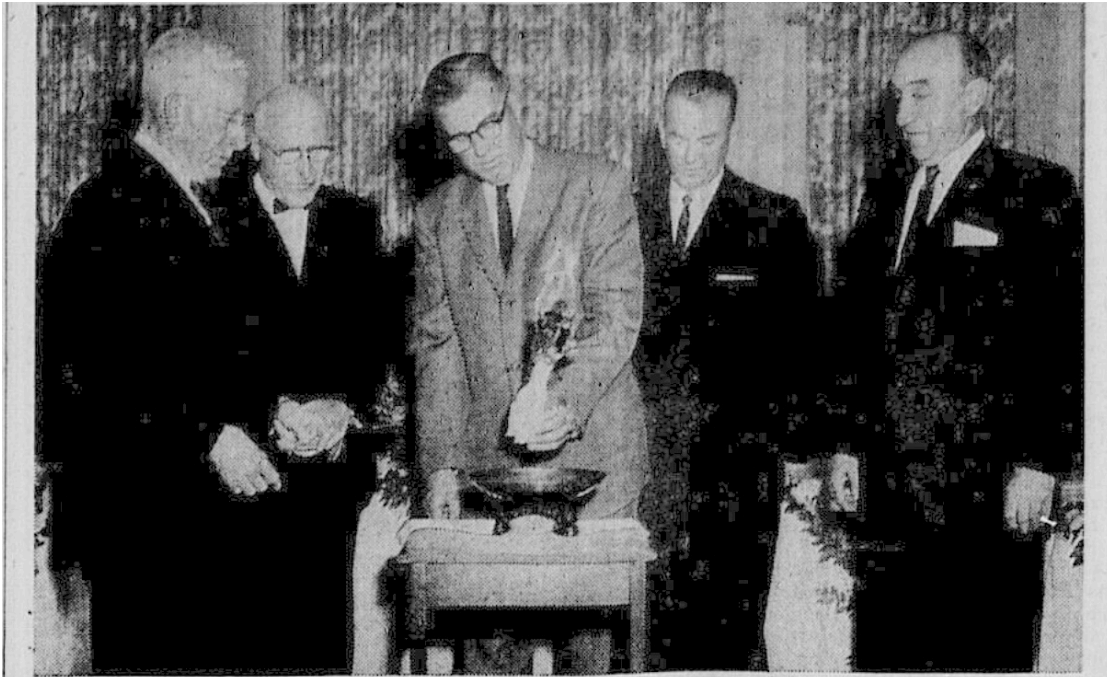


Photo by Ryerson

**A HEARTWARMING BLAZE.** The mortgage on the new parish house and other property of the Crawford Memorial Church goes up in smoke at the 90th anniversary celebration of the church last Friday in the parish hall. Watching the mortgage crumble are, left to right, Frank E. Crawford, trustee emeritus and church benefactor, Superintendent Willard C. Arnold of the Lynn district of the Methodist Church; Lester R. Godwin, president of the Crawford Church trustees; Rev. John Snook, Jr., pastor of the Old South Methodist Church, Reading; and Rev. H. Newton Clay, present pastor of the church.