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

In Their Own Words

Ragnhild M. Bairnsfather, November 2021

What follows are the memories of some members of Crawford, some of whom joined as early as 1914 and others as recently as the 1940s. Some were written down and some were captured on tape. The only word-for-word transcription of a taped interview is that of Eva Larson and Olive Wilkins.

Norman Osborne (1880-1970), during a visit to the church school in 1968

With the 100th anniversary of the Winchester Methodist Church just two years away in 1971, we asked Mr. Osborne to tell us his part in building it. He began by saying he was working on building for Mr. Armstrong (Robert W.) in West Roxbury. He wanted me to go down Maine to build a cottage there. After I got through, he said, "You're going back to Winchester to build a church." I didn't think much about it at the time. They got the plans all ready, got two or three contractors and the bids were so high. They called me and asked if I'd take hold of it and I said yes. I had about twenty-five men at that time working for me and I put them all in here and didn't charge a cent. I did all this work. I supervised everything and all I got was a day's pay. I got a commission on all my material, the bricks, lumber and everything. So all in all, I helped them quite a little. It took a year to build the church.

The parsonage was a barn where they (the Pattee family) kept the carriages and underneath is where they washed the carriages. The only thing I built was the sun porch and the garage underneath. Where the front door is now is where they washed the carriages; the rear door was where the carriages aired in the sun.

Eva Larson (1900-1989) and Olive Wilkins (1905-1993), interviewed in 1981

Eva: We had pew number 21 at the old church (on Mt. Vernon St.) We had to pay for it. And we went in on the right-hand side of the church, the side aisle, and it was about six or seven pews down. There were steps going up (to the sanctuary) from the vestibule and over in the left-hand corner was where the quartet sang. On the right-hand side was a door going down to a big hall and the kitchen. A sliding door divided the (downstairs) room where Sunday school classes were held with no separation between the classes. It was in that big room that we had Epworth League and Wednesday night prayer meetings. There were three or four of the old people that used to come down to prayer meeting and get up and give witness. They would be saying, "You must be holy sanctified before you enter the house of God." And another would say, "Yes, you must be holy sanctified." And it would get going so that it was louder and louder, HOLY SANCTIFIED!" And we (young people) used to sit there and laugh.

Olive: My grandfather (John Seller) used to pray on and on. Different people would say, "Amen!" and try to interrupt him, but he'd go on and on – he'd never stop. I didn't go to prayer meetings very often. They were too long.

Olive: At one time the church didn't allow dancing. We wanted to dance so got a jukebox from a restaurant to play records. We had to go through the official board so we could have it in the social hall downstairs. Some people had a hemorrhage. Of course, card playing in the church is quite recent. I was never allowed to play cards.

My father (Herbert Seller) was superintendent of the Sunday school. He was also on the official board and on the finance committee. He was very active. My mother was active in the women's groups.

Eva & Olive: Epworth League was a big group – the young people didn't have anything else to do – no TVs or radios, except my (Olive's) brother had a crystal set we used. We had a real religious meeting like a prayer meeting at night. Church was at 10 o'clock and wasn't over until a quarter 'til 12, then Sunday school class until 1. Then we'd go home and have our dinner and then we were back around 5 for Epworth League. Olive: I got a pin for perfect church attendance for twenty-five years.

Olive: One Sunday it was very windy and the door had slammed shut. This was at the old church and we were sitting in the next to the last pew. During the prayer, Mr. Bancroft banged and banged on the door and finally they let him in. He clumped his way up to the front seat because he was hard of hearing. He shouted, "The very idea of locking the Methodist Church during a service!" Poor Mr. Gifford was still praying. I was so embarrassed.

Eva: There was a campaign to raise money to build the present church. Some people would go "up the hill" (Myopia and Swan) and call on Jere Downs, the Schraffts and others to get donations for specific things like pews or shingles for the roof. Money for the organ was given by the man who lived where the Community Music School is now. (George Henry). He wasn't even a Methodist and he gave \$25,000.

Harold (1897-1982) and Gertrude (1897-1985) Bergquist, interviewed in 1981

Harold: Rev. Makepeace asked me to teach and I told him I haven't studied the Bible much. He said that's all right. You travel and have things they'd be interested in. I traveled all the New England states in my work. There was a lot of printed material for teaching and I used it because it was very good.

I taught Sunday school for twenty-four years – grades 5 and 6 - sometimes all boys, sometimes boys and girls. I liked teaching the girls; they were a little more on the (good) behavior side. Gertrude: he always had some candy for the children, too. Class size varied from six to twelve.

Harold: There was a Men's Club that had meetings and speakers. Horace Ford who had the ice cream place in town. He was a big-league baseball player. Governor (John) Volpe spoke one time. (Both were Winchester residents.)

Gertrude: We joined in 1943. Years ago the women had different neighborhood groups and met in our homes in the afternoons. There were maybe eight or ten groups. The Women's Society would meet in the ladies' parlor. We had an auction one afternoon and raised \$500. All our church activities were down in the social hall. We put on some good suppers down there where the nursery school is now. There were turkey suppers and May 1st breakfasts.

Unfortunately, we had to stop the breakfasts because expenses were too high. People paid 25-50 cents for a good breakfast. The women put them on. Harold: the men sometimes cooked. Gertrude: I don't remember the men doing any cooking. Harold: Oh, we mashed the potatoes and cut the turkey.

Vincent Clarke (1897-1983), recorded in 1983

In 1920 I looked over all the places to live in this area and Winchester appealed to me. I was a Methodist so I went to the little wooden church across from the Police and Fire Station. It was very simple, very ordinary and the congregation was friendly. We (the church) bought the property in 1920 where the Pattee estate was located, a lovely old, palatial Victorian house with stable on a desirable lot. Norman Osborne, a fine gentleman and fine carpenter and highly regarded was selected to build the church. We held our services in Waterfield Hall (at the corner of Waterfield and Church Streets) for four years. It was extremely uncomfortable – old wooden chairs you'd almost curse them as you sat in them Sunday after Sunday. But we knew we were going to have something better later on. The Pattee estate was being torn down, brick by brick, cleaned and washed and those that were good were used in the new church. In 1924 we moved into the basement of the new church – a tremendous improvement over Waterfield Hall with its harsh, wooden seats.

We are indebted to Frank Crawford, a rare individual who seemed to enjoy asking for money whether it was five, twenty-five, five hundred or five thousand. It was the same degree of appreciation – he would bubble all over in gratitude. He went all over town asking everyone, friends and anyone who had money, who had the privilege of donating. The Ladies Aid worked hard raising money in every conceivable way – fairs, church suppers, pageants, plays. Some were getting weary of the constant struggle to raise money. Then one Sunday in January 1929 Frank Crawford came to church and said he had an announcement to make. He would pay the mortgage if the church were to be named Crawford Memorial after his wife. Most were very happy to accept the offer though some were not happy and a few left the church. Then all of a sudden there was no need to raise money anymore. We are getting along beautifully, enough to meet current expenses and things perhaps slipped up because of that. On the other hand, things come back and we carry on for many, many years.

Ben Herrmann (1910-1998), interviewed in 1986.

I was asked by Rev. Jack Snook to take on financial secretary temporarily until they got somebody else. Well, they never did. That was in 1948 and I'm still doing it. I collected all the money and turned it over to the treasurer to keep things honest. I couldn't write checks. In 1948, 80% of the money taken in was cash - \$200-250 a week. Checks were for five or ten dollars. I rolled the silver coins. Today (1986) it's \$1,000 all in checks and \$100 of that is mostly bills, only one or two dollars in change. I'm amazed at the continuing generosity of the people.

Some people resented Frank Crawford, but you had to understand him. He was a delightful chap, a great talker. He would tell interesting stories and was a good fundraiser. He also used his own money. He was also a supporter of the Winchester Hospital. In 1954 or so we met in the sanctuary to decide whether to build a social hall. The plans were there, but we just couldn't afford it. Lots of discussion, but nobody would say, "Shall we do it?" Finally, Alanzo Nicholas, who was in his 80s and his wife and children had died, got up and said, "We can't just sit here all night. This place has to be built." He made the motion to build and it was seconded. Frank played a part in that. He had vision and was a mover and got things done. He was very generous. If he went to the fair, he'd spend two or three hundred dollars. I don't know how he did it, but if he liked the lady who was chairman, we benefitted.

Ruby B. White (1914-2012), excerpts from "Memories of Seventy-five Years in the Methodist Church," 1998

We sold the old church (on Mt. Vernon St.) to the Winchester Laundry and we were now quartered in Waterfield Hall, which we rented for \$10 a Sunday. It was on the second floor and many a turkey the churchwomen cooked and lugged up the stairs in clothes baskets along with food, dishes and such. This was done to raise money for our new church – these dinners were renowned.

I was known as the wild one. I tore around doing my own thing. No good will come of her they said and here I am still doing my own thing. I was expected to attend Sunday school, Epworth League, prayer meetings, and after 16 years of age we could do as we pleased. I continue to sing in the choir, teach Sunday school, preside over the Ladies Aid, run the Candlelight Group (one of the ladies' circles), start the Forty Group, and follow in my mother's footsteps running the kitchen and making a lot of revenue for the church. I spent all my summers at Asbury Grove where my family bought the big old Swampscott Church house as our summer home. Church attendance, prayer meetings and big revival camp meeting week were an integral part of my growing up. My Methodist upbringing has helped me through thick and thin and this church and Asbury Grove have been a big part of it.

Marion F. Hatch (1911-2002), she wrote in 1998

My mother, Lillian O. (Snow) Hatch was a charter member of the Winchester Methodist Church and very proud and supportive, so just about as soon as one of the Hatch kids could walk, he or she started Sunday school. My brother, Lefty, and I were each given a nickel for the collection, but it was nearly impossible for Lefty to get past Randall's, the confectionary store. I was afraid God would punish me if I didn't put His nickel in the collection plate. I always had Lefty's sin to hold over his head and would tell him, "You do as I say or I'll tell."

My memories of Sunday school are dim except for the Christmas tree, parties and picnics. I do remember Ruby (Brown) White and I were in the same class. Ruby cut up in class and how I admired her! (*Editor's note: Marion and Ruby both joined the church on 4/1/23.*)

For some years, Winchester and Stoneham joined Hare and Hound Chase on Thanksgiving morning through the Middlesex Fells. We started off at daybreak, as we had to finish in time to attend the football games. Usually we were cold, hungry and tired and sometimes covered with snow, but we thought it was FUN. I recall a Saturday night roller skating party in the social hall when we raised so much dust from the cement floor that this was never repeated. We spent hours washing dust off every surface in the hall and the kitchen. We discovered grape juice in the refrigerator, which washed the dust from our throats. Communion was canceled next morning.

It was at an Epworth League weeklong "Institute" at Lasell Seminary (now University) in Auburndale that I met "Newt" Clay who was in charge of recreation, in addition to teaching classes. Every morning before breakfast, he led us in exercises outdoors followed by a run around the block. At Lasell we got ideas for our local groups and solutions

for some of our personal problems. I believe that the leadership qualities and experience I gained through Epworth League were responsible for my later success in administrative positions I held in the business world.

Nancy Griffiths Wilde (1930-2007), she wrote in 1998

I remember picnics at Salem Willows Park. I will always remember the big, airy sunny nursery (now the church offices and choir rehearsal room) with a huge sandbox table with beautiful white sand. And suddenly, I was in Mr. (Harold) Berquist's class and memorizing books of the Bible. Norma, his wife, discovered I couldn't sing on key, so she would sit behind me in church and help keep me on key!

Ray Chase (1917-2017), he wrote in 1998

When I first arrived at Crawford Church in 1945, I became church school superintendent when Rev. Harris Heverly asked me to try it. It lasted ten years, mostly with Jack Snook. I have been church auditor for some 40 years. (He also was treasurer for the Nursery School for fifteen years and held other positions. Eunice was church secretary for fifteen years.) What has made Crawford so great during our years here has been its ability to maintain a solid position in the community as a real meaningful church family, with the doors always open to all who wished to become part of it!

Harry Emmons (1917-), interviewed in 1998 & 2001

When we came to Winchester in 1948, we called the Methodist Church to see if they had a Sunday school for our son, Bob. About ten minutes later some young fellow came prancing across our snowy lawn with his coat flying in all directions and within fifteen minutes of conversation, we were hooked. Jack Snook had just started at Crawford. He was there from 1948 to 1958. He was most personable and full of humor. In his final sermon he said he was so old he doesn't even buy green bananas.

When I think back of my early days here, I remember many people, but one especially comes to mind. He was Norman Osborn, who built this church. He was a true Christian gentleman. He told me he refused to do business with the State because the politician he knew were so crooked, he wouldn't deal with them. At one time there were six hundred members of the church and thirty or forty members in the Couples Club, which was formed when Snook was minister. It was very active and the center of the church. We made life-long friends with members of the Couple Club.

I like to joke that I held every position except pastor – lay leader, staff parish, nominating, administrative council and trustees.

Doris Emmons (1921-1997), writing on the ministries from 1948-1978

Rev. John Snook 1948-1958: In the Easter season of 1953 he was sent by the Chief of Chaplains of the US Air Force to preach at air bases in Libya and Morocco. In the fall of 1953 he went to the Holy Land through a Palestine scholarship. He covered 14,000 miles and the church enjoyed his 300 slide show from time to time. During his ten years, some 500 new members joined, Sunday school attendance quadrupled, total income in 1957 increased over 500%, the new social hall was built and renovations were made to the parsonage and church.

Rev. H. Newton Clay 1959-1968: In 1961 the 90th anniversary was observed during which the mortgage on the new hall was burned. Once again we are debt free. June 1964 Gifford Hall was formally dedicated in honor of Rev. Allison B. Gifford, pastor from 1918 to 1925, who was in attendance. Theos and Dorothy Thompson made a gift of a crèche with ten figures hand carved of Olive wood from the Holy Land. During 1962 the circular driveway in front of the church was enlarged and relocated. The boulder in front was moved nearer the street and a new copper plate was put in place, eliminating "Episcopal," which had been dropped some time ago. A new choir room was made available when a partition was removed in the kindergarten room on the second floor. March 1964 all Winchester churches united in an inter-faith meeting at the high school where on display were the paintings given to the churches by the Belgian town of Hemroulle. Many of the Protestant churches in town had participated for years in Lenten service and summer services, but a milestone was reached (in 1966) when our Catholic friends joined in a Thanksgiving morning service held in the Baptist Church.

Rev. Allen Broyles, Ph.D. 1968-1970: A task was formed to study the modification of the Methodist church organization following the merger of the Methodist Church with the Evangelical United Brethren. There would now be an Administrative Board and a Council of Ministries. During Broyles' service, we were made aware of God's call to each of us according to our interests and talents – racially integrated housing in Winchester, seeking peace in Vietnam, to teach Sunday school, to administer to the lonely and elderly... these were years of great social concerns and Dr. Broyles understood them. A weekday nursery school was organized and was led by Bernice Stevens for many years. Broyles left to pursue academic interests.

Rev. Dean Benedict 1970-1974: In 1971 the big event was the centennial banquet. The Couples Club became Pairs and Spares. That fall there was a three-day Lay Witness Mission with people coming from Delaware and Maryland. They stayed in member's homes and dinners were served at the church. The newly formed Sharing Group resulted from the Lay Witness Mission. It met in member's homes. In 1973-74 a Men's Club was organized.

In reading past history and records, I would be remiss if I didn't note the years of service given to our church by Raymond Chase who served as Sunday school superintendent for a time and as auditor of the church dealing with money since 1956, and as treasurer of the Methodist Nursery School since 1970. This is a real record of devotion. In this year, 1996, he matches Adolph (Ben) Herrmann's record of forty years of service as financial secretary.

Rev. Leon Hatch 1974-1978: 1976 was a big year - the Men's Club painted Gifford Hall; the United Methodist Women added lovely drapes to the widows. The Junior and Senior Groups prepared and served breakfast before church once a month. The Olivers and the Parrys set the tone for the two groups. Eloise Kadesch prepared and directed the Thanksgiving service, which was patterned after one held two hundred years ago. It was filmed by two Boston TV stations and shown on the evening news. 1976 was our third year for Hanging of the Greens. United Methodist Women served luncheons for senior citizens once a month and held a pie and mitten sale.

During the summer of 1977 Rev. Hatch and Rev. John Chilton from Hull, England exchanged churches. Hatch had several churches to serve, while Chilton's duties were less since Union services were held in the summer. Both families said it was a wonderful experience.

Ruth Mae Bunzel (1926-2020), interviewed 2002

I recall the suppers that were held in the lower level to raise money for the addition. My father (Andrew Morrow) brought in all the meat from Boston for a huge roast beef dinner put on by the Couples Club. We cooked it downstairs in the kitchen - today it would be considered antique. Jack and Phyllis (Rev. & Mrs. Snook) pitched in and helped in the kitchen - my father and Jack carved away. We had some wonderful times. Most of the fund raising was done by the Women's Society and the Couples Club.

Remembering people: Vincent Clarke was an attorney, intelligent, soft-spoken and he did a lot for our church. Rev. Makepiece was full of vitality and his wife, Jean, was a great asset to him and very much into dramatics. Jack Snook was very good looking with his red hair. Our door was always open to Jack. He was like a member of the family. He was very personable, vivacious, sincere and caring; Pastor John Taylor is like that, too.