

COMMUNITY CHURCH OF PEPPERELL
Commemorating 100 Years
Historical Moment

Summary of Historical Documents Displayed at the Church

Today's 100th Anniversary Moment provides a brief summary of the many historical documents and other items on display around the church. There are no less than 52 items— from historical sermons, to photographs, to church documents, to drawings and paintings, and even a sword. A detailed inventory of all these items was prepared in 2005 by Nell Harney – copies of that inventory are available in the secretary's office. Additionally, detailed descriptions are provided on the back of most of the framed materials. We will be compiling that information so that everyone can read it without needing to take the items down off the walls.

But so much for the generalities – let's discuss a few items in more detail:

My personal favorites are the oldest historical documents, some of which date back to the Revolutionary War era. This includes original copies of sermons and bulletins from the 1760's, the oldest of which is a bulletin for "A Thanksgiving Sermon" preached by Rev. Emerson on July 24, 1766, titled "On the Account of the Repeal of the Stamp Act". You may remember that Rev. Emerson was the first minister of the First Parish Church formed in the 1740's. Then there are two letters to Rev. Babbidge including one from 1832 calling him to be the first pastor of the Unitarian church, a post he would keep for more than 50 years.

There are also numerous framed original documents related to various facets of the church's internal operations. For instance, there are copies of agreements where a parishioner rented, or even purchased, a pew in the church. One from 1807 was for \$22.50 – worth nearly \$500 in today's dollars. Most interesting is the framed Constitution and Rules of Government from the Evangelical Congregation Society from 1832 – the year that church was established. And we've recently located the original church bylaws signed on September 16, 1919 by 61 church members, documenting the official formation of our present church nearly 100 years ago.

And if old photos, drawings, and paintings are your passion, there are many for you to review. The oldest is a pencil sketch of the First Congregational Church built in 1832. Then there is a copy of a daguerreotype of Rev. Babbidge from 1845. There are also a number of historical photos of our present church building, and former church buildings, including a quite somber photo of the Unitarian Church as it burned to the ground in 1917. Two maps of Pepperell dating from 1844 and 1886 are of interest to the amateur cartographers in the group. And finally there are framed watercolors from the 1950's painted by commercial artist Bernard Shattuck.

And did I mention a sword? Rev. Babbidge's Masonic sword, dating to the mid-1800's, hangs on the wall in the Lydia Robbins history room. Feel free to wander through the halls and rooms of the church to enjoy this veritable historical museum. Or you can see them as part of organized tours of the church and parish house during our 100th Anniversary Open House on September 15.

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