



R.I. Roots

Volume 4
Number 3

Fall 1978

Published by The Rhode Island Genealogical Society

Early Seventh-Day Baptists in Rhode Island

by

Melinda and Shirley Greene

When Stephen Mumford arrived at Newport, Rhode Island in 1664, he was already a believer in the Seventh-Day Church. Since there was no church of that faith in the Colonies at that time, Mumford joined the First Baptist Church of Newport. He had been affiliated with the Bell Lane Seventh-Day Baptist Church in London. During the next few years, a number of the members of that church embraced his views concerning the Sabbath and the perpetuity of the Ten Commandments. Prominent among these was Tacy Hubbard, wife of Samuel Hubbard. Samuel was born in England in 1610, and came to America and settled at Salem, Massachusetts in 1633. He removed from Salem to the valley of the Connecticut river with those who went thither, driving their cattle before them, in the autumn of 1635. The next spring he was married to a young lady who had also made the long journey, and faced the perils and endured the hardships of that awful winter, and whom we have come to know as Tacy Hubbard. She was the first person to embrace the Sabbath in America. After facing many perils and meeting no little persecution in the Connecticut valley, Mr. and Mrs. Hubbard moved to Newport, Rhode Island and were the first to commence observing the Sabbath in America. From them have descended the Hubbard's, Langworthys, Burdicks, all the Clarkes and some of the Rogerses. In reading Mr. Hubbard's Journal we find valuable references regarding the early history of both the Baptists and Seventh-Day Baptists in the Colonies.

We find it strange to realize that the history of the settlement of Southwestern Rhode Island and the founding of this church are parts of the struggle for religious liberty in which Rhode Island took precedence. Odd as it may seem, the American colonists fled from persecution in the old world to turn and become persecutors in the new settlement. Roger Williams in founding Rhode Island, once and for all had established a state where men could pursue their own thoughts and practice their own form of religious liberty. Rhode Island led the world in this regime, teaching that man can be happy and prosperous under such a tenet.

In the early days of 1666-1667 six other members of the First Baptist Church in Newport turned to keep the Seventh-Day. Their names were Mr. and Mrs. John Solmon, Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Wild, William Hiscox and Roger Baster. Together with Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Mumford and Mr. and Mrs. Hubbard and their daughter Rachel Langworthy, increased the number of believers to eleven. Then along came Mrs. John Maxson. Eld. John Crandall and his wife joined and he became the first minister to gather a group into any kind of order. He died three years after commencing this task and his wife who died earlier was the first Seventh-Day Baptist to die in America.

These people were all members in good standing in the First Baptist Church of Newport. They did not withdraw from this church until five years later. In 1668 we find that in Boston the Baptists were being persecuted and the Newport Church sent three members to Boston to defend the Baptists. Two of the men were held in high esteem by the First Baptist Church and were chosen as two of the three. These two were Mr. Hiscox and Mr. Hubbard. Though still in covenant relations with the parishoners of the Newport Church they were inclined to make their own views of the Sabbath felt. It is recorded in both Green's and Arnold's histories

of Rhode Island, that in 1667 they petitioned the general assembly to have market day changed from the Sabbath to Thursday. As a result the assembly changed both days to market days.

In 1669 friction transpired which finally made these members withdraw from the First Baptist Church and organize a church of their own. Elder Obadiah Holmes seems to have been the principal prosecutor along with Dr. John Clark, Mark Luker and Joseph Torey. On occasion they preached against the way those keeping the Sabbath behaved. Mr. Hiscox tried to dissuade the preachers but the conditions worsened and the Sabbath keeping group finally refused to take communion and were called before the church for reprimand and as a result the group separated from the First Baptist Church on December 18, 1671. On January 3, 1672, the Newport Seventh Day Baptist Church was organized. It being the first in America. There were seven in that church, William Hiscox Stephen Mumford, Samuel Hubbard and his wife Tacy, Roger Baster and Rachael Langworthy.

In the Seventh Day Baptist Memorial, Vol. 1, No. 1, is a description of the letters and advents that transpired between the members of the two churches. All of this time the Sabbath Observers had been trying to keep the Sabbath and remain in a church which kept Sunday as the true day. After the withdrawal the two churches remained on friendly terms. They were considered Baptists and were regularly asked to send delegates for the purposes of settling church troubles in Baptist Churches.

William Hiscox was chosen pastor of the new church, members of whom lived in Newport, Southwestern Rhode Island and Eastern Connecticut. This was the first church in America although not the first church of the Seventh-Day denomination. The first Christian church was a Seventh-Day Baptist church and John the Baptist was the first Seventh-Day Baptist. The church had no official name or articles of faith other than the Bible. The early records refer to "The Church of Rhode Island and Westerly." By "Rhode Island" they meant the island, not the whole colony, and by "Westerly", Hopkinton, Charlestown and Richmond. Eld. William Hiscox resided in Newport but the clerk of the church Joseph Clarke, resided in Hopkinton as did Eld. John Crandall and later Eld. William Gibson, who succeeded Eld. Hiscox.

Among the early names recorded in the early records are Hiscox, Langworthy, Clarke, Babcock, Rogers, Crandall, Maxson, Cottrell, West, Rhodes, James, Arnold, Ayres, Barker, Bliss, Collins, Fowler, Martin, Reed, Gibson, Ward, Lanphere, Millard, Weeden, Randall, Chase, Phillips, Barnes, Bennett, Stowe, Saunders and Button.

In 1680 the small congregation built a meeting house, which they worshiped in for one hundred seventy-five years. Following this the growth was rapid. In 1780 the church divided and became two churches. The members had reluctantly given their consent to separate. This was not because of any discord. This was because of the distance one had to travel in those days. They agreed that our aged brother, John Maxson, Senior be the person to lead them. He was seventy years of age full of wisdom. In April of the year following, Joseph Clarke, Jr. was ordained deacon, and in 1712 he was ordained to the office of elder and Joseph Maxson, Jr., was elected to the office of deacon. The office of deacon meant much in that day, as the deacon was authorized to baptize, and it was understood that he was to become

an elder in due time. From this date forward there was no time when the Church did not have two elders, and some times four or five.

We could only find one list that included the early members. During the six years which followed the organization of the church about forty members were added. Some members had died, some during the wars of King Philip, and others afterward, in a letter to a friend, Mr. Hubbard states that in 1678 there were thirty-seven members. Twenty in Newport, ten in New London, and seven in Westerly. The following names have been derived from the early records and is correct as far as I can ascertain. These members were on record before 1692.

William Hiscox
 Rachael Langworthy
 Jos. Clarke
 James Babcock
 Hope Cove
 Jonathan Rogers
 Jos. Crandall
 John Maxson, Sen.
 Dan'l Vernon
 Mrs. _____ Vernon
 Samuel Fox
 John Cottrell
 Mary Rogers
 Joseph Maxson
 Thomas West
 Peter Crandall
 Peter Button
 Bethiah Clarke
 Naomi Rogers
 Mr. _____ Henry
 Mrs. _____ Henry
 John Langworthy
 Elizabeth Langworthy
 James Rogers
 John Roads
 Jos. Emerie
 Ebenezer Moon
 Jos. James
 Peter West
 Elizabeth West
 Ruth Treby
 Sarah Arnold
 Edith Higgin
 Esther Ayres
 Elizabeth Emerie
 Hannah Ayres
 Sarah Rogers
 Hannah James

Peter Barker
 Mrs. _____ Barker
 Damaris Bliss
 Amy Collins
 James Fowler
 William Martin
 Jonathan Sabin
 Elizabeth Martin
 Freeloove Barker
 Hannah Reed
 Tasa Hubbard
 Mary Gibson
 Amy Ward
 George Lanphere
 Catherine Sabin
 Elizabeth Millard
 Rebecca Clarke
 Sarah Martin
 Rachel Weeden
 Thomas Burdick
 Robert Burdick
 John Randall
 Job Babcock
 Indian Japheth
 Elizabeth Chase
 Ruth Phillips
 Ellen Rogers
 Ruth West
 Esther Ayres, 2nd
 Elizabeth Barnes
 Margaret Bennett
 Hannah Stowe
 Elizabeth Randall
 Jane Babcock
 Ruth Burdick
 John Rogers
 Tobias Saunders
 Mary Saunders

Elder Hiscox served under Elder Crandall. He was pastor of this church for about thirty-three years and he was succeeded by Eld. William Gibson. Roger Baster, one of the founders of this church died 23 April 1687 and was buried at Newport. The church Clerk from 1692 to 1708 was Joseph Clarke, a nephew of Dr. John Clarke, of the First Baptist Church of Newport. Joseph Clarke, Jr., succeeded him and both became members of the Westerly Church in 1708. Their records were kept all in the same book, it did not occur to them to keep separate books for the two churches. Thus we have copied the list of members of the Newport church for July 25, 1708 under the leadership of William Gibson, Pastor.

Peter Barker	Hannah Read
John Read	Ester Ayres
Joseph Emerie	Elizabeth Emerie
Ebenezer Moon	Hannah Ayres
James Fowler	Philip Chase
Joseph James	Elizabeth Chase
Israel Barney	Ester Ayres, the younger
Peter West	Ruth Philips
William James	Ellen Rogers
William Martin	Sarah Rogers
Jonathan Sabin	Hannah James
Amy Collins	Catharine Sabin
Elizabeth West	Elizabeth Millard
Ruth Treby	Ruth West
Rachel Langworthy	Elizabeth Barney
Damaris Bliss	Margaret Bennett
Elizabeth Martin	Rebecca Clarke
Freelove Barker	Sarah Martin
Sarah Arnold	Hannah Stone
Mary Arnold	Rachel Weeden
Edith Higgins	

We know nothing of the age of Eld. Crandall. It is probable that he, being the son of Eld. John Crandall, one of the first founders, was quite aged when he died in 1737. The following is a list of members added to the church during the ministry of Eld. Crandall:-- (In Newport)

Ann Marshall	Baptized	the 15th	of 1st month	1718
Sarah Clark	Submitted to laying on	of hands	31st of 3rd mo.	1718
Will. Biniger	Baptized	28th	7th month	1718
Samuel Ritter	"	12th	2nd "	1718
Jonathan Murphy	"	12th	2nd "	1718
Joseph Barker, Jun.	"	13th	4th "	1719
Catherine Falaro	"	5th	9 "	"
Ann Fleet	"	21th	Feb	"
Mary Mott	"	4th	March	"
Edward Fitz Randolph	"	5th	"	"
Peggy Arnold (colored)	"	6th	"	"
Elizabeth Collins	"	July		1720
Sackfield West	"	26	June	"
Ruth West	"	19	March	"
Joseph Barney	"	17	June	1721
Ruth Clarke	"	27	July	"
Sarah Thomas	"	"	"	"

Constant Barney,	received	8th	Oct.	1721
Hannah Pierce	"	29th	Jan.	1723
Widow Reed	"		"	"
Joseph White	"	20th	July	"
Anna Alesworth	"	3rd	Jan.	1724
Anna Anderson	"	27th	April	1725
Joshua Davis,	received	20	June	"
Hannah Fowler	"	27	Oct	"
Rebecca Hakes	"	30	April	1726
Mehitable Telford	Baptized	10th	Jan	1727
Amy Higgins	"	"	"	"
Rachel Burdick	"	"	"	"
Abigail Crandall	"	21th	Dec	"

(to be continued)

- - - - -

(Early Seventh-Day Baptists in Rhode Island, cont. from Vol 4-No.3)

The church continued to grow from the humble meager beginning in 1666 when Ruth Burdick commenced to keep the Sabbath. Within four years after the separation from the Baptist Church, the Seventh-Day church numbered one hundred thirty. In 1718 it increased to one hundred and fifty. There doesn't seem to be any lists of members again until about 1768, then the church numbered two hundred seventy. By 1793, in the short space of twenty-five years, the members numbered four hundred thirty-two. On the 100th anniversary of the separation they had seven hundred and sixty-four members. The count continued to grow and by 1816 they counted nine hundred forty-seven members. Perhaps, it was the largest church sect in America at that particular time.

The church in Westerly continued to flourish as was variously known as the "Sabbatarian Church in Westerly", or "Westerly and Vicinity" or "in and about Westerly" ministering to the faithful of Eastern Connecticut and Western Rhode Island. After the division of Westerly and the church ended up in Hopkinton, RI and was then known as the Hopkinton Church. In 1819 a charter was secured from the state legislature in which the name was "The Seventh-Day Baptist Church of Christ at Hopkinton." Later other Seventh-Day churches were organized in Hopkinton and since they had been the first they were granted permission from the state legislature in 1880, to change their name to "The First Seventh-day Baptist Church of Hopkinton."

The decline of the Church in numbers was due in part to emigration of members to other areas. The members moved and started new churches where they settled. By 1745, Eld. William Davis had settled in New Jersey and had started the Shrewsbury Church. More Churches were formed at Burlington, Connecticut, and Berlin, NY. All started from the Newport church however. By 1784, the Waterford, Connecticut, Church had been formed. Members found it too far to travel to the Newport and Westerly Churches. Later, many members had migrated to Brookfield, NY, and in 1797 a church was organized there, and later at DeRuyter, NY, one was established in 1816. From here twenty-five members formed the First Verona Church in 1820. In 1827 another group left and formed the church in Little Genesee, NY.

To return to the Hopkinton Church, The members were so attached to the "Mother Church" they couldn't seem to face the fact that they would eventually have to do something. The number of members from the northern part of town lived ten miles from the church and they finally realized they would do better with a meeting house of their own. By 1770 they had decided to ask permission to build their own meeting house. Thus by 1771 it was started near Rockville and was finished before the summer of 1772. This was called the "Upper Meeting-House" and the other called the "Lower Meeting House".

Business meetings were held here as well as religious services, each church keeping its records and receiving and disciplining members living in its vicinity. It was considered as one church. What affected one affected the other. For three generations they continued this way, tied together because they could not bear to separate. About 1799, a new meeting place came into being about midway between the two. Until 1835 the three places continued to hold meetings. The Elders divided their time among

the three congregations keeping all problems solved and trying to minister to the needs of all of the members.

In 1835 the Hopkinton City Church became the "Second Hopkinton Church" and those at Rockville became the "Third Hopkinton Church". Thus the congregations were defined as to the areas. In 1837, the Church at Dunn's Corners was set off under the name of "First Westerly". The members of the church in Westerly reformed their Church as the "Paucatuck Church" in 1840. By 1843 a church was assembled in South Kingston. By the same means, too many members living too far away, had formed the nucleus of the Greenmanville, Connecticut Seventh-Day Church, known simply as the Greenmanville Church. A second church was formed at Niantic, RI (?) Probably a typographical error in the account. Niantic is in Connecticut and after research I have not found a Niantic, ever in RI.

Many other churches have been founded from these simple beginnings. The original Newport Church has been the mother of many. The early members of the church had firm characters and zeal and singleness of purpose. They had to separate from the Baptist because they could foresee the difficulties that lay before them. They were used to meeting on the seventh day (Saturday) in their homes. They celebrated the Lord's Supper at those meetings and were chastised for it. Few women had the enthusiasm as Mrs. Tacy Hubbard. While a resident of Connecticut, she had zealously pleaded for believer's baptism, and had been arrested twice. She was not afraid to speak up if the occasion demanded. She was always ready to defend her church principles.

The mere fact that their new Seventh-Day Baptist Church was formed within sixteen days after their withdrawal from the Baptist church, attested to the dedication of these early members.

Soon after their organization their influence began to be felt. It was a grief to the Baptists of the other churches. An earnest effort was made for reconciliation but the new "Seventh-Day Baptists" would not be turned aside. Their consciences were their guides. Even a year later, the Baptists were not ready to concede that a separate church had been formed. They wrote the Seventh-Day members a letter asking them to reconsider and to re-join the Baptist Church. The only thing that the letter did was ease the bitterness among the members and they remained good friends from then on even after going their separate ways to the church of their choice.

From time to time we will publish lists of members of this church and the dates. We have access to many records for this church. We cannot do any research on an individual basis however. The following list of members was for August 1808.

Jonathan Maxson
Arthur Flagg
Clarke Burdick
William B. Maxson
Jonathan Burdick
John D. Moranville
Arnold Bliss, Jr.
Daniel D. Moranville
Edward Allen

John Maxson
Arnold Bliss
Caleb Maxson
Jonathan Maxson
George Clarke
James Marriott
John L. Thurston
John O. Saunders
Adam Burdick

Scipio Tanner
George Bliss
Henry Bliven
Clarke Bliss
Henry Burdick
Daniel Burdick
John Maxson
Jeremiah Bliss
Henry Bliss

16.

Jedediah Clarke
Benjamin T. Bliss
Arthur Flagg, Jr.
Charles Burdick

George Clarke
Richard Closen
Sanford Hervy
William Bliss

Augustus Clarke
Cuffee Benson
Joseph Bliven

Females

Ann Cartright
Bathsheba Barker
Elizabeth Greenman
Elizabeth Larkin
Sarah C. Bliss
Violet Flagg
Margaret Crandall
Elizabeth Bliss
Nancy Thurston
Elizabeth Bliss
Catharine Saunders
Elizabeth E. Bliss
Sarah Allen
Rachael D. Moranville
Mary Alger
Keturah Clarke
Mary Burdick

Catharine Burdick
Elizabeth Peckham
Barbara Bliss
Ann Wilcox
Naomi Coggeshall
Lydia Burdick
Phoebe Benson
Abigail Bliss
Susannah Burdick
Amy Bliss
Elizabeth Closen
Barbara P. Murphy
Polly Pearce
Mary Maxon
Elizabeth Champlin
Phoebe Clarke
Bathsheba Burdick

Content Scofield
Mary Bliss
Content Maxson
Elizabeth Bliss
Mary Gears
Sarah Maxson
Rosanna Flagg
Hannah Bliven
Abigail Sears
Catharine Dart
Mary Bliss
Sarah Stillman
Deborah Green
Mary Clarke
Abigail Maxson
Ann C. Way
Charlotty Davis

* * * * *

References:

Seventh-Day Baptist Memorial --1874
Bi-Centennial Celebration--The First Seventh Baptist Church of
Hopkinton --1908
The Newport Seventh Baptist Church
Seventh Day Baptists Journals

* * * * *