

## THE OCTOBER MEETING

The eighth meeting in October, 1958 was held October 28, at eight o'clock in the cafeteria of the Scituate Junior-Senior High School, Rockland and Trimtown roads, Scituate, R. I., President Gorham presiding.

The invocation was given by the Rev. Herbert C. Follett, Pastor of Trinity Episcopal Church of North Scituate.

Minutes of the September meeting were read by the Secretary Protom, Mrs. Beatrice E. Patterson, and approved.

The Treasurer's report was read by Mr. Frank G. Briggs. In the general fund \$587.11 and in the building fund \$3,759.73. Collection for the building fund was \$67.55.

The girls Glee Club of the school sang five selections under the direction of Mr. Eugene Paquin, music director.

A new number of the Proceedings of the Society, Vol. 2 No. 5 was placed on sale at seventy-five cents per copy.

There were 225 persons present.

The speaker was the Honorable Earle B. Arnold, Probate Judge of Scituate. His subject was "Glimpses and Recollections of Scituate Before the Reservoir."

Judge Arnold gave a rambling talk in a true Yankee jovial manner as pictures were shown of places and buildings of yesteryear, Mrs. Isabelle Martin assisting at the projector.

This locality began as an agricultural community but later, because of the natural water resources and the foresight of Robert Joslin, who established the Joslin Manufacturing Co., mills and shops were built in the villages of South Scituate, Ashland, Richmond, North Scituate, Clayville, Rockland, Saundersville and Ponagansett.

At Richmond the first of a chain of Joslin mills made corset and shoe laces. At Ponagansett combs were made out of cow horns. At Saundersville, a thriving mill town, harnesses, leather bags and various other articles were manufactured.

The village of North Scituate boasted of two hotels and all that went with good entertainment, even a dance hall. Masonic Hall, now standing, had a harness store on the first floor. There was a jail or "Lock Up" where tramps could enjoy plenty of food, but if they wanted a fire they would have to chop the wood for it. There was a school house and several mills. One of the mill bells now hangs in the tower of the Advent Church.

Rockland was a thriving village with mills, store, church and school.

William Edwin Joslin, son of Robert, purchased a number of mills in this section, enlarged and improved them. In 1906-7 the company was the largest manufacturer of all kinds of lacings in the United States.

William Harry Joslin, born in 1875, carried on in the family tradition, running the mills. It was he who established electric power for the mills and household lighting.

Many of these villages were served by the Providence and Danielson Street Railway.

In 1913 a preliminary investigation to provide water for the City of Providence was started and in 1915 the Legislature passed an act which condemned nearly five square miles of land in Scituate and doomed its thriving villages.

In 1949 the Kent Dam, one of the largest earth dams in the world, was dedicated to the memory of Joseph H. Gainer, Mayor of Providence during the construction period.

Water from 92.8 square miles of drainage area now covers 3600 acres and is 80 feet deep at the Ashland Causeway.

Several members of the Joslin family attended the meeting.

Refreshments of doughnuts and cider were served by Mr. and Mrs. William Heath.

If any members have recollections of the Cranston and Warwick R. R. in the days of the huff and puff steam locomotive, I will be pleased to have them. Please address them to Charles M. Perry, Greene, R. I.

## OUR NEXT MEETING

Tuesday Evening November 25, 1958, 8 P. M., Cafeteria of New Coventry High School, off of the west side of Knotty Oak Road, Route 116, Anthony, a short distance north of Route 117. Look for sign at entrance on 116.

PROFESSOR CHARLES H. SMILEY WILL GIVE US HIS LATEST LECTURE, ENTITLED "THE INSIDE OF THE IRON CURTAIN", featuring his 23 days in Russia and Poland last summer, illustrated with colored slides.

Music by pupils of the school. Refreshments will be served and there will be escorted tours of the classrooms during the social hour. The public is invited. You surely will want to hear Prof. Smiley's lecture on this subject and we also urge you to come to see the New Coventry High School.

John W. Place, Corr. Secy., 301 Union Trust Bldg., Providence 3, R. I.

## THE OLD BATTEY MEETING HOUSE

by  
GLADYS W. BRAYTON

Scituate has its Battey Meeting House Road. Cranston has the original building which was erected by the members of that church now embodied in a dwelling house on Scituate Avenue and the Western Rhode Island Civic Historical Society has recently been given the fine old pewter communion service used by this congregation.



Battey Meeting House Communion Service  
Gift of the heirs of Dr. and Mrs. Niles Westcott to the  
Western Rhode Island Civic Historical Society

These are all reminders of a small group of Christian people in and around Scituate who banded together two hundred and thirty-three years ago to organize the Scituate Church adhering to the six principles of the doctrine of Christ, as laid down in Hebrews VI, verses 1 and 2.

They received a grant of land in 1726 on Plainfield Road, at a junction of that road with a cross road near the center of Scituate and the following year erected what later came to be known as the Battey Meeting House.

In August 1727 Samuel Fiske was ordained their first pastor, or watchman as they liked to call him, and Benjamin Fiske their deacon.

A history of the Baptists by Elder Richard Knight, published in 1827, says "the society grew in grace and numbers under their diligent labors for many years".

In 1783 James Colvin was ordained colleague with the ageing Elder Fiske and continued in this office after the death of the latter in 1744, until the year 1755, when he, too, was called to his reward. Destitute then of a pastor, the congregation listened to the occasional preaching of Deacon Hezekiah Fiske until 1762, when Reuben Hopkins was ordained to the pastoral office. It is interesting to note that Elder Reuben Hopkins was a cousin of Gov. Stephen Hopkins, one of

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## THE HINTERLANDER

MR. MATHIAS P. HARPIN, EDITOR, RIDGE HILL FARM, HOPE, R. I.  
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the signers of the Declaration of Independence. He had been brought up in the principles of the Friends and had been public speaker among them, but becoming convinced of the duty of believer's baptism by immersion, he left them and joined the Scituate Six Principle Baptist Church.

Elder Knight tells us that under his "nourishing ministry" a reformation commenced in 1772 which continued for several years and added numbers to the membership of the society.

During this period Thomas Manchester joined the church and "commenced preaching to acceptance and continued to improve his gifts" until he was called to the pastorate of the Coventry Church. Many of our readers will remember him as the pastor of the Maple Root Church and the acknowledged head of the Baptist denomination for many years.

The Scituate Church prospered in peace and love for twenty years more until Elder Hopkins, stricken in the pulpit, sickened and died in 1792 at the age of eighty years.

It was decided to call Elder John Westcott who was serving as colleague at the Foster Church with Elder Thomas Williams. Held in great esteem there, Elder Williams and the church refused to give him up, to the great grief of both the Scituate Church and Elder Westcott, it is said. However, they did consent to allow him to meet with the Scituate Church twice a month and this arrangement continued until September 30, 1809 when the members unanimously called Richard Knight, son of their deacon, Stephen Knight, and later the author of the book on which we have relied so heavily for the story of these early years. He was ordained in October of that year.

The Foster Church then called for the full time service of Elder John Westcott at Foster. Elder Knight trembled for the welfare of his flock without the advice and guidance of his good friend but the Lord prospered the younger man's work and a reformation took place. In the course of three years one hundred and fifty members were added to the society. A gradual increase continued until 1820 when another "happy work", as Elder Knight expresses it, added some fifty or sixty more members.

In spite of deaths and removals to the western country the church membership had reached two hundred and seventy and the Meeting House, now almost one hundred years old, was not large enough to accommodate those who usually attended.

In 1821 it was decided to erect a new and more commodious edifice on the site of the old meeting house.

For two years Elder Knight labored on this project. In 1823 it was decided to petition the General Assembly for permission to hold a lottery in order to complete the building. This was granted and Andrew Harris, William Hines and Deacon Horace Battey were made managers. The lottery was for \$1000, which sum it was deemed would be sufficient.

The Providence Patriot of Jan. 10, 1824 held an item which stated that the Managers of the Six Principle Baptist Society's Lottery at Scituate had had liberal patronage, which would allow them to commence drawing the Lottery on Saturday, February 14, 1824 at the Inn of William Battey at Scituate.

Again in 1825 \$400 was realized on a second lottery. Any surplus of funds was to be used for sheds and fencing. Pictures of this second building show a surplus must have been raised for both shed and fencing were in place.

By 1826 the old Meeting House had been moved over the rough country roads, with the help of sturdy oxen and rollers, to the farm of Elder Knight on Scituate Avenue in Cranston and had been added to the rear of his two and one half story mansion type house as an ell. There it stood until 1954 when the property, for many years known as the Hillcrest Apiary, was sold to Mr. Vahan Der Mkisian. The new owner chose to tear down the mansion house itself but retained the so-called Battey Meeting House ell as the nucleus of a modern ranch type home, a fact of which few people seem to be aware. This information will correct the statement in the Battey Genealogy by H. V. and Lewis F. Battey, published in 1932, which erroneously states that the original structure was burned about 1825.

Neither record nor tradition tell us for whom, specifically, the Battey Meeting House was named. We must be content to say it was for the Battey family, whose members were both numerous and influential in the vicinity for many years.

At these corners where the Meeting House was located, locally known as Battey's Corners, was the Battey homestead established around 1745 by John Battey, Jr.; the Battey Tavern run by John Battey, Jr. and his son William around 1797; the Post Office, of which Dr. Owen Battey was Postmaster and served for the munificent salary of \$60.36 in the year 1838-39; and the store run by Deacon Horace Battey in the early 1800's. Close by was the Dr. Owen Battey burial ground. Civic, religious and military affairs of the town find the Batteys as active participants. So when the second church edifice of the Six Principle Baptists of Scituate was erected at these corners, on the site of the old building, it was but natural that it should have

acquired the name of the family whose lands surrounded it and whose members had been zealous in its cause for so many years. And in time the cross road on which it faced came to be known as the Battey Meeting House Road. The writer is led to this conclusion from the fact that as late as 1819 a map in the State archives designates this road as merely "cross road" which would indicate that the church at that date had not taken on its new name.

In September 1826 when the new building was finished the Yearly Meeting of the Baptists was held there and Elder Knight says with great pride that for upwards of one hundred years the church has been blessed by internal peace and union and has steadily maintained in faith and practice the six principles of Christ's doctrine, on which they were first founded.

Church records, part of the gift from the heirs of Dr. and Mrs. Niles Westcott to the Western Rhode Island Civic Historical Society, show that Elder Knight remained in the service of his Lord at this church until his decease in 1863 at the age of ninety-two years.

In April 1857 Deacon Horace Battey was appointed a committee to get a subscription toward painting and shingling the Meeting House and in July Deacon Robert Potter was appointed to purchase some shingles and Elder Knight was delegated to get them on.

The Meeting House itself was not all that needed repairs at this time it would seem. In May of that year the clerk, in reporting a meeting, states that the Brethren and Sisters exhorted each other to continue on in the good old way a little longer, praying that there may be shortly a revival amongst those that are out of Church.

In March 1858 although all who were present were in harmony, "they had an increasing desire that God might pour out his Spirit on the Church and the people in the vicinity once more as there has long been a dearth among us".

Perhaps this dearth can be somewhat explained by a resolve which appears in the minutes of the next month's meeting. "Resolved that inasmuch as the admitting of Schools or other Exhibitions into our Meeting House disturbs the minds and feelings of some of our Brethren and Sisters we will from this time forth endeavor to have it understood that we wish to be excused from granting any more such privileges."

Deaths, removals and an unwillingness to change with the times steadily reduced the membership of this once prosperous church.

So ends the available records of the old Battey Meeting House. But from other sources we learn that Elder Samuel Arnold seems to have succeeded Elder Knight for a time, to be succeeded in turn, by Elder Fenner Jacques. It was Elder Jacques who, in 1873, baptized another leader of the Baptist denomination, Rev. Daniel Bennett, who like Elder Thomas Manchester moved on to the pastorate of Maple Root Church and the head of the Baptist denomination.

Elder Jacques and his congregation seem to have learned one of the secrets of success, to bend with the wind instead of resisting its force, and the church became more liberal and modernized and prospered again.

Elder Jacques was still serving the congregation when the building and its one acre of land were condemned around 1916 by the city of Providence in preparation for the reservoir which was needed to supply the growing city of Providence with water.

Ten years later on January 10, 1926, one hundred years after the erection of the new building the Providence Journal states, "The site of the Battey Meeting House is still high and dry but will succumb as soon as the water rises".

When the church disbanded Elder Jacques and his family came into possession of the fine old pewter communion service which had been purchased in the golden age of pewter and been used so many years by the members of this congregation. It consisted of a tankard, two plates and four chalices. Two of the chalices were straight sided, of the beaker type. These testify to the age of the old service, as they are of the early 18th century. The two goblet shaped chalices are of a later date and may have been purchased for use in the new Meeting House to replace the rather battered earlier chalices.

The Westcott family had been represented in the membership of the church for many years, as had the Batteys. Mrs. Fenner Jacques' grandmother was a Westcott and in time the communion service passed into the possession of Dr. and Mrs. Niles Westcott who proudly displayed it at Westcote, their home in Oak Lawn, where Mrs. Jacques' mother and grandmother had both been brought up. It was a fitting setting for these fine old early 18th century pieces for Westcote also dated from the same period.

When Dr. and Mrs. Niles Westcott died their heirs most generously presented the entire service to the Western Rhode Island Civic Historical Society, for the Battey Meeting House is part of the historic heritage of western Rhode Island.

We are most grateful for their generosity and their unselfish appreciation of historic values.

To borrow a phrase from the old records of the Battey Meeting House dated 1855 these are "gone by days" but they are days with a record worth preserving.