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Rowley, Mass. First Congregational Church records, 1664-1941. RG4836

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English

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Congregational Library & Archives

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Summary Information

Repository:	Congregational Library & Archives
Creator:	First Church (Rowley, Mass.)
Creator:	Phillips, Samuel, 1725-1796
Creator:	Jewett, Jedidiah, 1705-1774
Title:	Rowley, Mass. First Congregational Church records, 1664-1941.
ID:	RG4836
Date [inclusive]:	1664-1941
Physical Description:	0.67 Cubic Feet (2 boxes, 7 reels)
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	The First Church of Rowley, Mass. was founded in 1639 by Rev. Ezekiel Rogers and his followers, who had departed their Anglican church in Rowley, Yorkshire, UK in protest over lax Sabbath laws. Rev. Rogers was a notable Puritan whose conservative zeal influenced the governance of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The church continues to serve the community today as a member of the United Church of Christ. This collection contains the earliest church, parish, and financial records beginning in 1664, and microfilmed versions of the records also include more recent administrative records.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], in the Rowley, Mass. First Church records, 1664-1835, RG4836. The Congregational Library & Archives, Boston, MA.

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Historical Note

The original founders of the church and town of Rowley, Mass. came from the town of the same name in the East Riding of Yorkshire, UK. Rev. Ezekiel Rogers, the leader of the settlers, was the assistant pastor at St. Peter's Church of England in Rowley, and a staunch supporter of puritanical observance of the Sabbath. He found himself at odds with the Anglican authorities, who issued a decree allowing the

playing of sports on Sundays. He and at least 21 families separated themselves in protest and left for the New World on the ship John, settling in the area in 1638. The land for the settlement was purchased for 800 pounds from Newbury and Ipswich, and the town was officially incorporated on September 4, 1639. The settlers brought with them a high level of expertise in the manufacture of cotton, hemp and flax cloth, and constructed the first fulling mill in America.

The first meeting house was erected at the intersection of Central Street (then Holmes Street) and Wethersfield Street, and dedicated on December 3, 1639. This building was used for Sunday services and Lecture Days (midweek services) in addition to secular town business.

Rev. Rogers became a persuasive leader in the development of the puritanical government of the Court of Massachusetts Bay Colony. He was one of four ministers from Essex County chosen to rule on questions of church and colonial law, and the first recorded preacher at a council of Congregational Churches in New England. Less puritanical members were offended by his religious zeal; among his strong beliefs was that private members should not make speeches in church assemblies.

Rev. Rogers was married three times; his first two wives, Joan Hartopp and Joan Nelson, both died in childbirth along with the child. He married the widow Mary Barker in July of 1651. On the night of the marriage, Rev. Roger's home, furnishings, library, and church records were destroyed by a fire, popularly believed to be arson by a woman whom Rev. Rogers had refused to marry. Shortly after the fire he fell from his horse and broke his right arm, which became permanently useless. He died in 1660 and was buried in the Rowley Cemetery.

The Rev. Samuel Phillips (Harvard College, 1650) was settled in June, 1651, as a teacher on a salary varying from £50 to £90 per annum. When Rev. Rogers's health began to seriously decline, Mr. Phillips largely took over the ministry despite his lay status, and the town selectmen ordered that £5 should be paid to him for this service. This led to a protracted 18-year dispute with Rev. Rogers's widow, who claimed that the funds had been appropriated illegally. The case was decided in her favor by the Ipswich court, but was later overruled by the Massachusetts General Court in 1679.

In 1665, Samuel Shepard (Harvard College, 1658) was ordained pastor of the church, Mr. Phillips still acting as teacher. After Rev. Shepard's death in 1668, Mr. Phillips was finally ordained as pastor and continued in the role until his death in 1696.

In 1695 the town voted to build a new meeting house, and construction was completed in May of 1697. All notified persons were required to assist with the construction or be fined three shillings per day. This second building measured 50x40 feet and included a gallery and glass windows transferred from the previous meeting house. It also featured benches which were partitioned into men and women's seating areas.

Construction began on a third meeting house in 1747, which measured 60x42 feet with a steeple on the north side and porch on the south. The interior featured a large pulpit and sounding board and a broad aisle with galleries to the front and sides. In August of 1777 the meeting house was damaged by a lightning strike. Repairs were withheld until 1781, after the end of the Revolutionary War, using funds acquired from the auctioning off of space for additional pews.

In 1841 it was voted to build a fourth meeting house, and a change in location to the corner of Hammond and Main Streets was proposed. The congregation became divided over the issue, with parishioners on

the south side of the Ox Pasture Brook favoring the move and those to the north side opposed to it. A vote was held and decided by a single vote, with 24 members in favor of re-location and 23 against. This resulted in a number of dissatisfied parishioners splitting off from the Rowley church and attending service in the neighboring Byfield parish.

The First Congregational Church of Rowley received official incorporation in 1889, and continues to serve the community today as a member of the United Church of Christ.

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Scope and Contents

This collection documents the administrative history of the church and the religious life of its members. It contains the earliest church, parish, and financial records beginning in 1664, as well as a "double" volume containing both personal notes of the Rev. Jedidiah Jewett and a listing of marriages. Additionally, there are microfilmed records replicating most of the physical volumes, and also including more recent administrative records dating after the church's incorporation in 1889.

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Arrangement

Materials have been arranged in chronological order by start date.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Boston, MA 02108

info@14beacon.org

URL: <http://www.CongregationalLibrary.org>

Restrictions on Access

Access to this collection is unrestricted and open to the public.

Restrictions on Use

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Digital Reproductions are protected by copyright and/or related rights. You are free to use the Digital Reproductions in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. In addition, no permission is required from the Congregational Library & Archives for educational uses. For other uses, you need to obtain permission from the Congregational Library & Archives. For additional information regarding copyright, please consult the Congregational Library & Archives' [Digital Collections Copyright & Use](#) policy.

Acquisition Information

Materials were permanently loaned to the Congregational Library & Archives by the First Congregational Church, Rowley (UCC) in August 2011. There is no accession number for this collection.

Accruals

Additional accruals are expected for this collection in the form of full-text transcription. There is no anticipated date for this accrual.

Custodial History

The earliest volume of church records, 1664-1784 (also known as the "Phillips Diary") was assumed lost by the church during the later 20th century, but was recovered in 2007 from a deposit box in the Rowley branch of the First National Bank of Ipswich. The volume was extensively conserved by the Northeast Document Conservation Center in 2010 and microfilmed shortly afterwards.

Microfilm records, 1664-1784 were created in 2010 from the physical volume of church records 1664-1748 (also known as the "Phillips Diary"). The microfilm was imaged and produced by the Northeast Document Conservation Center.

Microfilm records, 1664-1941 were copied in 2007 from the original negatives loaned by the church, which have no known provenance.

Microfilm records, 1730-1835 were imaged and produced in 2008 by the Northeast Document Conservation Center.

Processing Information

Processed and described by Jules Thomson, October 2019, using DACS Second edition.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Baptismal records.
- Church discipline.
- Church membership.
- Church records and registers.
- Covenants (Church polity).
- Installation (clergy).
- Lord's Supper.
- New England's Hidden Histories.
- Ordination.
- First Church (Rowley, Mass.)
- Rowley (Mass.) -- Church history.

Technical Requirements

A microfilm reader is required in order to access microform materials. One microfilm reader is available to the public upon request.

To access digital user's copies via online-interface, a java-enabled web browser is required. Internet Explorer 8.x and later, Firefox 5.x and later, Opera 12 and later, Safari 5.x and later, or any version of Google Chrome are recommended.

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Bibliography

"History." The Congregational Church of Rowley. Accessed October 3, 2019. <http://www.firstchurchrowley.org/about/who-we-are/history-2/>

Wheatland, Henry. *Standard History of Essex County, Massachusetts: Embracing a History of the County from Its 1. Settlement to the Present Time, with a History and Description of Its Towns and Cities.* (By Cyrus M Tracy Henry Wheatland). Boston: Jewett, 1878.

Davis, Emerson. *Biographical Sketches of the Congregational Pastors of New England: Volume IV*, n.d.

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Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Instances
Church records, 1664-1784	box 2 volume 1

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

This bound volume, also known as "The Phillips Diary", contains early records of both the church and the community in Rowley, including meeting minutes, church covenants, baptisms, marriages, and death lists recorded by Rev. Samuel Phillips. Further records include disciplinary matters, ecclesiastical councils, and other details of seventeenth-century life in the area.

Microfilm records, (1664-1784), 2010

reel Service
Copy

Scope and Contents

This microfilm contains photographic copies of the Church records, 1664-1784, also known as the "Phillips Diary". This document is housed, as part of this collection, at the CLA.

Microfilm records, (1664-1941), 2007

reel 1

Restrictions on Access:

Restrictions on Access

reel 2

reel 3

Only the service copy is available for library use. The archival master and print master copies are restricted for preservation purposes.

Scope and Contents

This microfilm contains photographic copies of church records, parish records, treasurer's books, vital records, and

ministerial records, some of the physical versions of which are part of this collection. A detailed listing of these follows:

Reel 1

CR I

Church Records (also known as the "Phillips Diary"), 1664-1784

CR II

Church Records, 1742-1782

CR III

Church Records, 1782-1835

Reel 2

CR IV

Vital Statistics and list of ministers, 1840-1870

CR V

Meetings, 1870-1920

C Misc.

Jedidiah Jewett's Extract Book, 1730-1783

C Misc.

Church records pre-incorporation and Church Corporation Records, 1889-1941

Reel 3

PR I

Parish Records, 1733-1782

PR II

Parish Records, 1781-1882

PR III

Parish Records, 1822-1870

PT I

Parish Treasurer, 1743-1832

PT II

Parish Treasurer, 1833-1862

PR IV

Parish Records, 1892-1903

Church and parish records, 1728-1782

box 1

volume 1

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

This volume largely consists of church meeting minutes concerning the selection of new ministers – Jedidiah Jewett in 1728 and Jonathan Allin in 1780 – and records regarding their salaries.

Jedidiah Jewett extract and marriage book, 1730-1783

box 1

volume 2

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

This bound book contains two volumes, each starting at opposite covers and using the righthand pages in its respective orientation. The "extract" portion contains Rev. Jedidiah Jewett's transcribed excerpts from philosophical and historical texts and local newspapers. The "marriage book" records marriages performed in the church.

Microfilm records, 1730-1835, 2008

Restrictions on Access:

Restrictions on Access

Only the service copy is available for library use. The archival master and print master copies are restricted for preservation purposes.

reel Service
Copy

reel Archival
Master

reel Print
Master

Scope and Contents

This microfilm contains photographic copies of Rev. Jedidiah Jewett's personal notebook, parish records, church records, and a treasurer's book, all of the physical versions of which are a part of this collection. A detailed listing of these follows:

Reel 1

Section 1: C Misc.

Jewett's Extract Book, 1730-1783

Section 2: PR I

Parish Records, 1733-1782

Section 3: PR II

Parish Records, 1781-1882

Section 4: CR-PR

Church Records and Parish Records, 1742-1782 and
1728-1763

Section 5: CR III

Church Records, 1782-1835

Section 6: PT I

Parish Treasurer, 1743-1832

Parish records, 1733-1782

box 1

volume 3

Existence and Location of Copies:

Existence and Location of Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

This volume contains financial and administrative records, including church meeting minutes and financial information pertaining to officers' salaries and other expenditures.

Financial records, 1743-1832

box 1

volume 4

Existence and Location of Copies:

Existence and Location of Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

This bound volume of records was kept by the church treasurers, and includes salary records for ministers and other church officers, pew rents, taxes, and other incomes and expenses relating to the running of the church.

Parish records, 1781-1822

box 1

volume 5

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

This volume contains financial and administrative records, including church meeting minutes and financial information pertaining to officers' salaries and other expenditures. It also includes the results of an ecclesiastical council convened to resolve a dispute within the church.

Church records, 1782-1835

box 1

volume 6

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

These church records were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions are [available to view online](#).

Scope and Contents

These records are primarily vital statistics and membership records, including admissions, dismissions, baptisms, marriages, and deaths. They also contain a number of

disciplinary cases, mostly for intemperance or poor attendance
on the Sabbath.