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## **Sturbridge, Mass. Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale records, 1736-1999. RG5194**

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This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on October 26, 2023.

Description is written in: English.

DACS 2019.0.3

Congregational Library & Archives

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## Summary Information

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**Repository:** Congregational Library & Archives

**Creator:** Baptist Church (Fiskdale, Mass.)

**Creator:** Congregational Church (Sturbridge, Mass.)

**Creator:** Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale (Sturbridge, Mass.)

**Creator:** Unitarian Church (Sturbridge, Mass.)

**Title:** Sturbridge, Mass. Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale records, 1736-1999.

**ID:** RG5194

**Date [inclusive]:** 1736-1999

**Physical Description:** 2.18 Cubic Feet (2 boxes)

**Language of the Material:** English .

**Abstract:** The land that is modern Sturbridge, Massachusetts, was first visited by English Puritans in 1644. Sturbridge wasn't settled by English colonists until 1729 by Medfield residents. Construction of the first meeting house was completed in 1734. The Congregational Church in Sturbridge was established on September 29, 1736. In 1747 members of the church withdrew to form a separatist church which later became the Fiskdale Baptist Church. Construction on the second meeting house was completed in 1787. A second split in the congregation occurred in 1864 which resulted in the formation of the Sturbridge Unitarian Church. In 1908 the second meeting house burned after being struck by lightning; the third meeting house was constructed in 1910. In 1922, the Congregational Church, Baptist Church, and Unitarian Church merged to form the Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale. This collection contains the administrative history of the Congregational Church in Sturbridge, as well as the Baptist and Unitarian churches. Materials in the collection include church records, membership records, and financial records.

## Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], in the Sturbridge, Mass. Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale records, 1736-1999., RG5194. The Congregational Library & Archives, Boston, MA.

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## Historical Note

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The land that is modern Sturbridge, Massachusetts, was first visited by English Puritans in 1644, but had been inhabited by the Nipmuc people and the area of Sturbridge was called Tantisques. Spurred by reports of lead and iron deposits, John Winthrop II visited Tantisques in 1644. There, he negotiated for the purchase of land from Tantasqua, sachem of the area, to set up a mine, though minerals were not mined from this land until 1658. The mine stayed in the Winthrop family until 1738 and remained operational until 1910. Sturbridge wasn't settled by English colonists until 1729 when residents of Medfield acquired a land grant from the General Court of Massachusetts. Before the town was formally incorporated as Sturbridge in 1738, the land was initially known as the Plantation of New Medfield.

Construction of the first meeting house was begun in 1733 and was completed the following year. In 1736 the proprietors of the town called Caleb Rice to become the first minister in the town. The Congregational Church in Sturbridge was established on September 29, 1736. On May 10, 1747, 15 members of the church removed themselves from the church to form a new Separatist Congregational Church. In 1748 these "separatists" ordained their first minister and in 1749 the separatists established themselves as Baptists and formed the Baptist Church in Sturbridge, and later Fiskdale. This separation initially caused something of a crisis in the town, especially as the separatists refused to pay taxes to support the established Congregational Church. During much of Rice's ministry, the town struggled to pay his ministerial salary.

Plans for the construction of a second meeting house were first approved in 1773. However, those plans were revoked shortly thereafter and would not be revisited again until 1783 largely due to the American Revolution. Construction on the second meeting house was begun in 1784 and the new building was dedicated in December 1787. A steeple was added to the building in 1794 and the building underwent multiple renovations during the 19th century.

A second split in the congregation occurred in 1864, in part due to "turbulence" caused by the ministry of Marshall B. Angier. On June 3, 1864, the First Unitarian Church of Sturbridge was founded with many of its first members coming from the Congregational Church. The first Unitarian Church building was dedicated on December 11, 1872.

On August 5, 1908, the second meeting house was struck by lightning and subsequently burned to the ground. Following the destruction of the second meeting house the Congregationalists met at the Unitarian Church until a new church edifice was completed in 1910. In 1922, in large part due to the declining population of Sturbridge, the Congregational Church, Baptist Church, and Unitarian Church merged to form the Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale with each congregation remaining a separate society within the Federated Church. The 1910 Congregational Church building became the central building for the Federated Church. The Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale remains active today.

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## Scope and Contents

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This collection contains the administrative history of the Congregational Church in Sturbridge, as well as records from the Fiskdale Baptist Church, the Sturbridge Unitarian Church, and the Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale. Materials in this collection include church records, correspondence, society records, vital membership records, relations of faith, financial records and reports, and pew records.

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## Arrangement

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This collection has been arranged into three series. Records within each series have been arranged chronologically by start date.

**Series 1:** Church records, 1736-1999

**Series 2:** Membership records, 1742-1865

**Series 3:** Financial records, 1820-1894

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

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Boston, MA 02108

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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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### Acquisition Information

Materials were loaned to the Congregational Library & Archives by the Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale in December 2015; 2014-43.

The letter from Rev. Paine to Miriam Newell was removed from the Sturbridge Separatist materials (RG0971) and transferred to this collection. This item is owned by the Congregational Library & Archive.

## Digital Copies

Records within this collection were digitized as part of the New England's Hidden Histories project. Digital reproductions may be accessed online through our [digital archive](#).

## Accruals

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

## Processing Information

Originally processed by Sari Mauro, September 2014, using DACS Second Edition. Reprocessed by Zachary Bodnar, February 2022, using DACS 2019.0.3.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- Church discipline.
- Church finance.
- Church membership.
- Church records and registers.
- Covenants (Church polity).
- Marriage records.
- Necrologies.
- New England's Hidden Histories.
- Pews and pew rights.
- Unitarian controversy.
- Women -- Societies and clubs.
- Baptist Church (Fiskdale, Mass.)
- Congregational Church (Sturbridge, Mass.)
- Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale (Sturbridge, Mass.)
- Separatist Congregational Church (Sturbridge, Mass.)
- Sturbridge (Mass.) -- Church history.
- Unitarian Church (Sturbridge, Mass.)

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## Technical Requirements

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To access digital materials on Quartex, it is strongly recommended that you use the latest available version of Microsoft Edge, Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, or Safari (Apple).

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## Bibliography

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Stevens, Raymond. *Highlights of 250 Years of the Congregational Society of the Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale, 1736-1986*. Sturbridge, 1986. 17.11.1 S78.3 FEDCSF

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## Collection Inventory

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### Church records, 1736-1999

Physical Description: 12 Volumes

Physical Description: 14 Folders

#### Scope and Contents

This series contains records related to the daily administration of the Congregational Church and its affiliated societies. The series contains church records, meeting minutes, records of women run benevolent societies, ecclesiastical council records, meeting warrants, and Sabbath school records. This series also contains record books created and maintained by the Fiskdale Baptist Church and the Sturbridge Unitarian Church.

Title/Description	Instances	
Church records, 1736-1758	box 1	volume 1

#### Scope and Contents

This volume is a copy of the original records, transcribed by the clerk in 1896. It contains minutes and votes of meetings, baptisms, marriages, admissions, dismissions, disciplinary cases, confessions, and the original church covenant.

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Church records, 1736-1765	box 2	folder 1
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Reports, 1761, 1779, 1868	box 2	folder 3
Fiskdale Baptist Church records, 1780-1999	box 2	volume 1
Church records, 1786-1818	box 1	volume 2
<b>Scope and Contents</b>		
<p>This volume contains minutes of meetings, baptisms (including some "whose record was lost during the ministry of the Rev. Mr. Paine" recreated by the scribe at the time), admissions, dismissions, and marriages.</p>		
Church records, 1800-1819	box 2	volume 2
<b>Scope and Contents</b>		
<p>This volume was kept by Rev. Otis Lane and begins with the ecclesiastical council to arrange his ordination as the new pastor. It contains minutes of meetings, procedures for disciplinary cases, admissions, dismissions, baptisms, deaths, transcribed correspondence, the eventual dismissal of Rev. Lane at his request, and his replacement by Rev. Alvan Bond.</p>		
Invitations to ecclesiastical councils, 1808-1834	box 2	folder 6
Female Society records, 1813-1829	box 2	folder 7
<b>Scope and Contents</b>		
<p>This material contains correspondence to the Female Society in Sturbridge. Topics include faith, friendship, missionary work, and charitable donations. Many of the letters appear to have been intended to be read aloud at meetings.</p>		
Church records, 1819-1831	box 2	volume 3
<b>Scope and Contents</b>		
<p>This volume was kept by Rev. Alvan Bond and begins with the ecclesiastical council to arrange his ordination as the new pastor. Its contents include minutes of meetings, the articles of faith adopted in 1826, admissions, dismissions, deaths, baptisms, the rules of church discipline, and several individual disciplinary cases.</p>		
Correspondence, 1820-1891	box 2	folder 9
Miscellaneous records, 1829, undated	box 1	folder 4
Church records, 1831-1895	box 2	volume 4
Congregational Society records, 1831-1871	box 2	volume 5

Separated Materials:

## Separated Materials

Loose materials from within this volume of records were removed to make the Congregational Society records, 1866-1871, folder.

Sabbath School Society records, 1834-1841	box 1	volume 5
Invitations to ecclesiastical councils, 1835-1865	box 1	folder 6
Ladies Benevolent Society records, 1851-1898	box 1	volume 7
Pastoral calls, 1863, 1871	box 1	folder 12
Meeting warrants, 1863-1880	box 1	folder 13
Church records, 1864-1973	box 1	volume 9
Unitarian Congregational Society of Sturbridge records, 1864-1908	box 1	volume 10
Congregational Society records, 1866-1871	box 2	folder 11

### Separated Materials:

## Separated Materials

These materials were removed from within the Congregational Society records, 1831-1871.

Meeting warrants, 1881-1893	box 1	folder 14
Women's Missionary Society records, 1889-1897	box 1	volume 11
Church covenant, undated	box 1	folder 15
Sermon fragment, undated	box 1	folder 16
Ecclesiastical council minutes, undated	box 2	folder 13

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## Membership records, 1742-1865

Physical Description: 1 Volume

Physical Description: 11 Folders

### Scope and Contents

This series contains vital membership records for the Congregational Church in Sturbridge. The series includes marriage records, records of deaths, membership records, disciplinary case records, and relations of faith.

Title/Description	Instances	
Confessions, 1742-1822, 1853	box 1	folder 1
Relations, 1757-1763, undated	box 2	folder 2

Disciplinary cases, 1783-1831	box 2	folder 4
Dismissal requests, 1798-1865	box 2	folder 5
Membership certificates, 1804-1828	box 1	folder 2
Book of marriages and deaths, 1819-1831	box 1	volume 3

### Scope and Contents

Although such information is also included in the general church records, Rev. Bond also kept a separate book of the marriages and deaths of church members during his time in Sturbridge. In some cases, it may provide more detail.

Membership transfers, 1831-1836	box 2	folder 10
Membership transfers, 1836-1842	box 1	folder 8
Membership withdrawals, 1836	box 1	folder 7
Marriage intentions, 1839-1842	box 1	folder 9
Marriage intentions, 1842-1844	box 1	folder 10

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## Financial records, 1820-1894

Physical Description: 4 Volumes

Physical Description: 5 Folders

### Scope and Contents

This series contains financial records for the Congregational Church in Sturbridge. The series includes financial ledgers and reports, receipts, and pew records.

Title/Description	Instances	
Financial reports, 1820-1875	box 2	folder 8
Financial records, 1827-1832	box 1	volume 4
Receipts, 1827-1834	box 1	folder 3
Pew records, 1834-1856	box 1	folder 5
Financial records, 1842-1894	box 1	folder 11
Financial records, 1843-1866	box 1	volume 6
Financial records, 1856-1897	box 1	volume 8
Pew rental records, 1856	box 2	volume 6
Pew rental records, 1872-1873	box 2	folder 12

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