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Medway, Mass. The Community Church records, 1750-1978. RG4685

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Congregational Library & Archives

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Summary Information

Repository: Congregational Library & Archives

Creator: The Community Church (Medway, Mass.)

Creator: Second Church of Christ (Medway, Mass.)

Creator: Second Congregational Church (Medway, Mass.)

Title: Medway, Mass. The Community Church records, 1750-1978.

ID: RG4685

Date [inclusive]: 1750-1978

Physical Description: 0.63 Cubic Feet (2 boxes, 2 folders)

Language of the Material: English .

Abstract: The Second Church of Christ was gathered on October 4, 1750. The church's first minister, David Thurston, was called on April 24, 1752. Construction on a new church building atop "Rabbit Hill" began in 1813 and construction was completed in 1814. In 1838, 31 members of the church were dismissed to form a sister church, the Village Church in Medway. Following a church controversy that resulted in excommunications and expulsions from the Second Church, the Third Church in Medway was formed. The two churches merged in 1902. In 1901, the Second Church of Christ was renamed to the Second Congregational Church. In 1940, the church federated with the local Baptist church to form The Community Church. In 1995, the Congregational, Baptist, and Community church bodies voted to formally unite as the Community Church of West Medway, also called the Medway Community Church. The church is still active today. The collection includes church and parish records, membership records, financial records, and ecclesiastical council records.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], in the Medway, Mass. The Community Church records, 1750-1978, RG4685. The Congregational Library & Archives, Boston, MA.

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Historical Note

Owing to the growing population in the western portion of Medway, the West Medway Precinct was incorporated in 1748. Planning for the Second Church of Christ in Medway began shortly after with construction on a meeting house beginning on April 6, 1749. The Second Church of Christ was formally gathered on October 4, 1750. The church's first minister, David Thurston, was called on April 24, 1752. Due to health concerns, he asked for his dismissal from the church in 1769. The church remained without a minister until 1773 when David Sanford accepted the church's call. He continued to serve as the minister until his death in 1810.

Construction on a new church building atop "Rabbit Hill" began in 1813 and the building was dedicated on June 23, 1814. Jacob Ide was ordained and installed as the third minister of the Second Church on November 2, 1814. A Parish House was built between 1816 and 1817 and a Sunday school was established in 1819. In 1838, 31 members of the church were dismissed to form a sister church, the Village Church in Medway. The church building underwent a significant renovation in 1846. The church purchased a nearby home for use as a parsonage in 1872.

The Second Church experienced a significant controversy, beginning in 1881, which ultimately resulted in a split within the church and the formation of the Third Church in Medway. In 1881, Charles H. Deans, a prominent Republican political figure and trial justice, was accused of using his office to issue an arrest warrant for Nathan A. Williams out of personal spite, among other accusations of abuse of power, especially concerning the selective issuance of arrest warrants. His case was brought before the Governor's Executive Council and Deans was acquitted. However, the church council at the Second Church, found Deans guilty and subsequently excommunicated him. A group of church members disagreed with the excommunication and were also, subsequently, expelled. These expelled members went on to form the Third Church in Medway. They began meeting in 1884, though the church wasn't formally gathered until 1886. The Mendon Conference of Congregational Churches called an ecclesiastical council to intervene on behalf of those expelled, but the Second Church refused to admit any wrongdoing, or even to let the council use the meeting house for the ecclesiastical conference. The Second and Third Churches remained split until 1902 when the Second Church passed a resolution admitting to "unchristian" actions towards the members of the Third Church.

In 1901, the Second Church of Christ in Medway formally changed its name to the Second Congregational Church. The 1938 New England Hurricane destroyed the Baptist Church in Medway. The Second Church invited the Baptists to meet at their church building and in 1940, the two congregations formed a new federated church, The Community Church. Following the formation of the United Church of Christ in 1957, The Community Church decided to join the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches. An addition to the church building

to house Sunday school classes was completed in 1970. The church building underwent a major renovation between 1980 and 1986.

In 1995, the Congregational, Baptist, and Community church bodies voted to formally unite as the Community Church of West Medway, also called the Medway Community Church. Also, in 1995, the church joined the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference. The church steeple was destroyed by fire in 2009 after being struck by lightning. A restoration of the building was completed in 2011. The church continues to serve the Medway community today.

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Scope and Contents

This collection contains records related to The Community Church in Medway, as well as records related to the Third Church in Medway, which split away from the Second Congregational Church. The collection includes church and parish records, membership records, correspondence and communications, clippings, financial records, records related to ministers, and ecclesiastical council records.

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Arrangement

This collection has been arranged into the two series listed below. Materials within each series have been arranged by chronological order according to start date.

Series 1: The Community Church records, 1750-1978

Series 2: Third Congregational Church records, 1884-1902

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Suite 200
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Restrictions on Access

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

Restrictions on Use

Items in this collection are subject to U.S. Copyright Law. It is the responsibility of the researcher to determine the copyright status of collection items and to secure any permissions necessary for their reproduction and publication. Requests for permission to publish material must be discussed with the archivist or librarian.

Acquisition Information

Materials were donated to the Congregational Library & Archives by the Medway Community Church in April 2003 and November 2004; no accession number.

Processing Information

Processed by Zachary Bodnar, February 2025, according to Describing Archives: A Content Standard.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Church controversies.
- Church finance.
- Church membership.
- Church records and registers.
- Excommunication.
- Pews and pew rights.
- Medway Community Church (Medway, Mass.)
- Second Church of Christ (Medway, Mass.)
- Second Congregational Church (Medway, Mass.)

- The Community Church (Medway, Mass.)

Bibliography

Maxwell, Margaret. *The Church on Rabbit Hill: A History of the West Medway Community Church*. Medway: Snowfall Press, LLC., 2011.

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Collection Inventory

The Community Church records, 1750-1978

Physical Description: 2 Volume

Physical Description: 28 Folders

Scope and Contents

This series contains records related to The Community church in Medway, which was previously known as the Second Church in Medway. This series contains church and parish record books, records related to ministers, clippings, some financial records, printed copies of church manuals, confessions of faith, and covenants, and records related to the excommunication of Charles H. Deans.

Title/Description	Instances	
Church records, 1750-1860	box 2	volume 1
Confessions of faith, 1787-1827	box 2	folder 1
Reciepts, 1790-1891	box 1	folder 1
Pew deed facsimile, 1816	box 1	folder 2
Manuscript sermons, 1823-1832	box 1	folder 3
Confession of faith and covenant, 1825, 1848	box 1	folder 4
Petitions, 1843-1853	box 1	folder 5
Parish records, 1845-1901	box 2	volume 2
Parish warrants, 1847-1857	box 1	folder 6
Financial reports, 1848-1863	box 2	folder 2
West Medway mirror and tea party times, 1853	box 1	folder 7
Jacob Ide papers, 1853-1903	box 1	folder 8
David Sanford papers, 1860	box 1	folder 9

Anecdote regarding a sermon following Abraham Lincon's assassination, 1865	box 1	folder 10
Parish taxes, 1865	box 1	folder 11
Seth W. Segur installation, 1873	box 1	folder 12
Dr. Emmons in his study poem, 1878	box 1	folder 13
List of deacons, 1878-1901	box 1	folder 14
Manual, 1879	box 1	folder 15
Charles H. Deans excommunication, 1881-1887	box 1	folder 16
Clippings, 1882-1886	box 1	folder 17
Ecclesiastical council records, 1883-1886	box 1	folder 18
A statement of the Congregational Church of West Medway, Mass., 1884	box 1	folder 19
James M. Bell resignation clipping, 1885	box 1	folder 20
Thanksgiving day proclamation, 1897	folder 5	
Austin Metcalf bequest, 1899	box 1	folder 21
History timeline, circa 1978	box 1	folder 22
Early membership records, undated	box 1	folder 23
S. Knowlton papers, undated	box 1	folder 24
Pew plan, undated	box 2	folder 3

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Third Congregational Church records, 1884-1902

Physical Description: 9 Folders

Scope and Contents

This series contains records related to the third church in Medway, which broke away from the Second church following a major controversy around the excommunication of Charles H. Deans. This series contains membership records, church and financial records, clippings, and legal records.

Title/Description	Instances	
Third Church membership records, 1884-1990	box 1	folder 25
Third Church financial records, 1884-1897	box 1	folder 26
Communications between Second and Third Churches, 1884-1902	box 1	folder 27
Legal records, 1886	folder 4	
Financial records, 1886-1890	box 1	folder 28

Church records, 1886-1892	box 1	folder 29
Third Congregational Church records, 1886-1902	box 1	folder 30
Third Church communications, 1889	box 1	folder 31
Clippings, undated	box 1	folder 32

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