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## **Brockton, Mass. First Parish Congregational Church records, 1738-1980. RG0037**

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English

DACS2 - 2013

Congregational Library & Archives

14 Beacon Street

Boston, MA 02108

[info@14beacon.org](mailto:info@14beacon.org)

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

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	Congregational Library & Archives
<b>Creator:</b>	First Parish Congregational Church (Brockton, Mass.)
<b>Creator:</b>	Fourth Parish Church (Bridgewater, Mass.)
<b>Title:</b>	Brockton, Mass. First Parish Congregational Church records, 1738-1980.
<b>ID:</b>	RG0037
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1738-1980
<b>Physical Description:</b>	1.92 Cubic Feet (4 boxes, 1 reel)
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English
<b>Abstract:</b>	<p>The First Parish Congregational Church in Brockton was originally founded as the Fourth Parish Church in Bridgewater in 1737 and formally gathered as such in 1740. The name of the church changed, in 1823, to First Parish Congregational Church to reflect the incorporation of the town of North Bridgewater. In 1827 a portion of the church's membership left to form the South Congregational Church and in 1850 another portion left to form the Porter Evangelical Congregational Church. In 1874 the town of North Bridgewater changed to Brockton. In 1980 the First Parish Congregational Church merged with the South Congregational Church, the Porter Congregational Church, and the Waldo Congregational Church to form the Christ Congregational Church which continues to operate today. This collection contains the administrative, legal, fiscal, and vital records of the church and includes meeting minutes, membership records, building records, and ministerial records.</p>

### Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], in the Brockton, Mass. First Parish Congregational Church records, 1738-1980, RG0037. The Congregational Library & Archives, Boston, MA.

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## Historical Note

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The First Parish Congregational Church in Brockton was originally founded as the Fourth Parish Church in Bridgewater in March, 1737, with the construction of the first meeting house for the community that had formed in Bridgewater's North. In 1738, the community sent a petition to the General Court of Massachusetts to designate the area as a unique parish within Bridgewater. The request was granted in December, 1739 with the formation of the North Precinct of Bridgewater. John Porter, a 1736 graduate of Harvard, was ordained as the first minister of the Fourth Parish Church in October, 1740 at the same time that the church was formally gathered.

Membership within the church grew significantly under Rev. Porter, mimicking the expansion of the community. The expansion of the parish community resulted in the need for a new meeting house; the dedication of the second meeting house, which was twice as large as the first building, was held in December, 1763. Rev. Porter was interested in education and readily helped prepare talented youth for higher education during his ministry. During the American Revolution, Rev. Porter supported the Continental Army by organizing an effort which resulted in the shipment of 5580 pounds of beef to the army. He served as the minister of the church until his death in 1802.

The first parish Sunday school was organized in 1818 with an initial enrolment of 185 students. In 1823 the North Precinct of Bridgewater was incorporated as the town of North Bridgewater. At this time, the name of the church was changed to the First Parish Congregational Church. By the 1820s the second meeting house was beginning to require extensive fixes and renovations to meet the needs of the community. Instead of embarking on those costly renovations, the community found the funds to build the third meeting house, which was dedicated in November, 1827. In 1836 a significant portion of the parish withdrew from the church due to the formation of the South Congregational Church in Plain Village (now Campello) North Bridgewater.

The ordination of Rev. Paul Couch in 1835 resulted in a liberalization of the First Parish's teachings during his 24 years of ministry. This ultimately resulted in another significant portion of the church separating in 1850 to form the Porter Evangelical Congregational Church. Rev. Couch also oversaw construction of the fourth meeting house, also known as the Old Brown Church. This building was dedicated in July, 1854. In 1874 the name of the town of North Bridgewater was changed to Brockton.

During 1897 the fifth meeting house was constructed. This stone building was dedicated in December, 1897 and Rev. Alan Hudson was installed as the minister the same day. The fifth meeting house was largely destroyed in an early morning fire on February 19, 1965. The sixth and final meeting house was constructed in 1967 with the dedication taking place in June. In 1980 the First Parish Congregational Church, South Congregational Church, Porter Congregational Church, and Waldo Congregational Church merged to form the Christ Congregational Church. The Christ Congregational Church in Brockton continues to serve the local community today. The sixth meeting house is now the house of worship for the Mt. Moriah Baptist Church.

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## Scope and Contents

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This collection contains the administrative, legal, fiscal, and vital records of the First Parish Congregational Church in Brockton, Massachusetts. The collection includes the meeting minutes of the church and parish, membership records, vital statistics for church members, including baptismal and marriage records, ministerial records, building records, financial records, pew deeds, assessment results, and important legal documents.

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## Arrangement

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Materials have been arranged into the two series listed below. Within each series, materials have been arranged in chronological order, by start date, primarily, and by topic secondarily.

**Series 1:** Church and Parish records, 1738-1980

**Series 2:** Financial and legal records, 1764-1965

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

Congregational Library & Archives

14 Beacon Street

Boston, MA 02108

[info@14beacon.org](mailto: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**

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.

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## **Acquisition Information**

While the records are unclear, it appears that this collection is the result of two major deposits. The first deposit, by Rev. James H. O'Brien of the First Parish Congregational Church in Brockton, occurred in 1965. That same year some records were microfilmed by the Harvard University Reprographic Services (originally RG1339). In 1980, when the First Parish Congregational Church reformed into the Christ Congregational Church, additional First Parish Congregational Church materials were deposited with the Congregational Library & Archives along with materials from the South, Porter, and Waldo Congregational churches; no accession number.

## **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**

Many of the items within the collection were damaged by a fire in 1965. In response to the damage sustained by the collection due to the fire, the First Parish Congregational Church contracted with F. C. Wiedemann for document preservation.

## **Processing Information**

Originally processed by Sandra Sudak in 1990. Additional descriptions by Jessica Steytler in 2002 and 2006. Fully reprocessed and redescribed by Zachary Bodnar, March 2019, using DACS Second Edition.

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## Related Materials

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### Related Materials

In 1980, the First Parish Congregational, South Congregational, Porter Congregational, and Waldo Congregational Churches merged into a single entity, the Christ Congregational Church. The records of all four churches are held at the Congregational Library & Archives:

Brockton, Mass. South Congregational Church records, 1835-1979.

Brockton, Mass. Porter Congregational Church, 1800-1979.

Brockton, Mass. Waldo Congregational Church, 1896-1980.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- Baptismal records.
- Church discipline.
- Church finance.
- Church membership.
- Church records and registers.
- Installation (clergy).
- Marriage records.
- New England's Hidden Histories.
- Pews and pew rights.
- Sermons, American -- Early works to 1800.
- Sunday schools -- Records.
- Bridgewater (Mass.) -- Church history.
- Brockton (Mass.) -- Church history.
- Christ Congregational Church (Brockton, Mass.)
- First Parish Congregational Church (Brockton, Mass.)
- Fourth Parish Church (Bridgewater, Mass.)
- North Bridgewater (Mass.) -- Church history.

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## Physical Access

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Some materials within the collection have been damaged by exposure to fire. There may be special handling instructions for these materials and/or limited access provided to certain damaged items.

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## Technical Requirements

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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

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*Two Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Booklet*. Brockton: First Parish Congregational Church, 1962. 17.11.1 B78.33 CHrCC

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## Collection Inventory

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### Church and parish records, 1738-1980

Physical Description: 28 Files (10 volumes, 17 folders, 1 reel)

## Scope and Contents

This series contains records related to the administration of the church and parish, vital records, and well as records related to the religious operations of the church. Included in the series are church and parish record books, membership records, ministerial records, Sunday school materials, and historical sketches.

Title/Description	Instances
Parish records, 1738-1852	box 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 volume contains the records of the parish community. Included within the records is a copy of the petition sent to the General Court that resulted in the formation of the North Precinct in Bridgewater. Also included are meeting minutes, notifications of tax deadlines, discussion of meeting house maintenance and improvements, the installation of Rev. John Porter, financial records, and records related to the incorporation of the North Precinct into North Bridgewater.

Parish records, 1852-1893	box 1	volume 1
Parish records, 1894-1916	box 1	volume 2
A Church Book, 1740-1805	box 1	volume 3

### 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 the administrative records of the church and valuable membership records. Included in the volume are meeting minutes, a copy of the church covenant, baptismal records, membership records, records of admission, communion records, disciplinary records, and marriage records.

Church records, 1812-1874	box 1	volume 4
Church records, 1874-1894	box 1	volume 5
Church records, 1894-1914	box 1	volume 6
Church and parish records, 1914-1922	box 1	volume 7

Sermon: Isaiah 60:22 , 1774	box 1	folder 1
Ecclesiastical council records, 1811, 1915	box 1	folder 2
Membership records, 1817-1962, undated	box 1	folder 3
Historical sketch and sermon, 1820, 1890	box 1	volume 8
Sunday school records, 1826-1860	box 4	folder 1
Installation services, 1835-1922	box 4	folder 2
Historical sketch manuscript, 1847, 1932	box 4	folder 3
Building dedication services, 1853-1967	box 4	folder 4
Extracts of church records, 1860	box 4	folder 5
Anniversary and memorial services, 1877-1962	box 4	folder 6
Rev. Douglas Carlile resignation letter, 1884	box 1	folder 4

Separated Materials:

**Separated Materials**

This letter, and related clipping, was removed from the Parish Records, 1852-1893.

Society and committee reports, 1898-1912	box 1	folder 5
Sunday school reports, 1898-1912	box 1	folder 6
Historical poem, circa 1905	box 1	folder 7
<u>Physical Description:</u> 17 Files (9 volumes, 7 folders, 1 reel)		
Alan Hudson manuscript and sermons, 1907-1914, undated	box 4	folder 7
Asa Meech research materials, 1941	box 4	folder 8
Microfilm records: Negative, 1965, 1738-1890	reel 1	

Location of Originals:

**Location of Originals**

This microfilm is a negative copy of records originally held by the First Parish Congregational Church. The physical records on this microfilm are currently held by the Congregational Library & Archives and are a part of this collection.

**Scope and Contents**

This microfilm contains copies of several record books and documents, all dating from the earliest periods of the church's history. Below is an index of the records included on the reel.

**Index of Microfilmed Records**

- 1 Church records, 1740-1832

- 2 Historical sketch and sermon, 1820, 1890
- 3 Quitclaim deed, 1763
- 4 Parish records, 1738-1852
- 5 South Congregational Society records, 1836-1845
- 6 Plan to award certificates, 1827-1836
- 7 Names of those who left the society, 1840-1853
- 8 Names of those who left the parish, 1849-1852
- 9 Salary receipts of John Porter, 1746-1754

A Copying Out, 1980	box 1	volume 9
Poems and photographs, undated	box 4	folder 9

### Scope and Contents

This folder contains a collection of poems and photographs bound together in a sort of scrapbook. The majority of the poems are related to an adjacent photograph. The photographs are all of a single manor and people who either visited or lived there. Unfortunately, the exact location of the manor is unknown as are the identities of the people pictured.

Sunday school rewards of merit, undated	box 4	folder 10
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## Financial and legal records, 1764-1965

Physical Description: 20 Files (4 volumes, 16 folders)

### Scope and Contents

This series contains the financial and legal records of the church. Included in the materials are financial ledgers, building-specific financial records, pew deeds, assessment and survey results, and legal documents.

Title/Description	Instances	
Land deeds and lease, 1764-1854	box 3	folder 1
Account book, 1786-1862	box 3	volume 1
Committee payment, 1817	box 3	folder 2
Incorporation of North Bridgewater, 1818-1821	box 3	folder 3
Pew deeds and sales, 1827-1942	box 3	folder 4

Separated Materials:

### Separated Materials

Some of the materials present in this folder were removed from the Treasurer's book, 1857-1865.

Treasurer's book, 1857-1865	box 3	volume 2
Assessor's book, 1860-1865	box 3	volume 3

Building assessment, 1863	box 3	folder 5
Bill payments, 1864-1865	box 3	folder 6
Final wills and testaments, 1871-1897	box 3	folder 7
Building contract addendum, 1895	box 3	folder 8
Treasurer's reports, 1898-1947	box 3	folder 9
Deeds and leases, 1904-1926	box 3	folder 10
Cash book of the Women's Group, 1904-1933	box 3	volume 4
Documents of incorporation, 1906, 1914	box 3	folder 11
James A. Roarty lawsuit documents, 1914-1917	box 3	folder 12
Insurance letter, 1918	box 3	folder 13
Agreement with F. C. Wiedemann, 1965	box 3	folder 14
Estate assessment, undated	box 3	folder 15
Land surveys, undated	box 4	folder 11

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