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Dorchester, Boston, Mass. First Church records, 1727-1784. RG0861

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English

DACS2 - 2013

Congregational Library & Archives

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Summary Information

Repository:	Congregational Library & Archives
Creator:	First Church (Dorchester, Boston, Mass.)
Title:	Dorchester, Boston, Mass. First Church records, 1727-1784.
ID:	RG0861
Date [inclusive]:	1727-1784
Physical Description:	3 Folders
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	In 1631, a log cabin was built to serve as the first meeting house of the recently settled Dorchester Plantation. For its first five years of existence, the parish had two ministers, John Warham and John Maverick. They were followed by Rev. Richard Mather, who served from 1636-1669. The church evolved from a Trinitarian Congregational church, during the pastorate of Thaddeus Mason Harris (1793-1836), to the Unitarian denomination. The First Parish Dorchester Church, now a member of the Unitarian-Universalist denomination, continues to serve the local community. The collection contains notes on sermons, membership lists, and weekly records of church services.

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], in the Dorchester, Boston, Mass. First Church records, 1727-1784, RG0861. The Congregational Library & Archives, Boston, MA.

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Historical Note

In 1630, the Rev. John White and a group of 140 individuals formed a church in England, calling themselves Puritans. Soon after their formation, the members of the Puritans decided to travel to North America. They set sail in the 400-ton ship *Mary and John* and landed first at Hull, and later at a place called *Mattapan* by the Neponsett tribe. The Puritans named their new home Dorchester Plantation in honor of Rev. White who came from Dorchester, Dorset.

In 1631, a log cabin was built to serve as the first meeting house. The building also served as a fort, storehouse, schoolhouse, and town hall. The second church, originally built on the same site, was moved to Meeting House Hill in 1670. Four additional meeting houses would be built on that same hill during the course of the church's history. The third meeting house was constructed in 1678. The fourth was built in 1743 and the fifth was built in 1816. On February 3, 1896, a fire destroyed the fifth meeting house. The sixth meeting house was built on the remaining foundation of the fifth meeting house and was dedicated on May 6, 1897. For its first five years of existence, the parish had two ministers, John Warham and John Maverick. John Warham and a group of followers left the church and moved to Windsor, Connecticut. They were followed by Rev. Richard Mather, who served from 1636-1669. Under Mather's pastorate, the church founded the first publically supported elementary school.

Other ministers of long-standing tenures included Revs. John Danforth, who served from 1682-1730; Jonathan Bowman, 1729-1773; Thaddeus Mason Harris, 1793-1836; and Nathaniel Hall, 1835-1875. During Harris' tenure, the church evolved from a Trinitarian Congregational church to the Unitarian denomination, although Harris himself never believed in denominational titles.

The First Parish Dorchester Church, now a member of the Unitarian-Universalist denomination, continues to serve the local community.

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Scope and Contents

This collection contains early records of the First Church in Dorchester that illuminate much about the religious life of early members. The collection contains notes on sermons, membership lists, and weekly records of church services.

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

Restrictions on Use

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Acquisition Information

No acquisition information is available 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.

Processing Information

Originally processed by Sari Mauro, October 2013, using DACS Second Edition. Reprocessed and redescribed by Zachary Bodnar, April 2019, using DACS Second Edition.

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Related Materials

Related Materials

The majority of the records of the First Church in Dorchester are housed, and available, at the Massachusetts Historical Society: [First Parish Church in Dorchester Records, 1636-1981](#).

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Controlled Access Headings

- Baptismal records.
- Church membership.
- Church records and registers.
- Fast-day sermons.
- New England's Hidden Histories.
- Sermons, American -- Early works to 1800.
- Clap, Thomas, 1705-1774
- Danforth, John, 1660-1730
- Dorchester (Boston, Mass.) -- Church history.
- First Church (Dorchester, Boston, Mass.)

Technical Requirements

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

Portions of the historical sketch are pulled from the finding aid produced by the Massachusetts Historical Society.

325th Anniversary Program: First Parish Church in Dorchester, Massachusetts 1630-1955. Dochester: 1955. 17.11.1 B65.5 FirCD

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Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Instances
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Sermon notes, 1727

box NEHH- folder 6
Small 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 contains records of sermons preached at the First Church in Dorchester in 1727. The notes include records for both the forenoon and afternoon sermons. The notes include the relevant scripture passages and name of the preacher. Preachers noted within the volume include John Danforth, Increase Sumner of Roxbury, Samuel Mather, and Thomas Clap.

Membership records, 1757-1781

box NEHH- folder 7
Small 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 small pamphlet lists the names and dates of those who were entered into the membership roll of the First Church.

Church service records, 1773-1784

Digital Copies:

Digital Copies

box NEHH- folder 8
Small 1

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 notebook contains near weekly records of church services. For each week, the author noted the name of the preacher and the bible passage used during their sermon for both the morning and afternoon services. The author also notes baptisms that occurred, what days were sacrament days, and other general notes about special events or changes to the usual service.