

THURSDAY, JANUARY 16, 1958

Church Votes Building Fund

At a special quarterly conference held Sunday morning at the Provincetown Methodist Church it was voted by a large majority present to establish a committee to raise funds for a new church building.

A recommendation from a previous church meeting requesting such action was presented during the conference. The conference authorized the board of trustees of the church to appoint the committee. Such action came after more than a year's study by a committee of the church's needs in comparison to its physical property.

Frequent meetings with professional consultants, and a professional survey made during the past summer have been part of the building study. Announcement of the members of the committee by the board of trustees is expected some time during the week.

Rev. J. Kenneth Pearson, District Superintendent, of the New Bedford District of the Methodist Church presided at the conference and delivered the morning sermon.

MARCH 12, 1958

PROPOSED BUILDING SITE VIEWED BY METHODIST DISTRICT COMMITTEE

The District Committee on Church Location and Extension of the New Bedford District of the Methodist Church came to Provincetown on Saturday afternoon, March 8, and with the Board of Trustees of the church viewed the proposed building site on Shank Painter Road.

On January 12 the special Quarterly Conference voted to authorize the Board of Trustees to appoint a Fund Raising Committee for a new church. This action came after one and a half year's study both by the local church people and through a professional survey. The District Committee will make its report to the local trustees after following the necessary district laws of the church.

THURSDAY, MARCH 13, 1958

Editor, The Advocate:

Mr. Ross Moffett certainly spoke for hundreds of his fellow citizens in vigorously protesting the removal of the Methodist Church—easily the most notable building in the town for beauty and for situation.

Of course no building in the town is the sole property of an individual or of an association. The Town has voted rights in every structure, large or small. Many persons are aghast at the bare idea of the removal of this church—more photographed, painted, drawn, etched than any other building in the town—conspicuous from the wharves and from the harbor, as well as from the streets.

If any movement is under way, looking to the removal of this church, in the name of very many, I beg the proponents of this truly appalling plan to reconsider it.

Sincerely yours,
Mary Bicknell

THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 1958

Early Cape End Churches

The history of New England towns is written in its churches, is the observation by John Shaw, former member of the Board of Trustees of the Provincetown Methodist Church, who has assembled historical data regarding the early churches in this locality.

Our first parish had its roots in that group of Pilgrims in Scrooby, England who prided themselves that they were separatists, separate from priests and bishops, separate from other congregations. For this they suffered exile.

The parish was the Town, the meeting-house was the Town House, the minister was supported by a tax levied on real estate. This was in the beginning. Even yet ecclesiastical authorities who forget the prerogatives of parishes are sometimes saddened.

The first meeting-house was fathered by the Province for its own child the "Province Lands". The general court appropriated in 1715, \$150 for a meeting-house to be 32 by 28 feet with galleries on three sides, the inhabitants to pay the remainder of expense and to keep the premises in order.

They built it near the old cemetery, not far from Shank Painter Pond. They enlarged and rebuilt until they had the "Old White Oak" built of timber from the

hills, some of which is in the frame of the present Church of Pilgrims next to the present Town Hall. The first "regularly settled" minister was Rev. Samuel Parker and he was pastor to the whole town for many years. His grave is in the old cemetery.

In his day came the Methodists—"the new lights". A preacher of this faith and doctrine, Capt. Willam Humbert, forced by adverse winds to seek shelter in Provincetown Harbor, came ashore from his ship in 1793. While he was in port he held a meeting to expound the doctrine of Methodism. This meeting was held in the fore-room of Thomas Ryder's house. This house was located at a site that is now Adams Drug Store, then called "North Meadow Gut," afterward called "Mud Alley," now known as Gosnold Street.

Though the town voted in town meeting that no Methodist meeting house would be built, the new converts sent to Maine for lumber in order to build. When the vessel arrived, the men unloaded the lumber at high tide on the shore. During the night, the opposition came and sawed the lumber into short lengths then carried it to the top of High Pole Hill (where the Pilgrim Memorial Monument now stands) made a bonfire of it and topped it with an effigy of Jesse Lee, a noted Methodist preacher.

Undaunted, the Methodists got another shipload of lumber and this time, undisturbed, built their meeting house near the foot of High Pole Hill (as it was then called).

The present Center Methodist Church was built in 1860 at the corner of what is now Center and Commercial Streets.

Differences of opinion became so strained among the members of the Center Church that some members withdrew to form another church, which was culminated in the building of the Centenary Methodist Church in 1866.

The Center Church had a beautiful tapering steeple so the Centenary Methodist members, determined to outdo the mother church, had the steeple on their church made one foot higher. It was disastrous for them for the steeple was struck by lightning but being too high for a stream of water to reach the fire the structure was burned to the ground.

Another modest, convenient, pleasing chapel without the tall steeple was built.

For economic and other reasons the church property was sold and is now occupied by the First National Bank of Provincetown at the corner of Winthrop and Commercial Streets.

THE MEETING HOUSE

IN 1783

When the need for a newer and larger meeting house arose the members bought shares, 54 in all at a total of 330 pounds, 33 of the 54 shares were owned by four families, namely: 17 to Nickerson; 5 to Rider; 8 to Cook; and 3 to Atwood. The remainder of the shares were sold to other families but did not exceed 2 shares to a family. The building was divided into separate sections and each pew varied in price from \$100 to \$167 for the central section, and the side sections sold for \$50 to \$65 each. Only the men were allowed to sit on the lower floor, and the women were provided with a gallery and those pews sold for \$38 to \$44 depending on the location. The minister received 90 pounds a year for his services and a "tiden man" was paid 4 pounds a year to keep the property clean and in repair. The building was kept shuttered except on Meeting days and the yard was planted with beech grass to protect the soil from blowing away. The meeting house served many purposes other than religious affairs and was the gathering place for Town meetings and any other special event. Some came on horseback, some in wagons and on foot, and the Meeting house was the center of religious and social life in those days of the early settlement and a mighty important part it played in the lives of these pioneers. . . .

THE MINISTER AND HIS CORNED BEEF . . .

This is the story of L. H., a man of many talents, who in an honest endeavor to turn his hand to making a living, found himself with many occupations. Since H. was exceedingly fond of the use of "fire-water" as it was called in the 1800's, and his associates were equally as fond of the amber liquid as he, it was not an uncommon sight to see H. and friends loaded into the cart, jogging up and down the byways of the Cape. His knowledge was extensive and that perhaps prompted him to accept an offer to drive a butcher's cart around the Cape stopping here and there to greet his old friends and sometimes make a sale. On his regular route of trade lived a clergy-

man, who never failed to inquire of H. if he had any corned beef. It was a luxury in those days and too expensive for the trade that patronized his cart. The answer was of course no, and the Divine One was early acquainted with that fact. However, he never failed to assail H. with the same inquiry and as always received the same answer. One day our tradesman took with him a croney, and before they had gone very far, he became very drunk and unable to sit on the seat of the rumbling old wagon so H. decided to stow him in back with the "rounds" and "backs," "hearts" and "skarts" in the body of the cart. Reaching the Ministers he was again accosted with the usual "Got any corned beef?" This time H. replied, "Yesh shir (hic), plenty of it." Descending from his perch with great difficulty he rolled up the back of the wagon and pulling back the cloth from his wares, disclosed to the astonished eyes of the Reverend, the huge inebriated carcass of his friend.

"There," he said, "there's some corned beef, pretty damned well corned too, what kind of a cut will you have?" Needless to say the minister quite possibly took the shortest cut back to his house, and I feel sure left H. entirely alone on the following trips. . . .

- January 20, 1774

January 20th a new church was incorporated at Provincetown. The Rev. Samuel Parker was ordained as minister. "We hear that an elderly gentleman, who was one of the delegates from a neighboring church at the above ordination, having purchased two or three pounds of the tea which the people had taken for their pay in assisting to save the cargo of Captain Loring's vessel, that was cast away there, in his return home, three persons who had waylaid him in Wellfleet woods, sprang out on a sudden, one seized the bridle of his horse, while the other two went each side of him and searched his bags, and having found the tea, strewed it along the road. At first he thought they were Negroes who had been to see the ordination, but soon discovered they were persons disguised."