

# CAPE ANN Museum

## Library & Archives

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### INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN SOCIETY OF GLOUCESTER (UNIVERSALIST) COLLECTION

- Creator:** Independent Christian Society of Gloucester (Universalist)
- Dates:** [dates of collection material (add bulk if relevant)]
- Quantity:** 7.5 linear feet (18 document boxes, 2 ledger books (11.5 x 16.5"))
- Acquisition:** Accession #: 1999.35 ; Donated by: Independent Christian Church, care of Wendy Fitting, Church Minister.
- Identification:** A09 ; Archive Collection #09
- Citation:** [Document Title]. The Independent Christian Society of Gloucester (Universalist) Collection, [Box #, Folder #, Item #], Cape Ann Museum Library & Archives, Gloucester, MA.
- Copyright:** Requests for permission to publish material from this collection should be addressed to the Librarian/Archivist.
- Language:** English
- Finding Aid:** Mary Sibbalds, 2000; supervisor, Ellen Nelson, archivist.

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#### Biographical Note

In Gloucester, as in most New England towns of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Congregational Church was the established church and, as such, was in fact the government of the Town. Even before the arrival of the Rev. John Murray, however, several Gloucester citizens, most notably members of the Sargent family, had become interested in the writings of Rev. James Relly, whose ideas were espoused by Murray. Murray at first was welcomed in Gloucester and several times invited to occupy the pulpit of the First Church's Rev. Samuel Chandler. This amicable

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relationship was not to last.

Murray's followers multiplied, and a congregation was collected, meeting frequently at each other's houses and then on Sundays at the home of Winthrop Sargent. Their absence from the Meeting House did not go unnoticed, and in September 1778 they were suspended from the First parish church "until they should return from their error in Sentiments."<sup>1</sup>

Instead, in January 1779 the Independent Church of Christ was organized with John Murray as their minister, thus becoming the first Universalist church in the country. The records begin at this time, although the actual Charter of Compact, which provided for carrying on the affairs of the Society, was not adopted until September 6, 1785. This charter "engrossed on parchment and signed by the male members of the Society, eighty-five in number," is the centerpiece of this collection.<sup>2</sup>

1. Universalism in Gloucester by Richard Eddy D.D., Gloucester; Procter Brothers, 1892, p. 19.
2. Ibid., p28

This archival collection was given to the Association along with communion silver, two pitchers, four goblets and five pieces of the original church chandelier. These have been placed in another section of the museum.

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## Scope and Content of the Collection

Beginning "some years" prior to 1922, officials of the Independent Christian Society of Gloucester (Universalist) began storing church records and artifacts, covering the period 1779 to 1943, in a vault at the Gloucester Safe Deposit and Trust Company. There they remained in a large trunk until 1999, when current church leaders, more attuned to historical and genealogical matters, decided that these valuable records should be available for research. Not having space at the church either for the papers themselves, or for researchers to work with them, it was decided to present them to the Cape Ann Historical Association. This was done in June 1999.

The collection consists of the original Charter of the Society, registers of baptisms, marriages and funerals, lists of members and pew holders, minutes of church meetings, account books, deeds, bequests, scrapbooks, envelopes of receipts, photographs, records of various groups within the church, multitudes of sermons, and even a piece of wood from the original meeting house. These records were received in no particular order and with little explanatory information. Marriage records are fairly complete from 1804 through 1943, but there are no baptism or death records between 1844 and 1914.

The Church Record books with other records such as warrants and by-laws, have been arranged chronologically. These books contain notes of meetings, votes regarding ministers, record of tombs, subscription lists, record of pews and burial lots, proposals, and other matters as they affect the church.

Included was a YMCA record book, whose presence no member of the church could account for. This has been removed from the collection in belief that it was mistakenly included by a church official wearing two hats.

Also included in the collection was a record book of the Organization of the Evangelical Society of Gloucester, 1830 to 1900. An extensive inquiry was made of members of the Universalist church to determine why and how this early record book was found in the collection of the Universalist church. The consensus was that it is a mystery that we shall probably never find the answer to and that the book should be returned to its rightful owners, the Trinity Church of Gloucester. This record was presented to Florence Land, historian of the Trinity Church by Ellen Nelson, Librarian at the Cape Ann Historical Association on October 20, 2000.

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## Series Description

- I. Series 1. The Church Itself
  - a. Church Property
  - b. Church Business
- II. Series 2. People of the Church
  - a. Vital Records
  - b. Membership
  - c. Valuations and Assessments
- III. Series 3. Church Organizations
  - a. Sunday School
  - b. Adult Groups
- IV. Series 4. Ministers of the Church
  - a. Personal information
  - b. Church Services
  - c. Sermons of Rev. Thomas Jones
  - d. Sermons of Rev. W. H. Ryder
- V. Series 5. Finances of the Church
- VI. Series 6. Scrapbooks

## **Container List**

### **Box 1**

#### Series 1. The Church Itself

##### A. Church Property

#### Folder 1

Property held in Gloucester safe deposit and trust box: expired agreements, receipts, and inventories. Papers in a strong box of F.J. Babson & Co. with the label "Policies & Papers of Independent Christian Church" consisting of less than 20 items dated 1897-1924, including insurance papers, Treasurer's papers, a copy of the 1922 Parish meeting and mortgage discharge of 1923.

#### Folder 2

Photographs of Church: several copies of a published composite photograph and 7 photographs showing the exterior and some interior details of the church taken by Burr A. Church in 1932 & a letter from him.

#### Folder 3

Correspondence dated 11/22/1870 & 11/29/1870 to Mr. Eddy re writing desk of Rev. John Murray, and a letter dated 12/3/1907 to the Parish Committee regarding the cleaning of the desk with mention of a 'coupon system' for payment of pew rent.

#### Folder 4

Correspondence, bills, receipts, from Creed-Hirons Co. of Boston for maintenance and repair of the chandelier. Drawings of gear winch, six photographs, news clippings, booklet "The Old Brass Chandelier, 1823-1931" by Elizabeth F. Burnham, charcoal drawing of electrified chandelier (housed in chart drawer). Misc. correspondence from Creed-Hirons Co. re: clock. Correspondence from Newtonville re: silver communion service, 1941.

#### Folder 5

Deeds and agreements dated 1915, 1923, 1931, 1933, 1951. Blueprint of land on Prospect St, 1932. List of deeds conveying land to the church in 1805, 1806, 1853, 1854, 1898.

#### Folder 6

##### Bequests

Artifacts: piece of wood from Murray meeting house and a copper plate of composite photo in Series A2

##### B. Church Business

Charter of Compact. 2 copies, one containing 10 articles, the other 12 articles, both dated 9/6/1785 (housed in chart drawer)

### **Box 2**

#### Folder 1

Index of Record Book 1

#### Folder 2

Separated pages copied into Record Book 1

#### Folder 3

Warrants and Adjourned meeting notices. Includes 7 warrants from 1792 to 1940, 2 notices of adjourned Parish meetings, 1896 & 1910.

Folder 4

By-laws 1779, two copies of by-laws prior to 1915, typewritten copy of set prior to 1915, copy of "Proposed By-laws," 1915 Revision of the By-laws, two copies of the by-laws adopted 11/18/1931, one partial copy, undated.

Book 1 Church Records Jan. 1779-1865 [see index end of Register]

Book 2 Record book of break-away Independent Universalist Society, 1843-1852

Book 3 Church records 1865-1909.

**Box 3**

Book 4 church records 1909-1941

Folder 1 loose papers from Book 4

Folder 2 loose papers from Book 4

Folder 3 Report for 1915

**Box 4**

Book 5 Minutes of meetings of Board of Management, 1931-1940

Folder 1 records of parish Meetings, Feb. 24, 1941 – Nov., 1944

Folder 2 Board of Management, correspondence, 1931-1940

Folder 3 May 1944-Nov. 1945

Folder 4 Dec. 1945-Nov. 1946

Folder 5 Dec. 1946-Nov. 1947

Folder 6 1948

Folder 7 Massachusetts Universalist Convention, Misc. 1870-1942

Folder 8 Misc. Correspondence 1938-1942

**Box 5**

Series 2. People of the Church

A. Vital Records

Folder 1 Marriage certificate duplicates 1915-1918. Christening notices, GDT July 1928.

Book 6 Baptisms (1804-1840), Marriages (1804-1844), Funerals (1804-1844) List of parishioners 1807 at the back of the book.

Book 7 Marriages, 1846-1895

Book 8 Marriages, 1895-1913

Book 9 Records book 1913-1943, list of Church Members 1913-1943, baptisms, marriages, funerals 1914-1943. List of members in the Armed Forces of W.W.I

B. Membership

**Box 6**

Book 10 Meetings of Church Members, 1840-1935

Book 11 Pew Holders 1886-1901

Book 12 Pew Holders, 1902-1914

- Folder 1 Misc. Deeds to Pews 1800s
- Folder 2 Copy of list of Lots in Burial Ground, 1993
- Folder 3 Members List (Mailing List) (Mid 1990s?)
- Folder 4 Church Survey, 1959

C. Valuations and Assessments

**Box 7**

- Book 13 Valuations, 1820-1827
- Folder 1 Assessments and Abatements, 17 items, 1805-1840
- Folder 2 Abatements, 1814-1840
- Folder 3 Valuations, 1828-1830
- Folder 4 Valuations, 1831-1832
- Folder 5 Valuations, 1836
- Folder 6 Tax list, 1828-1837

**Box 8**

Series 3 Church Organizations

A. Sunday School

- Folder 1 Sunday School Association Constitution, 1920
- Folder 2 Quarterly Record Book 1856-1862
- Folder 3 Record of Attendance, 1859-1862
- Folder 4 Quarterly Record Book 1865-1874
- Folder 5 Sunday School Association Minutes, 1867-1890
- Folder 6 Misc. papers relating to the Sunday School
- Folder 7 Young People's Christian Union – 2 papers

B. Adult Groups

- Book 14 Chapin Guild, Treasurer's Book, 1913-1930
- Book 15 Missionary Association (Circle) Minutes, 1919-1923
- Folder 8 Chapin Guild dues book, 1909-1912
- Folder 9 Mission Circle list of members, 1919-1923
- Folder 10 Judith Murray Guild receipts and reports, 1930-1931
- Folder 11 Inner Church members list, 1915, with some death notations
- Folder 12 Unitarian Laymen's League member list, 1932

**Box 9**

Ladies Sunday School Society Activities and minutes 1852-1931 in eleven books

- Folder 1 Treasurers' reports for Judith Murray Guild, 1932; Circle 1930-31; Ladies Society 1931-32

C. Publications

Folder 2 Various small publications, 1990-1950 inc: The Universalist Broadcast, “Onward the Journal of the Universalist Young People” Aug. 1920. “The Open Door” Apr. 1918

**Box 10**

Series 4 Ministers of the Church

A. Personal Information and Miscellany

Book 16 *Life of John Murray*

Folder 1 Photographs of various ministers

Folder 2 Salary receipts of Rev. Thomas Jones, 1804-1845

Folder 3 Various salary receipts, 1839-1858

Folder 4 Lyman Achenbach correspondence, reports and receipts

Folder 5 Miscellaneous correspondence, sermons, notices

Folder 6 Various liturgies, 1920s-1950s

B. Sermons of Rev. Thomas Jones (640 arranged by books of the Bible: 33 from Luke etc.)

**Box 11 through Box 16**

C. Sermons of Rev. W.H. Ryder, 7/1872-5/1875 in 6 bound books

**Box 17**

Series 5 Finances of the Church

Book 17 Miscellaneous accounts 1869-1900

Book 18 Account book unnamed church Organizations, 1904-1913

Book 19 Trustees Permanent Funds, 1925-1929

Book 20 Trustees Permanent Funds, 1930-1936 (On oversize shelf)

Book 21 Trustees Permanent Funds, 1938-1942 (On oversize shelf)

Folder 1 Receipted bills 1800-1820

Folder 2 Receipted bills 1821-1859

Folder 3 Miscellaneous accounts 1880s and 1890s

Folder 4 Miscellaneous records of Trustees of the Nancy E. Rush fund and others

Folder 5 Receipted bills, 1920s

Folder 6 Trustees Reports, 1920s

Folder 7 Trustees Reports, 1930s

Folder 8 Account book for Restoration Fund, nd

Folder 9 Bank Books, canceled, 1920s and 1930s

**Box 18**

Series 6 Scrapbooks

Folder 1 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Folder 2 150th Anniversary Program

Folder 3 150 Anniversary Pageant material

Folder 4 1920's Events – Newspaper clippings

Folder 5 Newspaper clippings, Dec. 1949 to Dec. 1947

Folder 6 Newspaper clippings, Dec. 1947 to March 1949

Folder 7 Newspaper clipping other Universalists churches

Other miscellaneous newspapers

Record Book 1 of  
“The Free Independent Church of Christ”  
in Gloucester in New England  
State of Massachusetts

January 1, 1779 ~ August 25, 1838 (1864)

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