

STH May Hist Papers
[THE UNION CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF MAYNARD] *Bdd* ✓
Janette M Taylor

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Until the year 1852 the village of Assabet had no formal religious services. The residents went to church in either Sudbury or Stow, in both of which towns there had been churches for many years. It was not always convenient to have conveyance to those towns and the people felt the need of services in their own village.

In 1850 a Sunday School had been organized, with Mr. Amory Maynard as Superintendent, the man for whom the town was later named. The Sunday School meetings were held in the railroad station, which was then at the corner of Main and Sudbury Sts., using settees purchased by interested individuals. On September 23, 1852 a church was organized as a Congregational church, with ten members. Their meetings were at first also held in the railroad station. An Evangelical Society had been formed, on the petition of Amory Maynard and sixteen others, to conduct the financial and business affairs of the church, and this organization continued to do so for the next seventy-five years, when the church itself assumed these functions.

It was not long before the need of a church building was felt, and Amory Maynard became Chairman of a committee "to select three spots and see what encouragement they could get towards erecting a Meeting House." A piece of land on the Stow side of the river was offered to them by Knight & Maynard and was accepted; and it was voted to erect a house of worship to be financed by shares of \$25 each. The church was built in 1853 and the settees were moved from the railroad station to the vestry of the new church. ✓

In 1855 a bell was purchased and in 1859 a pipe organ was installed. In 1866 the seating capacity was increased by 20 pews to seat 360 people. In 1883, several years after the town had been incorporated and named for Mr. Amory Maynard, an organ loft was built and Mr. Maynard made a gift of a new Ryder organ to replace the old one. In 1889 the beautiful Dorcas window was placed in the church, and in 1890 Deacon Lorenzo Maynard, a son of Amory, fitted the auditorium with stained glass windows, and the connecting chapel was built. In 1909 a gale blew down the church spire, which was not rebuilt until 1920; and in later years chimes were added during the pastorate of the Rev. Norman MacLean.

In 1927 the church adopted a constitution and by-laws under incorporation, with the name "Union Congregational Church". At this time the financial and business affairs were taken over from the Evangelical Union Society.

In the early days there was a service each Sunday at 10:30 in the morning, Sunday School at 12, a second service at 1:30 in the afternoon, and a prayer service in the evening. The church has had many fine pastors during the years, and a number of

members have done notable work. One of the outstanding former members and a teacher in the Sunday School was Miss Corinne Shattuck, who became a famous missionary in Turkey and carried on her work there for about thirty-six years. Other members well-known in religious work were Alex Sloan and Christopher Collier, both of whom went into the ministry. In more recent years Howard Weaving, now a minister in New York City, was inspired by the training he received in the local church.

In 1877 the 25th anniversary was observed; in 1902, the golden anniversary; and in 1927 the 75th anniversary, at which time a medal was given to William H. Gutteridge who had served the church as Deacon for fifty years. In 1952, during the pastorate of the late Dr. Paul B. Pardy, the 100th anniversary was observed, and a beautiful newly decorated sanctuary was dedicated. This past year, in the pastorate of Rev. O. D. Ullom, the first part of an extensive building program was completed, including a number of rooms for Church School classes, and a new fellowship hall was dedicated.

As the church has increased in membership, so the Church School has also grown from its very small beginning in 1850. It is a very important part of the church and has a fine staff of teachers.

A Ladies' Benevolent Society was organized by Mrs. Amory Maynard in October 1851, even before the church itself. This group helped in furnishing the meeting house, with carpets, pew cushions, pulpit, and pulpit furniture. Later they assisted in raising money for the first organ installed; and they helped in purchasing the pews that are in use today. In the smallpox epidemic of 1883 the society did a great deal of work in the community; and through the years they have provided clothing and other necessities for the needy here and abroad through missionaries at work in many parts of the world. They were always ready to lend a helping hand wherever there was need.

Another active organization for many years was the Men's League, started in 1904. Mr. Amory Maynard, grandson of the first Amory Maynard, was Chairman at the organization meeting.

The Philathea Group, first formed as a Sunday School class under the leadership of Mrs. Sumner Rogers, and later the Service Group were both very active, helping both the local church and missions. In 1956 the three women's groups combined into a Women's Fellowship, with all women of the church working together to assist the church and to give continued support to Our Christian World Mission, both here and abroad.

~~Sanette M. Taylor~~
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