

## CHAPTER XI.

### ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY—METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH AND SOCIETY.

In 1793 John Langdon, of Vershire, Vt., becoming dissatisfied with Calvinistic doctrine, was converted to Methodism, and through his influence the conference held at Thompson, Conn., in September, 1796, appointed a preacher for the Vershire Circuit, a somewhat indefinite area that included about twenty-five towns extending from the Connecticut River easterly to Montpelier. Preaching in this territory was for many years afforded only by itinerant preachers who covered widely scattered settlements and held their meetings in school-houses, dwellings or barns.

In 1804 the Barre Circuit was formed from a portion of the Vershire Circuit, and a class was organized in Waitsfield with preaching once in four or six weeks. Not for eighteen years was a Methodist Episcopal Society organized, and it requires no stretch of the imagination to picture the struggles of the faithful few to keep the lamp alight. Religious intolerance was still abroad in the land, and the new sect was viewed with strong disfavor by the orthodox church. There seems to be little evidence that this hostility was here carried to the extent that obtained in some towns, and it is clear that Methodism was not singled out from other irregular denominations of that day, but we have record of at least one instance where persistent "attendance at Methodist preaching" was held to be sufficient cause for excommunication.

The ice thawed gradually, however, so that in the early "twenties" we find the Congregational Society tendering to the new church occasional use of its own meeting-house, and in 1833 the Congregational Church voting to recommend its members to "the Church of Christ of the Methodist connection." One example of the gradual breaking down of prejudice may be of interest. Dr. Simeon Stoddard and his good wife, who lived in the Southwest District, several miles from the Common, were

unable to attend the services one Sunday. Their children went, however, and learning before their return that Elder Wilder Mack was to preach that evening in their district, roguishly reported that there was to be a lecture at the school-house. Mrs. Stoddard, who, had she known the truth, would have shunned the heresy, attended with the children. Supposing that the preacher was of her own persuasion, she became intensely interested in the discourse, and when, upon their return, her eldest son asked, "Mother, what 'ism' do you call that, Congregationalism or Methodism, or what?" she replied: "I call it gospelism"—only to be told that she had been listening to the Methodist elder.

Until 1822 Waitsfield remained in the Barre Circuit, and its people were ministered to by the itinerant preachers on that ride. The names of these laborers in the field, so far as they can be gathered at this time, were:

- 1809—Warren Banister and George Gary.
- 1810—Eleazer Wells and Squire Streeter.
- 1811—Nathaniel W. Stearns and Joseph Jewett.
- 1812—Ebenezer F. Newell and Joseph Dennett.
- 1813-1814—David Kilbourn.
- 1815-1816—Joel Steele.
- 1817-18—Leonard Frost.
- 1819—Thomas C. Pierce.
- 1820—Squire B. Hascall and E. Dunham.
- 1821—Abraham Holloway.

During a portion of the time it would appear that Deacon Amasa Cowles worked in the town, as we find the following spread upon the town records under date of November 1, 1814:

#### *Deacon Amasa Cowles' Credential:*

"Know all men by these Presents, that I, William McKendree Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, under the protection of Almighty God, and with a single eye to his glory, by the imposition of my hands and prayer, have this day set apart Amasa Cowles for the office of a Deacon in the said Methodist Episcopal Church; a man whom I judge to be well qualified for that work; and do hereby recommend him to all whom it may concern, as a proper person to administer the ordinance of Baptism, Marriage and the Burial of the Dead, in the absence of an Elder; and to feed the flock of Christ, so long as his spirit and practice are such as become the Gospel.

In Testimony Whereof I have hereunder set my hand and seal this fourth day of June, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Fourteen.

W. McKendree L. S.

Durham Conference, Maine."

In 1822 Rev. Wilder Mack was appointed by the Vermont Conference to the "Mad River" circuit and in June of that year, the time seeming ripe for the formation of a religious society of the Methodist faith, a formal agreement was entered into by the signers whose names appear below:

"We the subscribers, inhabitants of Waitsfield, do hereby voluntarily associate and agree to form a society by the name of the Methodist society in Waitsfield, for the purpose of supporting a minister according to the first section of an act entitled 'An act for the Support of the Gospel, passed Oct. 26, 1797.'

In Witness Whereof we have hereunto severally set our hands.

Dated at Waitsfield this 24th day of June, in the year of our Lord 1822.

Lyman Spalding	Foster Dana
Parly Persons	Oliver Colton
James Baldwin	Joel Scott
William Wait 2nd.	Oliver Wood
Edmund Rice	Samuel Bowman
Rufus Barret	Solomon Brown
Jesse Carpenter	Moses W. Rice
Ard Barns	Joel Foster
Richard Gale	Silas Jones
Lewis Holden	Isaac Tewksbury
Wells Hitchcock	Job House
Ira Richardson	John S. Poland
Jacob Tinkham	Levi Wait
Ira Burdick	Amos Robartson (Robinson)
Abijah Cutting	Chester Butterfield
Charles Perkins	John Walton"

Meetings of this society were held for some years in the Southwest District school-house. Wells Hitchcock was its first clerk, and Rufus Barret, who, from his zeal in building up this church, has been often called the Father of Methodism in Waitsfield, was most often moderator in the early years. Elder Wilder Mack became the first preacher of the new society. The scale of yearly church expenses may be noted from the following:

## ECCLESIASTICAL.

Wilder Mack—table expenses	\$41.00
" " —traveling expenses	10.00
" " —quarterage	58.74
John Lindsey—P. E. traveling expense	.50
" " —quarterage	6.22
" " —table expense	4.00

\$120.46

In 1824 the Montpelier Circuit, which in 1823 was set off from the Barre Circuit, was divided, and Middlesex, Moretown, Fayston, Waitsfield and Warren became the new Moretown Circuit, over which Charles D. Cahoon was appointed preacher. That year witnessed a revival in the new church, which started in a South Fayston school taught by Solomon Gleason (a brother of Dea. Huzzial Gleason of Waitsfield) who held a local preacher's license. From that time until June, 1844, when Waitsfield became a separate charge, the following preachers were assigned to duty on the Moretown Circuit:

1825—John Foster and Darius Barker.  
 1826—Isaac Barker and Lemuel Harlow.  
 1827—David Leslie.  
 1828—David Leslie and John Cummings.  
 1829—Ashur Smith and John Cummings.  
 1830—Abel Heath.  
 1831-2—Joseph Baker.  
 1833—Nathan Howe and E. G. Page.  
 1834—John Nason and E. G. Page.  
 1835-6—Moses Sanderson and Israel D. Rust.  
 1837—Cyrus Liscomb and E. Copeland.  
 1838—Cyrus Liscomb and A. C. Smith.  
 1839—P. Mason and I. Beard.  
 1840—P. Mason, I. Beard and Eleazer W. Tucker.  
 1841—Henry J. Wooley, John Perrin and Cornelius Fuller.  
 1842—Henry J. Wooley and Albert Carter.  
 1843—William Blake and Otis M. Legate.

During the summer of 1829 two young girls, Abigail Wilder and Lydia Bixby, decided to organize a Sunday School in South Fayston where half the preaching services of the Waitsfield church were held (once in four weeks in each place). On Sundays when there was preaching the school met at noon, but otherwise the pupils gathered at the school-house at 5 P. M. Not until the following year, when the preacher organized a Sunday School for the circuit, was it possible to procure a few question books and about a dozen library books. Until a

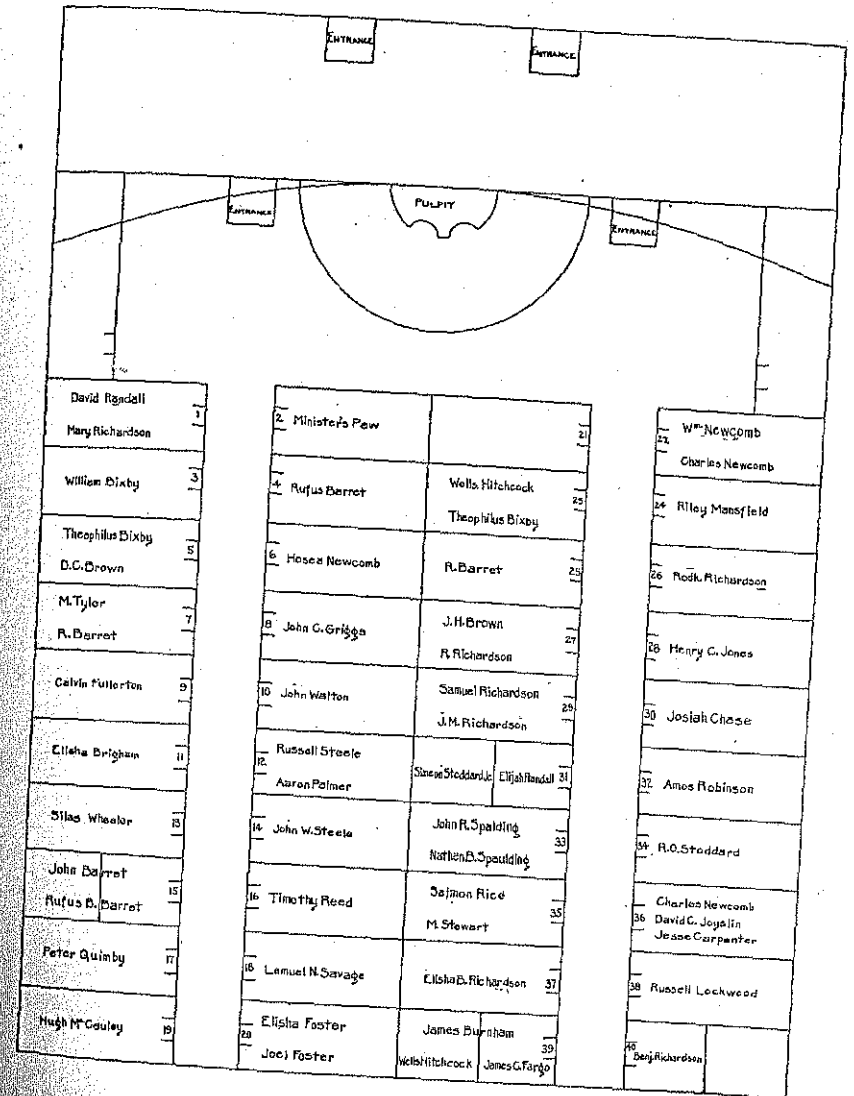
meeting-house was built in 1836 the school-house was used for the meetings, and as it was small there was but one class, led frequently by the resident preacher's wife.

Rufus Barret was the first superintendent, and later the duty was assumed by Roderick Richardson, jr., under whom the school increased greatly in numbers and efficiency, a woman assistant being appointed to see that pupils were present and classes supplied with teachers. Still later Hosea Newcomb became the superintendent, and after him came Cyrus Liscomb, Ira Richardson, Stephen R. Griggs, Thomas Poland, Ira C. Taylor, Dan Boyce, George O. Boyce, Jacob Boyce, Plyna F. Carroll, Fred Fisk, Azro D. Bragg, Frank A. Bragg, Mrs. William T. Miller, Julius E. Berry, and Charles J. Greene.

From the beginning the school has been an efficient aid to the general work of the church.

On October 11, 1824, the recently organized Moretown Circuit voted "to build a house for preachers agreeable to the description drawn by Elder Kilburn," and Stephen Herrick, Nathaniel Stearns and Ira Richardson were chosen a committee to select a site. This committee reported in April, 1825, in favor of locating the building on the Barret farm in Waitsfield, and Rufus Barret, Bro. Randall, Bro. Dana, Bro. Hyser and Stephen Herrick were chosen trustees. This parsonage was erected just northerly of the location later occupied by the meeting-house, and now forms a part of the residence of the late Meriden L. Richardson. It was completed in January, 1829, at which time the trustees reported a debt of \$26.05 due thereon.

Some ten years later the Circuit added a barn, and installed a cow therein, as may be gathered from the fact that in 1841 Rufus Barret and George W. A. Hitchcock were chosen a committee "to dispose of the parsonage cow and procure another for the same."



PLAN OF FIRST METHODIST EPISCOPAL MEETING HOUSE

By 1832 the society had entirely outgrown the school-houses, and was frequently compelled to hold its services in "Squire" Barret's spacious barn. Need of a suitable meeting-house was imperative, and under the lead of Mr. Barret the work was undertaken in 1833, when a plan of a house to be 36 x 46 feet in size was prepared and the following agreement indorsed thereon for signature:

"In consideration that Rufus Barret of Waitsfield, Builder, causes to be Built A Meeting House on the spot of ground Lying between the Parsonage lot and Joel Foster's Line (it being in Waitsfield) For the use and accommodation of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Waitsfield and Fayston as a House of Public Worship and secures the same to the Methodist Episcopal Church in Waitsfield by Deed—Said House to be thirty Six Feet by Forty Six Feet—one story and A Half high with A gallery for singers—The frame to be raised and enclosed before the first day of December in the year of our Lord one thousand Eight Hundred and thirty-four if Made of timber, but if of brick to be brought to the same state of forwardness by the above mentioned time—To be finished before the first day of December in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty-five—We the subscribers promise and engage to take the Pew or pews in which we set our names respectively at the price or prices now affixed to such pews in the Plan of the House hereunto annexed,—and that we will pay said sum or sums to Rufus Barret or his order one half in Money and the other half in good Merchantable grain or Neatstock in two equal payments—if in Money and grain the first by the first day of January one thousand Eight hundred and thirty five, the second by the first day of January one thousand Eight hundred and thirty six—If the one half to be paid in grain or Neatstock be paid in Neatstock it shall be paid by the first day of October 1834 and the first day of October 1835 in equal payments."

This agreement was executed by each subscriber placing his signature in the space on the plan which represented the pew of his choice.

Land for this edifice was given by Mr. Barret, and the work proceeded promptly to completion in accordance with the contract. The building, which is still standing, was a plain, unpainted, barn-like structure with an interior as devoid of ostentation as was the exterior. It served until 1852, when the building was remodeled, painted, and a spire added. At this time many members of the church desired to have it removed to the village as a more central and convenient location,

but so many members of the church resided in South Fayston that after much discussion it was deemed inexpedient to make the change, and in consequence quite a contingent withdrew and organized a Wesleyan Methodist Society, of which mention is made elsewhere.

With the growth of the church, services became more frequent. In 1842 the plan of the Moretown Circuit called for preaching at Waitsfield three-fourths of the time, and at South Fayston one-fourth of the time. Consequently in June, 1844, Waitsfield and Fayston were constituted a station, and Rev. Wilder Hemingway was placed in charge as stationed preacher. James C. Fargo was designated as local preacher, and Samuel Dana as exhorter, while John R. Spaulding, Hosea Newcomb and Lucius S. Griggs were selected as stewards. From that date the following pastors have been placed in charge of the Waitsfield church:

- 1845-6—Harvey Hitchcock.
- 1847-8—Homer T. Jones.
- 1849—Dyer Willis.
- 1850—Plyna N. Granger.
- 1851-2—Andrew J. Copeland.
- 1853-4—Charles W. Kellogg, whose service was marked by a great religious awakening.
- 1855—William J. Kidder.
- 1856-7—Peter Merrill.
- 1858-9—Nathan W. Scott.
- 1860-1—Harvey Webster.
- 1862—C. S. Buswell and Frank H. Roberts were appointed to "Waitsfield and Warren," and the charge has since borne that name.
- 1863-4-5—Lewis Hill—the first pastor to remain three years.
- 1866—Benjamin P. Spaulding.
- 1867—N. M. Granger.
- 1868-9—Frederick M. Miller—remembered as the first pastor to preach a sermon especially for the children, and the first to introduce singing-books in the Sunday School.
- 1870-1—Joseph Hamilton.
- 1872-3-4—Elisha Folsom.
- 1875-6—Joseph A. Sherburn.
- 1877-8—Charles H. Leverton.
- 1879-80-81—George L. Wells—under whom the growth of the church was very marked.
- 1882-3-4—Caleb P. Taplin.
- 1885—Albert S. Maxham.
- 1886-7-8—Orville D. Clapp.

1889-90-91—George O. Howe—during whose pastorate there was a revival in religious interest, and under whom the Sunday School became especially strong.

1892-3-4—William E. Douglass—during whose pastorate the present church edifice was erected.

1895-6-7—Archibald B. Enright.

1898-9—William T. Miller.

1900-1-2—J. Edmund Badger.

1903—James S. Allen.

1904-5—Frederick M. Barnes.

1906-7-8—Frank H. Roberts.

Gradually the old church building in Irasville was outgrown, and wisdom seemed to dictate a removal to some location in the village. A suitable site upon the westerly side of the main street was purchased in May, 1868, and with the opening of the year 1870, work was commenced upon the new building, which in spite of many difficulties was brought to a speedy conclusion. This structure contained an audience room capable of seating about three hundred, with ample provision on the basement floor for the Sunday School and other purposes. Calvin Fullerton, Ira Richardson and Jacob Boyce were the building committee, and by a strange coincidence the new bell tolled for the first time at the death of Mr. Fullerton.

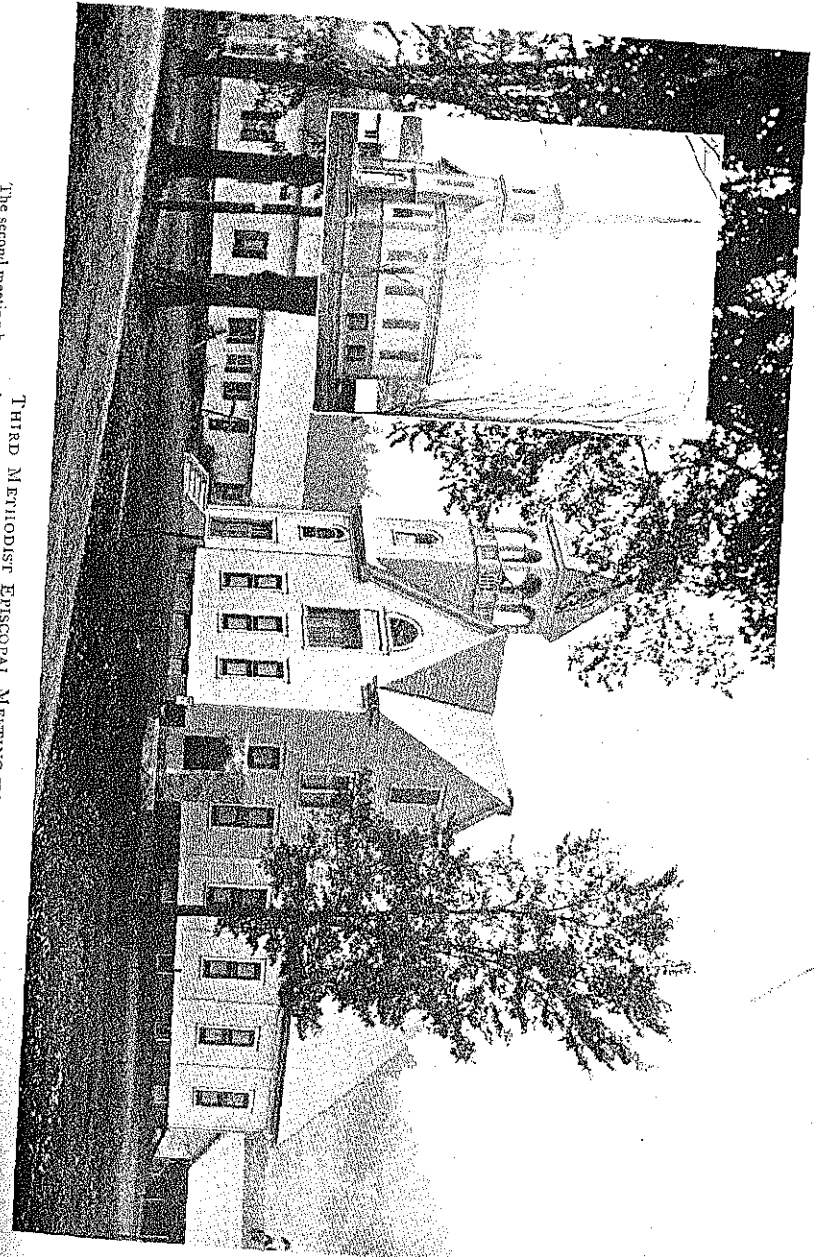
The removal of the centre of activity made it essential that a new parsonage be secured, and in November, 1872, the Society purchased the dwelling now used by its pastors.

On February 24, 1894, the second meeting-house was burned, but the Society, under the efficient leadership of Rev. William E. Douglass, turned enthusiastically to the work of raising funds, and before the close of the year the present modern building had arisen over the ashes of the old, and was dedicated on October 11, 1894, free of all debt.

On November 16, 1890, Chapter 4010 of the Epworth League was organized in this church with a membership of 51 which was subsequently increased to 122. Ziba H. McAllister was the first president and the following have served subsequently: Carrie M. Greene, Charles J. Greene, Mrs. Alice Berry, Mrs. Archibald B. Enright, Mrs. Lovina A. Palmer who served three distinct times and was president at her death, December 3, 1907, Frank A. Bragg and Annie L. Bragg.

A Junior Epworth League was later organized and has flourished under the efficient leadership of Mrs. Curtis Guyette.

THIRD METHODIST EPISCOPAL MEETING-HOUSE.  
The second meeting-house, shown in the small picture, stood on the site of the present building and was burned in 1894.

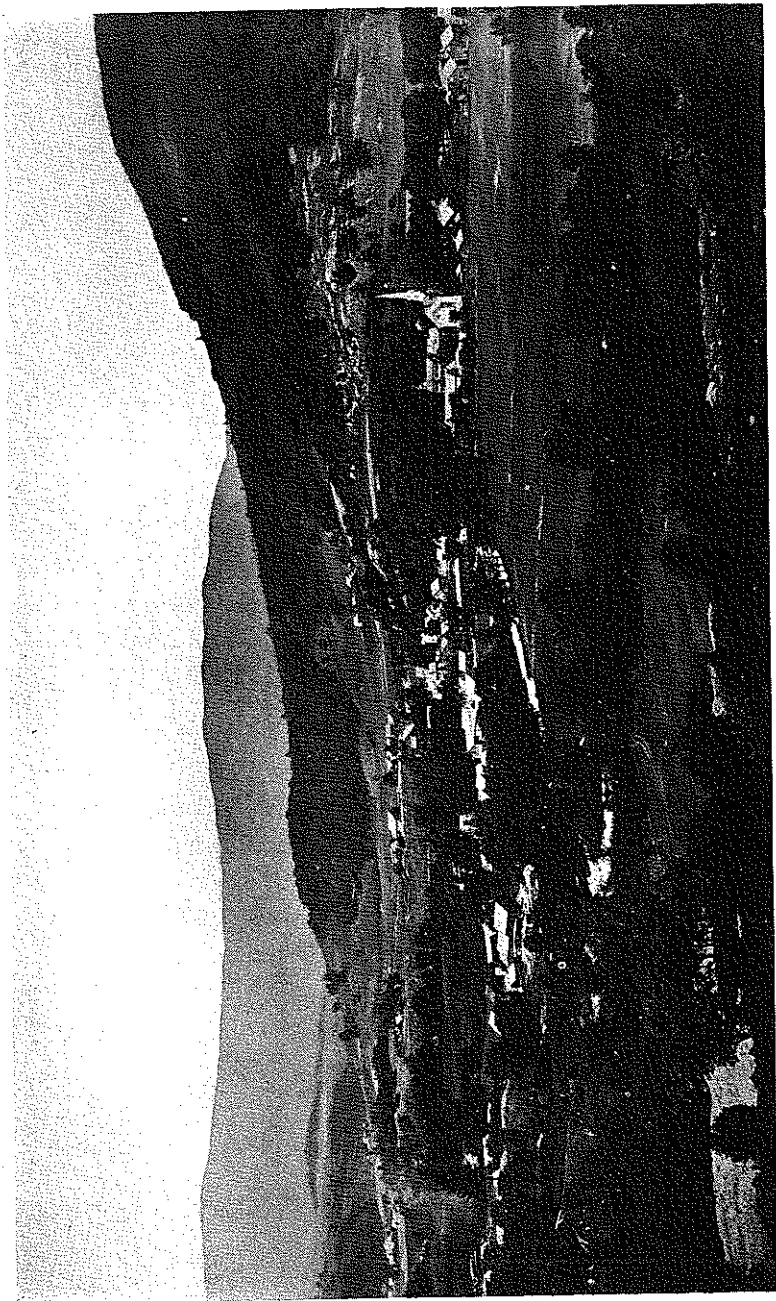


A list of those who have served as stewards of the Waitsfield Methodist Episcopal Church since its organization as a separate charge in June, 1845:

John R. Spaulding	Dan Boyce
Hosea Newcomb	George A. Berry
Lucius S. Griggs	Plyna F. Carroll
Timothy Reed	Eastman R. Long
Theophilus Bixby	Franklin J. Greene
Stephen R. Griggs	Leonard C. Berry
Charles Liscomb	Moses E. Hadley
John P. Souther	Plina E. Lockwood
Joseph Martin	Lyman M. Learned
Moses Stewart	Henry B. Cady
Nathaniel Shepherd	Allen Howe
Ira C. Taylor	Mrs. Miriam Boyce
Ira Richardson	Orlo Linfield Barnard
Lawson P. Carroll	Julius E. Berry
George O. Boyce	Henry T. J. Howe
Thomas D. Poland	Andrew Long
Seth Sterling	Moses Palmer
A. H. Dutton	Frank A. Bragg
Azro D. Bragg	Ziba Hamilton McAllister
George W. Nichols	Joseph A. La Point
Eleazer Wells Tucker	Charles J. Greene
Jacob Boyce	Oramel Smith Joslin
W. B. Porter	Charles H. Clay
George B. Newcomb	Mrs. Alice P. Kelsey
W. P. Harmon	Pearl B. Gaylord
Harry Hawley	James Neill
Silas Eaton	Mrs. Jennie Boyce
	Mrs. Isabelle K. Richardson

A list of persons licensed to preach by the Methodist Society in Waitsfield:

James C. Fargo	Freedom Hill
Samuel Dana	George F. Wells
Thomas W. Kelsey	Orville C. Poland
H. C. Howe	L. Olin Sherburn
Robert Brown	John C. Maxham
Eleazer Wells Tucker	Orlo Linfield Barnard



WAITSFIELD VILLAGE LOOKING WEST TO LINCOLN MOUNTAIN.

HISTORY  
OF THE  
TOWN OF  
WAITSFIELD, VERMONT

1782 - 1908

WITH FAMILY GENEALOGIES

---

BY  
MATT BUSHNELL JONES

---

BOSTON, MASS.:  
GEORGE E. LITTLEFIELD,  
67 CORNHILL,  
1909.