

CHAPTER XII.

ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY—THE FIRST UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY IN WAITSFIELD, THE UNION MEETING-HOUSE SOCIETY IN WAITSFIELD, BAPTIST SOCIETY, EPISCOPAL CHURCH, WESLEYAN METHODIST SOCIETY, WAITSFIELD UNITY SOCIETY.

During the later years of Mr. Chandler's ministry in the Congregational Church there was a growing tendency on the part of a considerable number of citizens, including several leading men in the town's affairs, to embrace more liberal theological views than those at the time accepted by the orthodox churches. Many were also opposed to the assessment of church expenses upon members, as a tax upon their grand list. As early as 1826 Universalist services were conducted by a Rev. Mr. Fuller in school-houses or other convenient places. There was a belief among some of these men that they had a right to make use of the Congregational meeting-house at least a portion of the time, but this view of the matter was not tenable, and a board of arbitrators to whom the matter was referred so decided.

Rev. Mr. Chandler resigned as pastor of the Congregational Church in 1830, and with the loss of his strong guiding hand it was inevitable that members not wholly in sympathy with orthodox doctrines should withdraw. On Christmas Day, 1830, the following constitution for a Universalist Society was signed:

"We the subscribers, being desirous of promoting Christianity in a way that to us appears reasonable, and wishing to support a doctrine that is consistent with itself and agreeable to the Gospel—Therefore

The undersigners, all being inhabitants of Waitsfield, do hereby voluntarily associate and agree to form a society by the name of The First Universalist Society in Waitsfield, for the purpose of building a meeting-house whenever said society shall think proper, and of hiring a minister according to the first section of an Act entitled 'An Act for the Support of the Gospel' passed October 26, 1797. In Witness Whereof we have hereunto severally set our hands.

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Dated at Waitsfield this 25th day of December Anno Domini 1830.

We further agree that we will meet at the house of Roderick Richardson on Thursday the 30th of December inst., at 5 o'clock P. M., and there adopt such bye-laws and choose such society officers as the members of said society may think expedient when met.

Roderick Richardson	Cyren Burdick
Ralph Turner	Ezra Church
Levi Smith	David Wheeler
Daniel Thayer	David Skinner
Fredk. Richardson	Ebenezer Cutler, jr.
John S. Campbell	Jonathan Palmer, jr.
Nathan Thayer, jr.	Avery Kellogg
Dan Richardson	Benjamin Poland
John Campbell	Ezra Jones
Matthias S. Jones	John Wood
Richard Gale	William A. Kelly
Harry Jones	William Ward
Yorrick C. W. Hastings	Chandler Taylor
Cyrus Joslin	Luther Mix
James Dow	Garrinther Hastings
	Elias Taylor"

At the meeting called as above Roderick Richardson was chosen treasurer; Cyren Burdick, clerk; Dan Richardson, collector; Daniel Thayer, Ezra Jones and Levi Smith, prudential committee.

The Society also passed the following vote:

"Whereas this Society deem the support of the Gospel by a tax on the Grand List as contrary to the spirit of religious toleration: Therefore resolved that we as a Society will not give countenance to that mode of Taxation."

This was a direct attack upon the method of raising funds then in vogue with the Congregational Society, and doubtless accounts in considerable measure for the size of the exodus to the new church. In 1840 there were 55 members of the Society; in 1855 there were 60; in 1860—94; and in 1864—82. Thereafter the membership steadily decreased, although annual meetings were held and the organization preserved until December 23, 1887.

Society meetings were held at the house of Roderick Richardson until his death, and thereafter in the Union Meeting-house, of which the members of this society were majority owners.

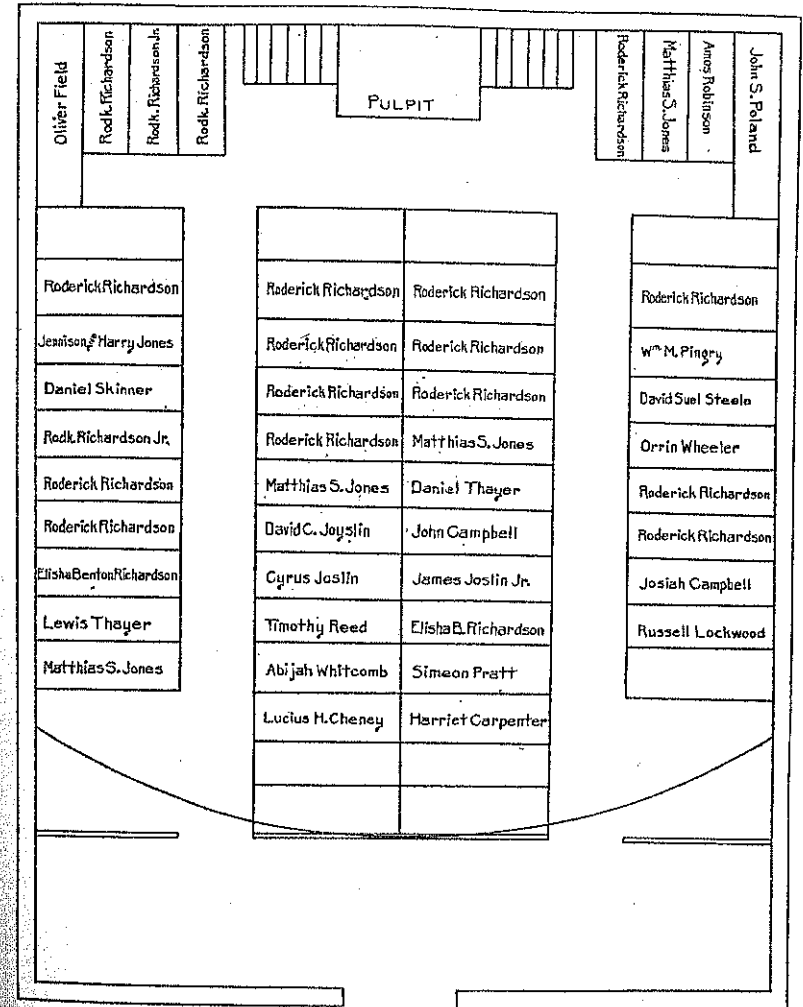
Beginning with January, 1831, preaching services were maintained on an average one Sabbath per month, and after the construction of the meeting-house, already referred to, there were more frequent services. Indeed from 1844 to 1848, and from 1856 to 1862, regular pastors labored in this field, and during the latter period a Sunday School and Bible class were maintained. After the departure of Rev. C. C. Thornton, however, services were maintained with growing infrequency, and, for some years prior to the death of the Society, were held only occasionally.

Rev. John E. Palmer followed Mr. Fuller and preached a portion of the time from 1826 to 1837. From 1838 to 1844 Rev. Edward Brown preached on stated Sundays. In 1844 Rev. John E. Palmer became pastor, and so continued until 1848, from which year Rev. T. C. Eaton and Rev. G. S. Gurnsey preached irregularly until 1856, when Rev. C. C. Thornton became pastor. He continued his work here until 1862, and after that date there were no regular services, although Rev. John Gregory preached occasionally until 1875, and in 1874 meetings were held, with Mr. Gregory and Rev. W. H. Walbridge occupying the pulpit on alternate Sundays.

The Union Meeting-house Society in Waitsfield.

The organization of the Universalist Society gave rise to a desire for another church edifice in town, and this was accentuated after the Baptist Society entered the field in 1835. In consequence, an agreement for the formation of "The Union Meeting-house Society in Waitsfield" under the Act of October 26, 1797, was signed December 4, 1835, for the purpose of erecting a meeting-house which should be open and free to "all denominations of Christians" under the rule that owners of pews should have voting powers in the society proportional to the number of pews owned, and that each individual pew-owner might "occupy the desk for worship of Almighty God one week in each year for each pew owned," the week to begin on Thursday morning at six o'clock; but each pew-owner who belonged to a religious society was to be held to have surrendered his right to his denomination unless he otherwise directed.

The number of pews was limited to fifty, and each owner was obliged to indicate at the annual meeting how his allotted time was to be used during the coming year.



PLAN OF UNION MEETING HOUSE

The committee of the Society, upon which there was to be at least one representative from each religious society represented among the pew-owners, could grant use of the meeting-house for any public meeting or to any society, with the consent of the owner or society to whom the use of the edifice was for the time being assigned.

The list of subscribers for pews was as follows:

Roderick Richardson	8 pews
Matthias Stone Jones	3 "
Thomas Prentis	1 pew
John Campbell	1 "
Jennison and Harry Jones	1 "
Roderick Richardson, jr.	2 pews
William M. Pingry	1 pew
Abijah Whitcomb	1 "
Oliver Field	1 "
John Stafford Campbell	1 "
Roswell Richardson	1 "
Lucius H. Cheney	1 "
Russell Lockwood	1 "
David Carlisle Joyslin	1 "
Asahel Rider	1 "
Lewis Thayer	1 "
Josiah Campbell	1 "
Harriet Carpenter	1 "
Dan Richardson	1 "
Levi Smith	1 "
Elisha B. Richardson	1 "
James Joslin, jr.	1 "
Daniel Skinner	1 "
Amos Robinson	1 "
Bissell and Horace Phelps	1 "
Nathan Haskins and Eli Bruce	1 "
Orrin Wheeler	1 "
Simeon Pratt	1 "
Cyrus Joslin	1 "
John S. Poland	1 "
Daniel Thayer	1 "
Philo Harrington	1 "
Elisha Foster	1 "
David S. Steele	1 "
Thomas Tinkham and Hiram Stowell	1 "
Timothy Reed	1 "

The meeting for the organization of the Society was held at the inn of John Stafford Campbell, on the date named, and officers were elected as follows:

President—Thomas Prentis.

Secretary and Treasurer—William M. Pingry.

Collector—John Stafford Campbell.

Committee—Roderick Richardson and William M. Pingry.

Immediate action looking to the erection of a meeting-house was taken. On December 23, 1835, Roderick Richardson, Lucius H. Cheney, Matthias Stone Jones, David Carlisle Joyslin and Roderick Richardson, jr., were chosen a building committee, and the Society voted to locate the edifice on Roderick Richardson's meadow, "about forty-two rods northerly of the store, on the land William M. Pingry once bought of said Richardson and afterwards sold back."

On January 29, 1836, the building committee entered into an agreement with the elder Richardson under the terms of which he was to build a brick meeting-house 54 x 42 feet in size, to be completely finished except for inside painting and painting of doors at a total cost of eighteen hundred dollars. In case subscriptions did not equal that sum Richardson was to bear two-fifths of the loss, and the committee collectively three-fifths, but any member of the committee might relieve himself from this contingent liability by paying Richardson the sum of ten dollars.

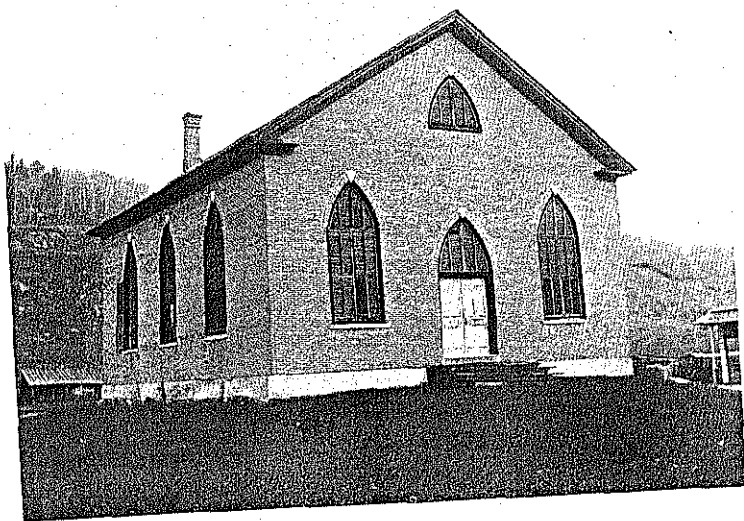
The building was completed during the year, and on February 22, 1837, a vendue for the choice of pews was held. The price of each pew was fixed at twenty-eight dollars, and premiums ranged from one to twenty dollars.

The interior of the building was plain, with the pulpit at the rear end. Over the vestibule was a small gallery reached by stairs on either side. In this gallery a pipe organ was installed at a later date.

The records are fragmentary after the first few years. The meeting-house was used by the Universalist and Baptist societies, and in later years for Unitarian preaching. After 1870 no very regular use was made of the edifice, and in 1903 it was sold by the few remaining proprietors to the local lodge of Odd Fellows.

Baptist Church.

There seems to have been occasional Baptist preaching in town after 1798, but not until May, 1835, was a Baptist Society organized, with eleven members. The Rev. John Ide of Waterbury was instrumental in this work, and preached once in four weeks, the Methodist meeting-house being thrown open to the



UNION MEETING-HOUSE, 1836.

new church, although its members at once joined with the Universalist Society in constructing the Union Meeting-house, and, after its completion, occupied that building a portion of the time. Their first service there was held January 29, 1837, by Rev. William M. Guilford, who thereafter preached irregularly; but not until 1838, when Rev. Friend Blood became pastor, did the church have a settled leader. After Mr. Blood, came Rev. P. Amsden, and in 1847 Rev. H. P. Warren, but after a few years the church, which was never strong in members, ceased to exist. The records of the Society were unfortunately burned in the dwelling of its last clerk, Roswell Richardson, but a few old returns filed with the town clerk for the purpose of securing a portion of the public money show that William M. Pingry was clerk in 1841 and Roswell Richardson in 1843 and later. The following names appear at various times in the lists of members:

Thomas Prentis	Nathan Robinson
William Morrill Pingry	Albert Lockwood
Roswell Richardson	Augustus L. Rice
Russell Lockwood	Daniel Kimball
Andrew Roulston	Benjamin H. Adams
Daniel Skinner	George D. Rice
Luther G. Boynton	Elisha Benton Richardson
Oliver Field	Lorenzo Hitchcock
Charles Newcomb	George W. White
F. L. Upham	Samuel B. Ellis

Episcopal Church.

In 1853 Episcopal worship was established in Waitsfield, in large measure through the efforts of Hon. Roderick Richardson, jr. Rev. John E. Johnston was installed as rector, and services were held with regularity in the Union Meeting-house which was repaired for the purpose. A society of 52 members was gathered, but in 1855 Mr. Richardson removed to Montpelier, and with the loss of its leading spirit the society rapidly lost strength. Mr. Johnston ceased his labors in 1855, and from that time preaching was only occasional, although Rev. J. H. Hopkins labored here for a time, Rev. H. Hazard served as pastor in 1867, and others conducted infrequent services until a comparatively recent date. Returns of the Society can be found only for the years 1854 to 1856, and they contain the following names:

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Roderick Richardson	James McKinney
James M. Richardson	Eugene McCarty
Moses H. Sessions	Edmund Dumas
Harry Jones (Clerk)	Daniel Russ
Thomas J. Grosvenor	John Paterson
Florence McCarty	Moses E. Hadley
William McAllister	A. B. Smith
Ebenezer Ainsworth	George R. Tewksbury
Royal I. Fuller	Hugh McKinney
George B. Carroll	Nathaniel A. Stockwell
Daniel McKinney	Stephen C. Parker
James Blair	Asahel Rider
Amos W. Lockwood	Wilder Drew
Pliny F. Carroll	Cyrus Joslin
Almus Stevens	A. S. Adams
Samuel P. Ellis	Julian Dumas, 2nd
Moses Dow	Maurice Dumas
Richardson James Gleason	William Kew
Josiah S. Colby	Loren G. Cutler
Albert G. Murry	W. H. Mead
John Walton	Peter Duphany
Francis Donohue	John H. Carpenter
Hastings Stafford Campbell	A. B. Smith
Geo. C. Wainwright	J. E. Johnston
Luther Leland Durant	

Wesleyan Methodist Society.

A Wesleyan Methodist Society came into existence in 1853. There were two contributing causes: (1) The desire on the part of some members of other churches to take a more radical position relative to slavery, temperance and other reforms of the day, and (2) dissatisfaction on the part of some members of the Methodist Episcopal Society with the failure of that society to remove its meeting-house to a more central location when the question was agitated in 1851-2.

The old meeting-house on the Common, abandoned by the Congregationalists in 1846, was made use of. Regular services, including a Sunday School, were maintained until 1864, and the organization of the society was preserved for some years longer.

Orvis Jones served as clerk of the society, and the following pastors occupied its pulpit:

- Rev. Lyman Prindle—1853-1860.
- Rev. L. C. Partridge—1860-1861.
- Rev. John Dolph—1861-1863 and 1865.
- Rev. Lyman Prindle—1863-1864.

Returns of the society show the following names upon its roll:

Timothy Reed
 Thomas Prentis
 Orvis Jones
 Joseph Comstock Prentis
 Lloyd Wells
 Samuel Long
 John Sloan
 Joseph Palmer
 David Skinner
 Hiram C. Skinner
 F. M. Taylor
 G. N. Griffin
 James C. Dow
 Samuel P. Ellis
 Harry Hawley
 Otis Wallis
 Aaron Palmer
 Dewitt C. Strow
 Moses Dow

Daniel Shepherd
 Almon Joslin
 Cornelius Emerson Joslin
 Henry Orlando Skinner
 Elisha Benton Richardson
 Ithamar Smith
 Cyren Joslin
 John Waterman
 Julian Dumas
 Gorham Matthews
 Wm. H. Pike
 Jennison Joslin
 Chandler Taylor
 Patrick Moriarty
 Ezra Osgood Joslin
 William J. Skinner
 Andrew Long
 Joseph Wallis
 Lyman Prindle

D. Jackson Gale

Waitsfield Unity Society.

On July 28, 1888, a religious association was formed under the name of "The Waitsfield Unity Society," the formal agreement therefor being recorded four days later. This society was organized through the efforts of Miss Helen G. Putnam for the purpose of "maintaining a religion of Liberty, Holiness and Love," and the motto "Not in the Creed but in the Deed" was adopted. Milo Albert Bushnell was clerk, and several who had been previously interested in the Universalist Society were found upon its rolls. Preaching was maintained through the summer of 1888, Miss Putnam occupying the pulpit most of the time; but after the annual meeting on December 27, 1888, no further activity was manifested.

CHAPTER XIII.

EDUCATION.

Samuel Williams, in his History of Vermont (1794) says "one of the first things the new settlers attend to is to procure a school-master to instruct their children in the arts of reading, writing and arithmetic, and where they are not able to procure or hire an instructor the parents attend to it themselves."

The first constitution of the state, adopted in 1777, provided that a school should be established in every town, and in the charter of Waitsfield a share of land was reserved for such schools. Indeed the town has never parted with the title to this land, but has leased it "so long as grass grows and water runs," and to this day the annual rental is applied for the support of schools.

Prior to 1797 the education of the children seems to have been wholly in the hands of their parents, for it was not until September 5 of that year that Jared Skinner, Salma Rider, Benjamin Wait, Francis Dana and Aaron Minor were chosen a committee to make a division of the town into school districts. At the meeting held on the second Tuesday in October, 1797, this committee reported:

"That they have divided the town into districts up to the mountain, the first district beginning at Moretown line on the river.

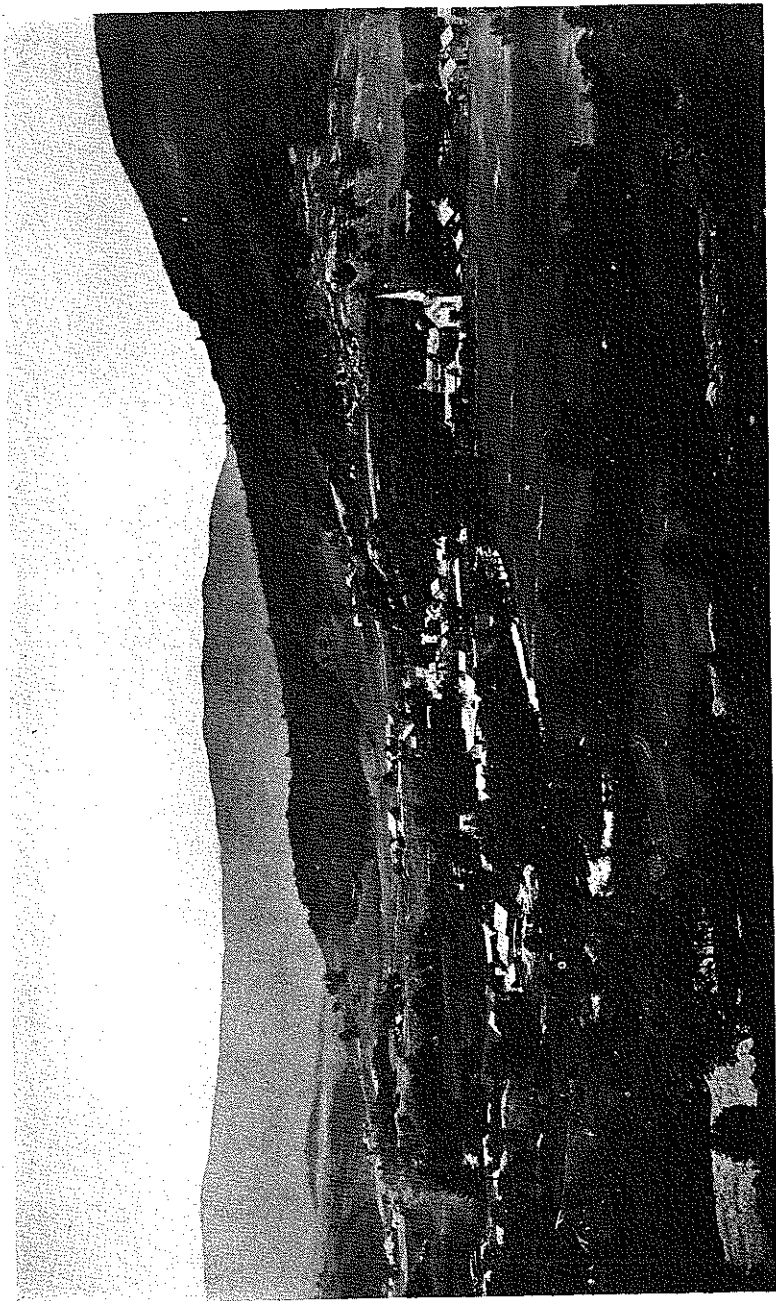
1. All the land the west side and one range of lots the east side of the river up to Mr. Marsh's, (lot 129) taking in Abel Spaulding's (lot 113).

2nd. Thence the same range of lots up the river to the Warren line.

3rd. Thence taking one range of lots to the road from the River District south of the road that leads by Mr. Joiner's (lot 103) up to Mr. Hamilton's, (lot 56) and north up to the mountain and Moretown line.

4thly. Thence the same range of lots last mentioned south to the Warren line."

The report was accepted, and at the same meeting the town voted to erect a building 36 feet by 18 feet in size on or



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.