

New Hampshire State Library



Papers of the Thornton Center Freewill Baptist Church – Thornton, NH
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Finding Aid
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Scope and Content Note:

This collection consists of the records from the Thornton Center Freewill Baptist Church in Thornton, New Hampshire that was established in the 1820's. The collection was received as a stack of 9 bound ledger books. There are three distinct areas of content within the collection.

The first subject area deals with the administrative functions of the church as a whole. This includes information about meetings, member lists, and budget. There is also some very detailed information of both personal and religious nature that is included within the meeting notes. This information often includes member grievances, church dismissals and member "trials" for inappropriate behavior. There is also a history recorded in one ledger that covers pastor information and the covenants.

The second subject area concerns a social group within the church. It is known by a few different names, but all names refer to the same group. Within the ledgers it is called at various times: Thornton Female Benevolent Society, The Ladies Aid Society, and Ladies Benevolent Circle. At some points these names are shortened to: Benevolent, Ladies Aid, or the Circle. These names are used interchangeable throughout the ledgers. Often different names are used within the same entries. For the sake of clarity, the records are labeled as Female Benevolent Society, aka, Ladies Aid Society. The records from this group consist primarily of meeting information, member lists, fundraising events, and details about the programs and money gathered.

The third subject area concerns the Sabbath School at the church. This ledger contains information related to attendance to the school, the elected administrators, donations/collection gathered at the school, and regular meeting information.

Size: .75 linear feet. This collection is housed in 2 letter size Hollinger document boxes.

Span Dates: 1821-1930's

Provenance:

Donated by Mrs. Lizzie W. Ham on an unknown date.

History:

Thornton, NH

The town of Thornton was incorporated in 1763 and is named after Dr. Matthew Thornton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. The town sits on the Pemigewasset River and encompasses 40,000 acres of land that is farmland and mountainous. It resides within Grafton County and currently has a population of just under 2,500 people.

Baptist Church

The roots of the Baptist Church may be traced back as far as John the Baptist and the Apostles of Christ. In Europe the origins may come from the Anabaptists, a 16th-century Protestant movement on the European continent. Most scholars agree that Baptists, as an English-speaking denomination, originated within 17th-century Puritanism

as an offshoot of Congregationalism. The first Baptist church in America was established in Providence R.I. in 1639 by Roger Williams.

(<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/52364/Baptist>)

The Thornton Freewill Baptist Church began in the early 1820's. It was reorganized and a more formal covenant for the church was produced in the 1870's.

Names:

The family surnames listed below can be found throughout the collection. The numbers in parentheses after a name indicate the folder/item where a name can be found. Many family names appear in multiple locations throughout the collection and multiple times within specific items. This is not an exhaustive list.

Abbott (3,10)	Dargin (3)	Hunt (1,3)	Sanborn (2,3,7,9,10)
Adams (9)	Dickey (2,3)	Jackman (1)	Sargent (1)
Arnold (9)	Drew (1)	Johnson (2,3,10)	Sawyer (3,7,8,9,10)
Atwood (7)	Dobson (9)	Jordan (9)	Scott (9)
Avery (8)	Dow (2)	Kendall (7,8,9)	Shaw (2)
Bailey (7)	Downing (2,3,7,8,9,10)	Knowles (3)	Silver (3,7)
Barnard (1,9)	Drake (9)	Lewis (1)	Smith (2,3,7,9,10)
Bartlett (8)	Edmund (8)	Lohyne (9)	Steele (8,9)
Blake (2,3,7,8,10)	Elkins (2,3,10)	Lyford (9)	Straw (3)
Bowles (8)	Elliott (3,7)	Martin (9)	Sutherland (9)
Boynton (1)	Emmons (3,7,8,9,10)	Mason (1,2,3,7,10)	Taylor (7)
Bryant (8)	Fadden (3)	McMurphy (2)	Thornton (7)
Browne (3,7,9,10)	Farnum (2)	Melcher (3)	Tisdale (8)
Burleigh (7,8,10)	Fifield (1,3,7,8,9)	Merrill (1,2,8,9)	Topping (3,10)
Bussell (10)	Folsom (2)	Mills ()	Tourtillotte (3,8)
Butterfield (8,10)	Foster (3,7)	Morgan (2)	Tucker (1,2,3)
Campbell (3,7,8,10)	Fox (8,10)	Moulton (3,8,10)	Tuttle (1)
Canfield (3,8,10)	Fuller (1)	Nathan (8)	Wallace (3,7)
Carter (3,8,10)	George (1)	Norris (2,3,7,8)	Warren (8)
Cane (10)	Gilford (3,7,10)	Paine (3)	Watkins (7)
Chase (2,8)	Gilman (7,8,10)	Pattee (3,10)	Weeks (3,7,10)
Clark (10)	Gordon (1,3)	Patterson ()	Whitney (7)
Clement (3,10)	Grant (1)	Perkins (2)	Wilson (1)
Clough (3)	Griffin (2)	Philips (3,7)	Wood (1,2,3,7)
Colby (1)	Ham (3,8,9)	Piper (2)	Woodbury
Connor (2,3,7,8,9,10)	Hamilton (8)	Plummer (2,9)	(1,2,3,7,8,10)
Constantine (3)	Hart (1)	Reeds (7)	Woodman (7)
Cook (8)	Hatch (7)	Reynolds (8)	Woodward (8)
Corliss (3)	Hendrick (3)	Richards (8)	Wyett (1,2)
Crosby (1)	Horner (2,3,7)	Rowe (2,3,7)	
Danforth (9)	Houston (3)	Russell (1,7)	
Daniel (8)	Howland (8)	Samual (8)	

Condition of the Collection:

The nine ledger books that make up the collection are in various conditions and are made of various materials. All of the ledgers are handwritten and in some areas the ink has begun to fade. There is yellowing and minor foxing on some of the pages. Some pages have minor tears along the edges. All the paper, in general, is beginning to become brittle and care should be taken when handling and turning each page. It also should be noted that there are a few loose pages in some of the ledgers. Care should be taken to ensure these loose papers do not fall out. They should remain in their original locations.

One ledger has a wood cover that has paper applied to the surface. This cover is flaking, leaving the wood exposed. Two of the ledgers have black cloth-like covers. The edges of these covers are cracked and have tears in places.

Six of the ledgers have hard board covers with cloth-like spine coverings. These are generally in good condition. There is some fading and wear, especially to the edges of the covers. Some of the bindings have become loose but pages remain in place. However, for one of these ledgers with a hard board cover (Folder 8) the cover and first page have become detached. The spine is completely gone but pages are still being held in place with original sewing. Care needs to be taken with this particular ledger to ensure pages remain in order and no further damage is done.

Arrangement and Description:

The collection was originally received wrapped in white paper. It was a stack of ledger books and the only order to this arrangement was that the ledgers had been stacked with the largest on bottom and the smallest on top. There was no original order for chronology or content.

For the arrangement of this collection the series have been arranged according to subject matter and content. The content falls into three areas; the records of the church, the records of the Female Benevolent Society, aka, Ladies Aid Society, and the records of the Sabbath School. Within the series the items have been placed in chronological order. Each ledger, or the items found in the ledger, has been given its own folder. This collection consists of 3 series with 10 folders, housed in two boxes.

It should be noted that for one particular item, the original arrangement has been changed. The papers housed in Folder 4 were originally inside the front cover of the ledger in Folder 6. This ledger is blank so it was decided to house the loose papers in a separate folder. The original order of the papers has been maintained.

Box 1:**Series I:** Church Records 1821-1931**Folder 1:** Ledger: Record Book 1821-1843

Contents: Meeting information, member lists, and information about grievances between members and within the church.

Folder 2: Ledger: Record Book 1842-1871

Contents: Covenant, member lists, meeting notes

Folder 3: Ledger: Record Book 1871-1885

Contents: History of church, member lists, meeting notes, loose papers

Folder 4: Personal notes and letters 1882, n.d.

Contents: Personal letters to church, requests for dismissal, grievance proceedings. Originally housed as loose papers in an otherwise blank ledger book. Blank ledger can be found in folder 6.

Folder 5: Ledger: Church Budget 1917-1930's

Contents: Budget, expenditures and incomes of the church, mostly in list form.

Folder 6: Blank Ledger

Box 2:

Series II: Female Benevolent Society, aka, Ladies Aid Society 1860-1931

Folder 7: Ledger: Female Benevolent Society Records 1860-1890, 1904

Contents: Meeting notes, multiple lists of members names.

Folder 8: Ledger: Female Benevolent Society Records 1890-1917

Contents: Constitution, meeting notes, some budget and fundraising information.

Folder 9: Ledger: Ladies Aid Society Records 1921-1931

Contents: Meeting notes, budget and fundraising details

Series III: Sabbath School 1875-1889

Folder 10: Sabbath School Secretary's Book 1875-1889

Contents: meeting notes, attendance lists, money collected. Loose paper in middle that lists pew owners at church.

Bibliography and Additional Readings

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