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The Ministry of the Rev. Thadeus Fiske, the 2nd pastor over the First Congregational Parish in Arlington from April 26, 1788 to April 13th, 1828. FORTY YEARS

Rev. Thadeus Fiske was the 2nd minister to be settled over what is now called the First Parish in Arlington, as at the time of Mr. Fiske's settlement it was known as the 2nd Parish in Cambridge, or as Menotomy Parish. Rev Samuel Cooke died June 4, 1783, from that time until July 16, 1787 this Parish was without a pastor. Two ministers had been chosen in 1786 Rev. Jonathan Burr and Rev Joshua Paine, but both declined. But on the 16th of July as stated a Parish meeting was called at which Selectman Jeduthan ?? Wellington was chosen Moderator and it was voted unanimously to give Rev Mr. Fiske a call at a salary of 100 pounds a year and a settlement of 150 pounds. Mr. Fiske must have given due thought and consideration to this call. The Parish was poor and had been 5 years without a Pastor. Mr. Fiske writes "The Parish was poor and small, considerably involved in debt having been destitute of a settled minister about five years, and were in a broken state very much reduced in members and property." We must remember that Rev Mr. Cooke died just after the close of the War of Revolution, and it was many years before prosperity came to the people. Indeed Mr. Fiske came to a Parish poor in purse and reduced in members, but for a man of his time he was well-to-do, and came from a noted family. And he was proud of his ancestry. About the first of March 1788, Mr. Fiske accepted the call of this Parish to become their settled minister and in April 23rd following to become its settled minister, and on April 23rd following he was ordained to the work of the Gospel ministry in the 2nd Parish in Cambridge. Mr. Fiske at this time was 26 years old, was born in Weston Mass. in 1762, a graduate of Harvard College 1785, and in August 1786 received a license to preach the Gospel from the "Association of Ministers" in and around Cambridge, Now being a settled minister, his next thought was for a wife, and on the 17th of June, 1789, he married Miss Lucy Clark, daughter of Rev, Jonas Clark of Lexington and granddaughter of Rev. John Hancock, the predecessor of Mr. Clark as minister of 1st Parish in Lexington. I will here note that the Rev Samuel Cooke, the predecessor of Mr. Fiske, married his 3rd wife in 1762, Mrs. Lucy Bowes, the widow of Rev. Nicholas Bowes of the first Parish in Bedford, who was a daughter of Rev. John Hancock of Lexington. I find no record of Mr. Fiske purchasing any land or building his house, but I have no doubt that he purchased land and built his house about the time of his marriage: the lot of land occupied by him fronted on Pleasant St. contained about 2 acres and adjoined the land then owned by the heirs of Rev. Samuel Cooke. On this he built an eloquent square old mansion that should have been preserved to the present day. It stood about opposite the house of Mr. Charles S. Parker on Pelham Terrace, and his barn about on the site of the present residence of Mr. Elwell. The whole of his ground was covered with fruit trees and shrubbery, and a row of shade trees was standing just inside of the wall along Pleasant Street running from the street to Spy Pond, the land now occupied by Addison Street, and the lots fronting thereon.

In the first year of his ministry, Mr. Fiske came near dying from a fever, and again in 1804. He had a return of the same fever, so that he was unable to preach for five Sabbaths. Mr. Fiske had two children born to him, first Horatio Hancock born June 22nd, 1790, and second Elmira (?) born April 23rd 1792. The first Horatio took up a mercantile life and in 1818 became one of the firm of Stanton Fiske and Nichols of Boston, successful and enterprising merchants. He married March 1818 Miss Letitia Whittemore, daughter of Amos Whittemore the inventor of the card machine. Horatio died Sept 13, 1829 aged 39 leaving a widow and two daughters Elmira and Caroline, whom I remember well. Rev Fiske's daughter Elmira married in 1811 Joseph Adams, an attorney son of Rev. Moses Adams, minister in Acton. Mr. Joseph Adams died suddenly in 1814, and this sudden death was a severe affliction to the whole family, and the widow made her home with her father during the rest of her life, after her father had resigned from the pastorate of the 1st Parish in West Cambridge. Mrs. Adams was dismissed from the church Dec. 15th, 1828 to join Rev Mr. Potter's Episcopal Church in Boston. Mrs. Adams died June 13th, 1854; Rev Thadeus Fiske died Nov. 14, 1855 age 93. His wife Lucy died 8 months before her husband March 9, 1855 aged 88. I have given this account of Mr. Fiske's family, as the loss of his son dying at 39 was a dire affliction to him and occurred a little more than a year after his resignation as a pastor. The tragic death of his daughter's husband was a severe blow to him and much more to his daughter, whose mind became affected and her last years were spent in the insane asylum. His son's widow and daughter were faithful to the old couple to the last, and both the Dr. And Mrs. Fiske received every call and attention from them that devoted children and grandchildren could give. Mr. George B. Neal married first Caroline, and she dying, he married her sister so that the family were settled and lived in Charlestown. Mrs. Fiske dying but a few years since. Then Caroline and now within a year or more Mr. Neal has died, and I am not informed if there are any children living from that marriage.

Now as to the ministry of r. Fiske, whom from this out I will call Dr. Fiske, he was a member of the Board of Overseers of Harvard College from 1788 to 1828, and in August 1821 the Board of Trustees of Columbia College, New York, bestowed upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity. Dr. Fiske was enthusiastic when he was first settled here, and resolved in his own mind to work hard and build up the Parish so that it would hold its own with the Parishes in neighboring Towns, and right here I will quote from his own diary, on being settled here: "I immediately set myself about endeavoring to do away the difficulties that obstructed their prosperity I felt deserved to attend and improve their condition, and raise them at least to an equal standing with the parishes in neighboring towns. I began with relinquishing part of my salary; I appropriated the proceeds yearly for three successive years to help them out of debt. In order to make up the deficiency of my support I had recourse to extraneous means for the maintenance of my family. Aware of the unpleasant feelings too often excited in a parish by increasing the salary of their minister, I declined to do so. Instead of asking assistance in that way, or leaving a poor parish in search of a better, and a more ample support, as the practice now commonly is I chose to remain and be faithful to my trust and duty and encounter with poverty and discouragement. Hence I adopted plans of reputable employment, not

inconsistent with my pastoral office, and ministerial character, to supply the deficiency in my support. I undertook to board and instruct children and youth and for more than twenty years I received into my house as many as I could conveniently accommodate and instruct. Some I prepared for admission into college, and others for useful stations in life." This you can learn from the Doctor himself how devoted he was to the welfare of the Parish, at the same time he states, not to neglect any of the duties that devolved upon him as pastor. His early work was successful and the Parish prospered, so that in 1804 it was voted to build a new meeting house, and the old meeting house was sold, and is now one of the finest dwelling houses on Pleasant Street, being now 169 years old. The new meeting house was raised in July 1804, and as stated "no man was hurt thereby." And was dedicated March 20, 1805. 71 pews were sold at prices of \$100 for gallery pews, and \$140 to \$250 each for pews on the main floor. There at this time the Parish was prospering, and Dr. Fiske evidently was satisfied with the work. The new meeting house cost \$12,175, and the sale of pews amounted to \$14,167. Indeed the good Doctor must have felt proud in the prosperity of the Parish. April 23, 1809 he delivered a sermon on the 21st anniversary of his ministry, and I may quote from it: "Compare your situation now with what it was 21 years ago. Then you had troublesome times. You had been destitute of a minister almost 5 years, without slated preaching on the Sabbath, and without the regular administration of the ordinances of the Gospel. A sheep without a shepherd, you were scattered and exposed to "grievous wolves." There were divisions among you, and discord and alienation of affection. -- Your situation now is the reverse of all this. You enjoy the regular and slated means of religion in a preached Gospel, and the administration of the ordinance of Christ. The church is built up and enlarged, and additions are made in trust as shall be saved (?). You all are not perfectly joined in the same mind, and in the same judgement, yet a disposition prevails to permit everyone freely to enjoy the right of religious opinion and practice provided he does no violence to the rights of others.

"A small and inconvenient house of worship is now exchanged for this spacious, elegant and commodious temple, whose tower is adorned and with an excellent and beautiful clock." The prosperity of the Town began by the setting up of a factory for making cotton and wool cards under the patent of Amos Whittemore, by William Whittemore & Co inn 1799, and thus capitol being brought into the Town, prosperity financially came too, and thus the parish was placed on firm base without any debts. No wonder Dr. Fiske felt proud of the situation after 21 years of his ministry. But troubles came to him, the tragic death of his son-in-law in 1814, and its effect on his daughter Elmira; then discussions within his church: the card manufacturing business was moved to New York in 1812. The outlook after 1814 was depressing to him, and he himself was then 52 years old. From hearsay, I would judge that his sermons were chiefly doctrinal, and he was denouncing the new ideas that were springing up around his parish. The attendance to the church was growing less, the spirit of unity that prevailed in 1809 was departing, and with old age coming on the good Doctor was depressed, and this very depression showed itself in his sermons. Dr. Osgood, a bright, wide-awake man was the minister in Medford, and often exchanged with Dr. Fiske. After the afternoon service, the two

Doctors would meet as each was journeying home-wood about half way between here and Medford. Dr. Osgood would say Brother Fiske what kind of an audience did you have. Brother Fiske would reply: "Oh, a very good house in the morning, but very slim in the afternoon." How was it with you Dr. Osgood? "Well in the morning, brother Fiske, very scattered, but in the afternoon when they found who was preaching, quite a house full." Perhaps this story tells the tale, the poor Doctor's sheep were going astray, so that at last, perceiving his influence was waning, he resigned his position as minister April 23, 1828, being then 66 years old, yet he lived 27 years more. I think my sister Mrs. Hodgdon and myself are the only two members of the first Parish at present living here that were christened by Dr. Fiske – she Oct. 13th 1822 and myself April 22nd, 1827. I can remember Dr. Fiske as far as my memory will reach back; say when I was 4 years old, Dr. Fiske was then 68 years old, and to me then he seemed like a very old man, and not a man that children would be attracted to, for his manner was not pleasing to children; he thought my father was alright, and he was our neighbor, the two families were always on good terms. As a family Doctor my father was his chief advisor, especially so as to the Doctor's daughter Elmira. Mrs. Fiske was a good, kind-hearted woman whom I much respected, but I must confess that I stood much in awe of the Doctor. He had old idea that "children should be seen and not heard." One thing in particular I must call your attention to and that is he was opposed to Sunday Schools. For this no real Sunday School was established in the first Parish until near the end of his ministry in 1828. He would allow of no Sunday School in the auditorium of the Meeting House, but in the vestibule two or three good ladies organized a Sunday School. Miss Eliza Bradshaw, Eliza Carlisle and Rebecca Wellington organized a Sunday School which every Sunday morning at 9:30 from the middle of May to the middle of September met in this vestibule. When Rev. F. H. Hedge was ordained May 20, 1829, the Sunday School was established in the old district schoolhouse then located on the old burying ground near what is now the entrance of the cemetery. It was there that I first attended Sunday School. From Dr. Fiske's diary gives his reasons in opposition to a Sunday School, which may, in these days, seem rather strange, but it shows how strongly he was bound to the Puritan ways. He writes "Sabbath Schools were formerly unknown; it is not more than ten years since they have been introduced. Before this every family was a Sabbath School. On every Sabbath, after the close of religious exercises of public worship, and returning to their respective places of abode, parents and heads of families gathered the children and youth around them to say their catechism." The New England primer which contains a short compendium of the principle doctrines and doctrines of the Bible, besides elementary reading and spelling was used both in public and private as the principal source and means of religious instruction for children and youth. Sabbath Schools were designed at first to aid these practices, but instead of this they have superseded it, and set it aside; which I think is to be regretted, for it has led generally to the neglect of parental instruction; now parents avail themselves of the excuse for their neglect of family religious instruction on that they send their children to Sabbath School, and there their duty ends. The New England Primer now is a rare and solitary Book, scarcely to be found among us. The appearance of one in this place would now, I believe, be as great a curiosity, as any show that could be exhibited here. Though now

become obsolete and out of date, I made use of it to teach the youth and children of my Parish, till within a few years before the close of my ministry. Thus I assisted in training them in the way they should go – in the old paths and the good way in which the Puritans of New England and all fathers and ancestors walked, and found rest for their souls.”

This was written by Dr. Fiske at the close of his ministry in 1828 of 40 years. I have quoted this that a twentieth century audience might hear the ideas of an eighteenth century man. Dr. Fiske did not belong to the nineteenth century. He was so firmly entrenched in the old Puritan doctrine that he could not grow out of it. He saw his parish adopting new ideas and new forms and saw his usefulness as a minister was gone. He resigned. His parish was divided. There were only a very small minority believing in the old orthodox creed. The remainder were very nearly equally divided as Unitarians and Universalists, but the few Orthodox staid by the old Parish except the Locke Wyman family who went to the Woburn Church, but returned here when the present Orthodox Church was established. Miss Anne Bradshaw staid by; she would not leave the church that her grandfather Samuel Cooke was pastor of for many6 years, but she did more, she believed in Sabbath Schools and succeeded in moving the Sabbath School as a Summer institution in the centre district school house to an all the year round in the gallery of the old meeting house about the year 1836. The school began at 1:30 p.m. and in one of the side galleries, and was in session until 2:30 p.m. when the afternoon church service commenced, and the school remained without dismissal until the church service was over. Yet I will remember how circumspect we all had to be under that eagle eye of Miss Bradshaw, who forced us to be all attention to the church service, and it was a tiresome task to be spellbound as we were from 1:30 to 4:30 especially after a morning service from 10:30 to 12:30. Dr. Fiske resignation as a pastor was caused some by forcer of circumstances than by any act of the Parish. His influence was gone and he felt it, but after his resignation he living (?) right here, had a deep interest in the church though not of it. He was quite incensed when Rev. F. H. Hedge was ordained in his place May 20, 1829. He was the son of Prof. Hedge of Harvard College, and but 23 years old when ordained. During the time of Mr. Hedge’s to March 9, 1835, Dr. Fiske never entered the church nor had any intercourse with Mr. Hedge. After the settlement of the Rev. David Damon, the 4th minister of this parish March 13, 1835, I can remember that Dr. Fiske attended the church occasionally and sat in the pulpit with Mr. Damon with whom he was on friendly terms. Dr. Fiske in 1835 was 73 years old, and with his domestic troubles was a worn out old man. He and his wife were alone in their large house, but the minds of both began to fail and their memory was imperfect. I remember one Sunday morning in the early 40s of seeing Dr. Fiske coming from his house with a manure fork over his shoulder going to his manure pile along the highway opposite his house, and commenced to work. It was between 9:30 and 10.30 church bell. I called my mother’s attention to it from our own house, and she bade me at once to see the Dr. and save him the disgrace of being seen at work by the people passing on their way to church. I went to him and said “Dr. Fiske you must have lost a day for his is Sunday and the people will be going to Church soon”. He looked at me in a

half dazed manner and said "Sunday?" "Yes it is Sunday, Dr." Upon this he put his fork over his shoulder and went home.

It was but a few years after this when his grand-children shut up the old house and took the old couple to Charlestown where they lived, and kindly cared for them to the end. I have here portrayed briefly the ministry of the past of the old Puritan ministries in this Town, and will here state that no minister was ever more faithful to his Parish than he, but he could not grow with the times. He remained steadfast in the old faith, which he held to as long as reason remained to him. He thought the world was going to the bad and he would not endorse the new ideas. I am sometimes asked if I thought the world is growing better. I say "yes" every generation is better in my opinion than the last and I say this in looking back 75 years. I can remember when the protestant ministers in this Town would not recognize one another upon the street, and it would be preposterous for the minister of one denomination to occupy the pulpit of one of another denomination, each called the other heretics, and all their sermons were chiefly doctrinal. How changed it is now. I think brotherly love prevails among all the present Protestant ministers here, and each extends the right hand of fellowship to the other, and none object to having another occupy his pulpit. I mention this one item in proof of the assertion that I have stated that the world grows better with each generation, and shows "how blessed it is for brethren to walk together in unity." Which puts me in mind of the Rev Mr. Damon, who gave out his ?? for his sermon: "Can two walk together unless they are agreed?" He stopped, looked round and stated: "Certainly not! Unless they are agreed to walk together."