

1931.11.3 Arlington Unitarian Church by Thomas Gray July 1931 7/1931/56E

This Church built in 1856 replaced the third one used by the Society. The society was started in 1734 and a few years afterwards a Meeting House built. A building was erected on the present site which was torn down or moved and is now owned by Frances Thompson at 208 Pleasant Street. The house was owned and occupied by Addison Gage for many years until he built at the Addison Street site, which was afterwards moved to # 18 Addison St. The third Church building was burned January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1856 and was supposed to have been set by a cigar thrown into a wooden sawdust spittoon by one of the choir who was rehearsing for a New Year's service. This was supposed to be the first accident in the State from this cause. I watched the church burn as I sat on the bed at home.

The present building was ready and used just one year from the burning of the other January 1, 1857. IN the building of this church the street that used to run behind it to Pleasant St. was closed. This was the fourth building used by the Society.

My father George Harrison Gray who was chairman of the Parish Committee was much interested in the rebuilding and gave a great deal of his time to the work. I greatly admired the steeple of a church in Malden standing between the Boston & Maine RR and Malden center, and found much difficulty in securing plans for it. I rode over to Malden with him several times to see it. My brother-in-law Horace Kelly Homer, who was chairman of the committee when the spire was blown down 22<sup>nd</sup> of August 1871 (in the same storm the spire of the Orthodox Church was destroyed) found the same difficulty in procuring plans. The Malden Church was burned many years ago. The steeple on the Church is a copy of the Malden Church, and has been much admired.

During the building two accidents happened to spire as it was being hoisted into place. It was built in the tower portion. As it was nearly in place, something gave way, and but for the quick action of a darkey employee who made a quick hitch, would have fallen into the street.

August 22, 1871 during a tornado about ??, the steeple as well as the Orthodox was blown over (the Orthodox fell point down into the ground). It was rebuilt the next year, and the same clock and bell replaced.

I consider this to be the best feature of the Church in existence. It shows the driveway, the sheds, or a portion, Colton Academy, Arlington Heights, then known as Peirce's Hill with the stand pipe, and Nathan Robbins farm, now occupied by his grandson Nathan, and the woodsy hill as it used to be.

This history would not be complete without calling attention to a most unusual and remarkable service to the Church – and a labor of love – of Edward S. Fessenden who for almost 70 years has been more-or-less connected with the musical end of the Church parties at Parson Smith's house with the famous game of "Oats, Peas, Beans and Barley" grown for the time he became the motive forever for the organization to the present date, September, 1931; he has served in various capacities with more-or-less activity, and for many years has been the Chairman of the Music Committee even supplying the organ with necessary equipment for its improvements.

It is a remarkable achievement, and probably unequaled church service.

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