THE PELHAM CHURCH

Celebrates Its One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary.

Tablet in Memory of the First Pastor Unveiled and Dedicated.

Pelham, the historic old New Hampshire town, even as a whole community, participated in the 150th anniversary of her Congregational church yesterday.

The life of this church in a century and a half has been the life of the town, and anything of moment to the one is now, as it ever has been of deep influence on the other. This was in evidence yesterday. The whole townpeople were present to make of this church anniversary an event always to be looked upon and to be spoken of with pleasure when future anniversary exercises are held. Not only were the townpeople present but scores of the sons and daughters who have gone into the outside world for their life work came back for the day to make the occasion still more significant.

It was a cold, blustering day but within the church all was warmth and good cheer. A large committee, of which Rev. C. L. Merriam, formerly of this city and now pastor of the Pelham church, was the head, welcomed the guests, and directed them to the pastor's room, where coffee and light refreshments were served by the ladies with a perfect hospitality.

The audience listened attentively and enjoyed deeply as they heard of the struggles of the church and ministers at a time when religious feeling among the settlers was strong and they had little patience with any spirit of free thinking.

The memorial was also of the first two ministers of the church, Rev. James Hobbs and Rev. Amos Moody. An extract from the memorial will show its interesting nature, and will give an idea of the community and its desire for religious teaching at the time.

At a town meeting in October, 1746, the second meeting after the incorporation of the town, it was voted to hire as much preaching for the coming winter as could be procured for sixty pounds; old tenor; a pound; old tenor, equalled about 42 cents.

At a town meeting, June 23, the town voted to call Mr. James Hobbs of Hampton, "to be their gospel minister;" also to give him seven hundred pounds, old tenor; a pound; old tenor, four hundred pounds as his yearly salary.

At a meeting on the 9th of August, "it was voted to add one hundred pounds to the settlement of Mr. Hobbs and one hundred pounds to his salary, twenty pounds a year for five years, old tenor. It was further voted to give him "twenty-five cords of fire-wood yearly during his ministry, the furnishing of the fire-wood to commence when he has a family and keeps house." At a subsequent meeting in the same month, "it was voted to state Mr. Hobbs' yearly salary so long as his ministry continued in town, Indian corn at twenty-six shillings per bushel, pork at two shillings per pound, at the time of slaughter, and beef at sixteen pence per pound at the time of slaughter, reckoned in old tenor."

The church consisted of ten members - James Hobbs, Joseph Hamblett, Henry Baldwin, Jr., Thomas Gage, Jonathan Kimball, Samuel Butter, Amos Gage, Henry Baldwin, Daniel Hutchinson, David Jones.

Mr. Hobbs was 26 years old. He probably married in January, 1752, as the following appears in the town record: "The Rev. James Hobbs and Elizabeth Bouchelder was Published in Pelham, December 29, 1751."

The following from the records of the church has interest in this connection: "April ye 8th, 1753, admitted to the full communion in this church Elizabeth, wife of James Hobbs, pastor of the church in this place."

Mrs. Hobbs was from Hampton. Her maiden name was Batchelder. There is a tradition that her father was unwilling that she should visit Pelham before her marriage, lest she should shrink from making her home in the wilderness. The contrast between Hampton and Pelham was very great. Mrs. Hobbs endured many privations and hardships. But the young woman of 26, who left her father's house to make a home for the husband of her love in this newly-incorporated town, found it her home for more than 60 years; saw, instead of the wilderness, cultivated fields and happy homes; good roads constructed, two meeting houses successively built and thriving schools established in the five districts of the town. Mrs. Hobbs is said to have been a model of a housekeeper and to have abounded in ministerial among the people. She was sent for in sickness, at births and deaths and she dispensed charities from her own door.

At a town-meeting, Dec. 17, 1751, a committee was chosen to buy a tract

Pelham Historical Society, Pelham, New Hampshire

William T. Hayes & Karen Genoter
Light refreshments were served by the ladies with a perfect hospitality. | “It was voted to add one hundred pounds to the settlement of Mr. Hobbs.”

At a town-meeting, Dec. 2, 1751, a committee was chosen to buy a tract of land for Mr. Hobbs, so that the young minister and his wife were probably at once established in the parish as their home. In less than a year from his ordination there was an appropriation of four hundred pounds to pay the balance of his settlement. His salary was only cared for with each passing year. Committees were chosen from time to time to treat with him about “staying” it in the necessaries of life, as the prices of these varied. The years passed. The people were subduing their lands, comforts were increasing in the homes, the institutions of the town were assuming form and goodness. These were births, baptisms and funerals.

“March ye 26th, 1781, baptiz’d Phyllis, a negro servant of Edward Wyman, Jr. and on April ye Ist, 1783, baptiz’d John and Edward, sons of Edward Wyman, Jr.”

There can be no question but this pastorate did much in determining the future character of the town. It was a period when foundations were laid, when tendences received their direction, when principles were established that were to control the future; and in this static period the gospel ministry formed the high-toned character for which the town has always been distinguished.

A beautiful memorial tablet erected to the memory of the first pastor of the church. Rev. James Hobbs, was unveiled and dedicated by Mr. Hobbs and his nearest of kin in the town, Mr. A. H. Wyman and Matilda J. Marsh.

The tablet consists of a base bar in the marble. Just above this is a slab of white marble, about 20 inches in length and breadth, and joined to it is a smaller slab in black on which is cut the inscription, the letters in 18th century font.

LATE REV. AUGUSTUS BERRY.

Who was for Many Years Pastor of the Pelham Church.

There were informal receptions as former friends met again and clasped hands as they exchanged greetings.

In the audience room above the pews were well filled. The pulpit was decked with plants and flowers and from the ceiling bunting in the national colors hung in festoons, reaching to the four walls.

On the platform were a dozen clergymen who took part in the finely arranged programme and the chorus choir, for thanks to the efforts of Mr. A. D. Greeley, Pelham has given much attention to the musical development of its young people. He sat in the platform and three songs were one of the many great events of the day.

The services opened at 10:30 o’clock with Rev. William H. Bolster, D. D., acting as moderator. He gave out for the opening hymn the glorious old tune of Nisiema, and the audience sang with true spirit three verses, beginning with “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.”

The preacher, read responsively, was led by Rev. C. H. Oliphant of Methuen, and Rev. Albert Watson of Windham offered a fervent prayer.

Charles W. Hobbs gave a memorial sketch, confining himself to the early ecclesiastical history of the town. Much of it was historical taken from the records as written by Rev. Augustus Berry, but all was of rare interest, and tho

In Memoriam.

Nov. 18, 1891.

“The Rev’d Mr. James Hobbs
who departed this life
June 23rd. 1793
In the 46th year of his age.”

Ordained first pastor of this church, Nov. 12, 1771.