First Pelham Settlers Brought Congregationalism

Pelham, Oct 12.—In connection with the observance of the 200th anniversary of the Pelham Congregational church the following history was presented:

Congregationalism came to Pelham with the first settlers. The five first men, Butler, Hamblett, Wyman, Richardson and Jacques, came from Woburn, Mass., where Congregationalism was already well established.

These five pioneers took up land in 1720-21 and at that time the eastern part of Pelham was a part of Dracut, and the western, a part of Dunstable.

Pelham was incorporated as a township in 1746 and that same year it was voted at town meeting to build a meeting house in the center of the town and 12 pounds, old tenor, was voted to defray expenses of building. This was a rude structure 28 x 24 feet, without heat and without windows, located near where "the block" now stands, almost opposite the Sheburne school.

It was also voted to hire as much preaching for the coming winter as could be procured for 60 pounds, old tenor ($25.25).

James Hobbs was the first preacher called. He was born 1700 pounds as a settlement (about $250) and a yearly salary of 400 pounds (about $166) also 25 cords of wood, "whom he has a family and keeps a house."

Mr. Hobbs accepted the call but stipulated that when the funds were insufficient to support him "in a quality becoming a minister of the gospel" they be ready to contribute all needed support, added payment to be in beef, pork and Indian corn.

The ordination of James Hobbs took place in the fall of 1731, and a church was organized. Present and taking part in the ordination were clergymen from Dracut, Nottingham, Salem, Kingston and Methuen.

And so on Sunday, Oct 7, the Pelham Congregational church celebrated the organization of its first church.

The present edifice is the third building which has housed the church. The second was purchased from Nottingham West and moved here. The present church was built in 1842 and remodeled in 1890. Recently the basement has been enlarged and redecorated for a social and supper room, oil heat installed, the auditorium redecorated and landscaping completed outside, with more and better parking space.

For many years the church had no musical instrument. The hymns were "sung off" by the leader, the "pitch" taken from the tuning fork. It was not considered fitting to have other music in the church. The first Sunday the organ was in use, a disserter founspotted out of church as the paudle was being played saying, "I don't think much of coming out of church in the tune of "Hey Biddy Martin, Tip Top Fizz" (a then popular dance tune).

Dinner Ends Church 200th Anniversary

Pelham, Oct 12.—Celebration of the 200th anniversary of the Pelham Congregational church was climaxed by a dinner with 200 attending.

Seated at the head table were: Rev. Albert Sundberg, Jr., pastor of the Pelham church; Rev. Thomas Roden, a former pastor now of North Conway, and Mrs. Roden; Rev. and Mrs. Archibald Kerr, representing the Hillsboro County association; Rev. and Mrs. Daniel Wilgie of the NH Congregational conference; Rev. Cornelius Cahill, pastor of St. Patrick's church; Mrs. Mary Sheburne; Mrs. Frances Carleton, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick W. Garland, Miss Mary Hobbs, Mrs. William S. Keebler.

As master of ceremonies Frederick Garland, chairman of the board of trustees, introduced Rev. Albert Sundberg who gave the "Welcome."

He then introduced the church officers: trustees, George Harris, Chester Jackson; clerk, Mr. and Mrs. Stiles; superintendent of the Sunday school, Mrs. Kathleen Atwood; president of the Ladies Aid, Mrs. May Jackson; Daniel S. Atwood, Jr., president of the Christian Endeavor Society; Mrs. Ethel Hayes, president of the YW, Miss Bernice Mooney, organist; Miss Bernice Bigelow, choir director; finance secretary, Miss Hazel Spalding.

Greetings from the conference were given by Rev. Mr. Wilgie and Rev. Mr. Kerr expressed greetings from the Hillsboro association.

Miss Mary E. Hobbs and Charles Winthrop Hobbs, Sr., were introduced as direct descendants of Rev. James Hobbs, first pastor of the church.

Rev. Thomas Roden expressed his appreciation for the carrying on of the improvement program and also paid tribute to the late Ernest G. Sheburne for his cooperation in the church work.

Rev. Fr. Cahill stressed the great need of cooperation of all of the people in America to preserve freedom accomplished in the recent years.

Greeting from a former pastor, Rev. Duane Thielteville, was read by Helen Morris, and from Rev. and Mrs. George Williams, by Ariga Stiles.

A history of the church written by Miss Frances Hobbs and Miss Ariga Stiles was read, the first part by Rev. Mr. Roden reviewing many interesting events of the early church years in Pelham.

The second part of the history was read by Mrs. William T. Koehler and expressed appreciation for the organ purchased during the time Rev. Herbert Gale was pastor through the generosity of the estate of the late Luella Hobbs Dutton of Pelham and Mrs. Ira Harris of Nashua.

Music during dinner was furnished by a trio including piano, Miss Bernice Mooney of Lowell; cello, Mrs. Bernice Bigelow of Pelham; violin, Miss Dorothy Bruno of Methuen, Mass.