Westhampton Congregational Church (Westhampton, Mass.) Records
1817-1970
17 vols. (1.5 linear feet)
Call no.: Ms 806

Background on Westhampton

The Congregational Church in the small western Massachusetts town of Westhampton was formally organized on Sept. 1, 1779, with the assistance of ministers from two adjoining towns. Jonathan Judd of Southampton and Solomon Williams of Northampton. The first pastor chosen for the pulpit at Westhampton was the young Enoch Hale, a 1773 graduate of Yale and brother of the patriot Nathan Hale. Ordained on Sept. 29, 1779, Hale served his community for fifty years, during which time he was an active presence in the religious life of the Commonwealth, serving as Secretary of the General Association of the Congregational Churches and Ministers of Massachusetts (1804-1824) and as Secretary of the Hampshire Missionary Society for many years.

During the summer 1829, with the aging Hale nearing retirement, Westhampton called Horace B. Chapin to settle as colleague pastor. His installation in July initiated a period of sharp crisis. Several members of the church petitioned to form themselves into a Union Society and after being denied, forty-six seceded and called a charismatic evangelical preacher, John Truair, as their pastor. Ordained in Cambridge, Vt., in 1810, Truair had served as pastor in the Oneida, N.Y., on the eastern edge of the Burned Over District, and as corresponding secretary for the American Seamen’s Friend Society, before arriving in Westhampton. Truair’s role in the controversy precipitated the Hampshire Central Association to withdraw him from fellowship, and the Presbytery of New York deposed him from the ministry two years later, but his evangelical zeal held the secessionists together. After Truair returned to New York State in 1837, however, the “meteoric light began to wane,” as Josiah Holland noted, and most of the Union Church membership voted to return into the fold in September 1841, with the remnant formally disbanding in August 1850.

Contents of Collection

The records of the Congregational Church in Westhampton document nearly two hundreds of religious life in a rural western Massachusetts community. Beginning with the founding of the church in 1779, the collection include a nearly unbroken record of church activities, including thorough records of membership, transfers, marriages, baptisms, deaths, and church discipline, and for the latter century, a complete record of church finances. Of particular note is a volume recording the activities of the secessionist Union Church, 1829-1849.

Abstract

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Most of the earliest records of the church were destroyed in a fire at the home of Rev. Hale in 1817, however two volumes in this collection include a painstaking effort to reconstruct the early records of church activity.

### Collection inventory

**Westhampton Congregational Church (Westhampton, Mass.), Church records 1817-1961**

- **Westhampton Congregational Church (Westhampton, Mass.), Church records, book 1**
  - 1817-1831
  - 184p.
  - Vol. 1
  - Includes notes on the church extending back to its founding in 1779, including deaths in Westhampton; journal of the church and its history; marriages solemnized in Westhampton and by the pastor in other towns; members of the church; officers of the church; donations received and thanks; and baptisms.

- **Westhampton Congregational Church (Westhampton, Mass.), Church record, book no. 2**
  - 1831-1870
  - 364p.
  - Vol. 2

- **Union Church of Westhampton (Westhampton, Mass.), Records of Church of Westhampton**
  - 1829-1849
  - 52p.
  - Vol. 3
  - Records of Union Church, which seceded under Rev. John Truair from the Congregational Church in Westhampton. The end of the volume includes lists of deaths and baptisms.

- **Westhampton Congregational Church (Westhampton, Mass.), Record of the First Congregational Parish in Westhampton, vol. II**
  - 1849 Apr.-1872 Apr.
  - Vol. 4

- **Westhampton Congregational Church (Westhampton, Mass.), Record of the Congregational Parish in Westhampton, vol. III**
  - 1873 Apr.-1934 Jan.
  - Vol. 5

- **Westhampton Congregational Church (Westhampton, Mass.), Record of the Congregational Church in West Hampton continued from Book No. 3**
  - 1874-1939 (bulk 1874-1899)
  - Vol. 6
  - Includes Rules of practice (1875); confessions of faith; convent; list of members; journal (1874-1939); deaths of members (-1939); removals; baptisms; pastors and deacons. Includes records extending back to founding in 1779

- **Westhampton Congregational Church (Westhampton, Mass.), Account of the Westhampton Library Committee**
  - 1883-1912
  - Vol. 7

- **Westhampton Congregational Church (Westhampton, Mass.), Pilgrim church register and record, book 3a**
  - 1900-1927
  - Vol. 8

- **Westhampton Congregational Church (Westhampton, Mass.), Pilgrim Church Register, book IV**
  - 1929-1956
  - Vol. 9

- **Westhampton Congregational Church (Westhampton, Mass.), Church records, vol. IV**
  - 1935-1956
  - Vol. 10

- **Westhampton Congregational Church (Westhampton, Mass.), Church register and membership list**
  - 1957-1961
  - Vol. 11
  - Includes lists of officers, members (1882-1961), church attendance, baptisms, marriages, deaths, and meetings.

**Westhampton Congregational Church (Westhampton, Mass.), Church accounts 1817-1831**

- **Westhampton Congregational Church (Westhampton, Mass.), Church records, book 1**
  - 1817-1831
Administrative information

Provenance
Gift of the Westhampton Congregational Church (Westhampton, Mass.) and the Westhampton Historical Society, 2014.

Related Material
See also the following collections:


Enoch Hale Papers, Special Collections, Yale Divinity School Library (RG 66).

Bibliography

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Subj ects

- Congregational churches--Massachusetts--Westhampton
- Revivals--Massachusetts--Westhampton
- Second Great Awakening
- Westhampton (Mass.)--Religious life and customs

N a m e s

- Hale, Enoch, 1753-1837
- Truair, John, 1780-1845
- Union Church (Westhampton, Mass.)

G e n r e t e r m s

- Account books