

NEWTON'S UNIVERSALIST HISTORY

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A society existed for several years called the **Newton and Watertown Universalist Society** whose meeting house stood in Watertown north of the border line of Newton. The church edifice was dedicated August 15 1827 and the church formed March 16 1828. The members were thirteen in number nine belonging to Newton and four to Watertown. The society was served by about fourteen successive pastors and finally dissolved about 1866. The church building was sold for a school house and still occupies its original location. The tower was removed and the bell sold to the Second Baptist Church in Newton Upper Falls and is still in use by that society. The communion furniture was formerly the property of the First Universalist Church in Boston corner of Hanover and North Bennett streets now the Seamen's Bethel and one of the cups was brought from England by Rev John Murray. This society may be regarded as the beginning of the Universalist Society now at Newtonville.

https://books.google.com/books?id=hNaAnwRMedUC&pg=PA244&lpg=PA244&dq=Newton+and+Watertown+Universalist+Society.&source=bl&ots=Rp8b4zWeXO&sig=FppFr_f_qzM65Cl5sEttqL4bUrec&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjOzaa9sprSAhUG4yYKHUykB8YQ6AEIKTAD#v=onepage&q=Newton%20and%20Watertown%20Universalist%20Society.&f=false

The **Newton Universalist Society** in Newtonville, Massachusetts, was the outgrowth of a missionary effort in 1870 by members of the former Newton and Watertown Universalist Society (organized in 1827) and the former Watertown Universalist Church. The first meeting of the church was in February 1871. The Newton



Universalist Society was organized in April of that year, and the Newton Universalist Church was organized in February 1873. The cornerstone of the church building was laid on October 22, 1872, and it was dedicated on June 26, 1873. It was popularly known as the Newtonville Universalist Church. The society and church were dissolved in 1937.

<http://library.hds.harvard.edu/exhibits/featured-images/newtonville-universalist-church-newton-massachusetts-0>

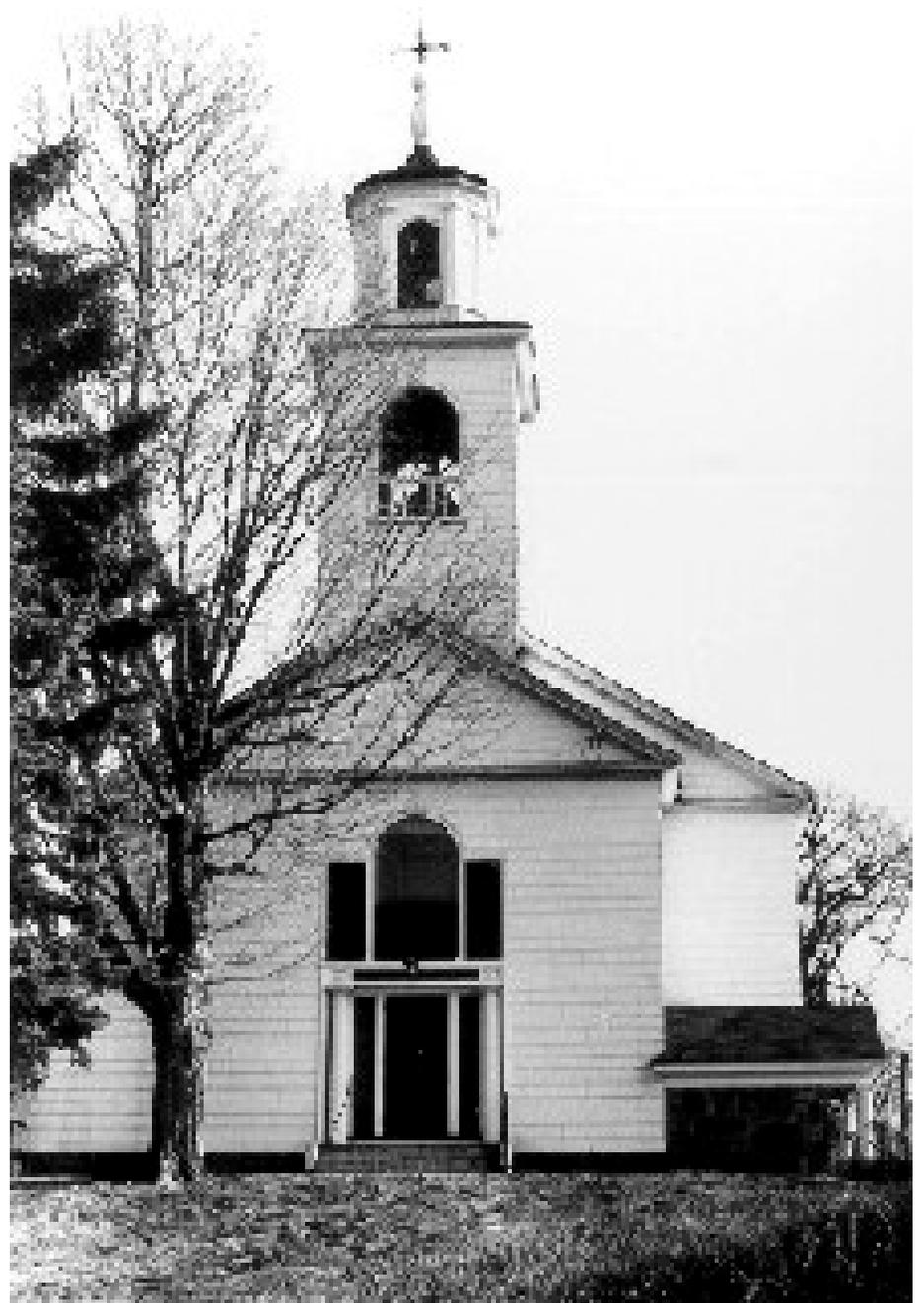
(Bonus points: What is this building today?)



Upper Falls Religious Society

The land on which this first meeting house was erected was an open field connected to Chestnut Street by a right-of-way purchased from property owner Rebecca Morrill. The original building contained 48 pews and the cost was about \$3,300. Of this amount, the Elliot Mfg. Co. paid three-fifths and the Newton Factories two-fifths. The meeting house was commenced in the autumn of 1827, and finished and dedicated February 27, 1828. Its construction brought the number of churches in Newton to five at that time. Only two of these remain today which makes the building the second oldest church in the city. As all religious activities of the Commonwealth were still under the control of the Puritan or Congregational church (the laws governing its authority were not repealed until 1833), permission had to be granted by the Legislature under "an act to incorporate the Upper Falls Religious Society and the Proprietors of the Upper Falls Meeting House in Newton."

Although non-denominational at its inception, the congregation voted to adopt the Unitarian faith and thus became the first church of that denomination in Newton. In the first years the ministers were Unitarian. However, **in 1832 we find that the members "voted that the money that may be received, be appropriated for the support of Unitarian and Universalist sentiments as each subscriber shall dictate."** This division, of course, was resolved when the Universalists built their own church in the village a few years later. Included in the 32



petitioners to the state legislature for permission to organize as a church were local factory owners and officials as well as prominent landowners and merchants from all sections of the village. Among the first group were Otis Pettee, Superintendent, and Frederick Cabot, Resident Agent, both of the Elliot Mfg. Co. There were also Newell and Rufus Ellis, owners of the Newton Factories. Among the second group was Bethuel Allen, landowner on Woodward Street, relative or close friend of Ralph Waldo Emerson in whose home Emerson and his mother lived in 1833-34. Because of the connection, shortly after Emerson was ordained a Unitarian minister in 1829, he was persuaded to preach in the new church on two occasions. The wife of Geoffrey Wheelock, a charter member of the Society, is believed to be Emerson's cousin, the daughter of his mother's sister, Mary (Haskins) Ladd. She is known to have resided in Newton.

Available records of the Society show a male membership of 145 during the years 1828 through 1833. While it is understood that most of these were employees of the industries which sponsored the building of the church, there were others from the outer perimeter of the village which had no association with these firms. Among the seven or so families from the northern section (now Waban) were the Turners, Collins, Wiswalls, Allens and Woodwards. Among the petitioners in the organization of the Upper Falls Meeting House were Matthias Collins, William Wiswall 2nd and the aforementioned Bethuel Allen. In 1832 the use of the church building as a Methodist church was granted to Marshall S. Rice, a Society member. The two organizations continued in joint operation until 1836 although Mr. Rice had purchased the building in 1832. Some of the members of the Religious Society joined the newer congregation.

http://www.hemlockgorge.org/FHG_Makers_of_the_Mold/MakersChurches.htm#UpperFallsReligiousSociety

This building still stands as the First United Methodist Church of Newton at 5 Summer Street in Newton Upper Falls.



Newton Upper Falls Universalist Society

A society of the Universalist denomination was organized for religious worship at Newton Upper Falls in September, 1841. A meetinghouse, the first of the Universalist faith in Newton, was erected on High Street at a cost of about \$1,300 and was dedicated in May, 1842.

There were 22 original proprietors listed as organizers of the church and leading the list was Pliny Bosworth, a shop owner who had just completed the building of a machine shop on High Street. A list of the church members may be found in the chapter THE PEOPLE. The first and only pastor was Reverend Samuel P. Skinner who served the church until October, 1845. When a feud developed between West Newton and Newton Centre as to which village should be the seat of the town government,



producing such high feelings that it was almost decided to divide Newton into two towns, it was the persuading influence of Reverend Skinner's eloquence that kept the old town together. Our young Upper Falls schoolboy, John Winslow, gives us this eye-witness account of those exciting days:

"Town meeting day was an occasion when boys with public spirit would go to meeting and not to school. How well do I remember the old town meetings held in the Town Hall at Newton Centre, near the Baptist Pond. When the question of dividing the town was up it caused many hot debates in town meeting. Two prominent advocates of the proposed division were the Hon. William Jackson of the 'Corner' and Seth Davis of West Newton, which latter place in early days was impolitely called 'Squash h End.' Two prominent opponents of division were old Mr. Edwards and the Rev. Samuel Skinner. Mr. Skinner was a ready and able debater, and rather too much for his adversaries. The long contest finally came to an end and the good town was not divided. You may believe that we boys who attended the town meetings had decided opinions on the momentous question."

After Reverend Skinner, the Universalist pulpit was supplied by A.S. Dudley, a dentist by profession, until July 1847. It was then filled by Dr. William F. Teulon of Huguenot ancestry, and long a physician at Upper Falls, West Newton and Newton. Although the Society was dissolved after an existence of only six or seven years, its church building continued to serve as a useful structure in the village, taking the name of Elliot Hall. In 1879 the building was sold to a local grocer, John Hove, who turned it a quarter turn and converted it into a private residence.

http://www.hemlockgorge.org/FHG_Makers_of_the_Mold/MakersChurches.htm#UniversalistSociety



Quillen Hamilton Shinn (January 1, 1845-September 6, 1907), Universalist minister and well-traveled missionary, is known as the "St. Paul of the Universalist Church." He has been credited with starting at least 40 churches and inspiring nearly 30 persons to enter the ministry.

Shinn's message remained essentially unchanged throughout his career, reflecting his belief in the centrality of the Bible, the love of God, the parenthood of God, the immortality of the soul, the divinity (though not the deity) of Christ, the certainty of punishment for sin, and the universality of salvation. He contended that "there is no hell for any of us to fear, outside of ourselves." He had no use for modern Biblical criticism, was suspicious of liberalism of any kind, disliked Unitarians with their "go-as-you-please church," and was an uncompromising opponent of the use of alcohol, tobacco, and profanity. While not a social activist in the usual sense of that term, he was an active member of the National Prison Association and at one time served as chair of a denominational committee on penal reform. He was an unremitting adversary of capital punishment and a strong supporter of women's rights.

<http://uudb.org/articles/quillenhamiltonshinn.html>



(Final bonus point: Where is this building and what is its name?)