

May 27, 2004

A Weir painting graces the church

The history of Windham's Anglican Church dates back to 1735 when the Rev. Samuel Seabury came to the village and conducted services for a congregation of about 80 people. Seabury, the rector of the New London Anglican Church, was the father of Samuel Seabury (1729-1806), who in 1784 became the first Bishop of the Anglican or Episcopal Church in the United States.

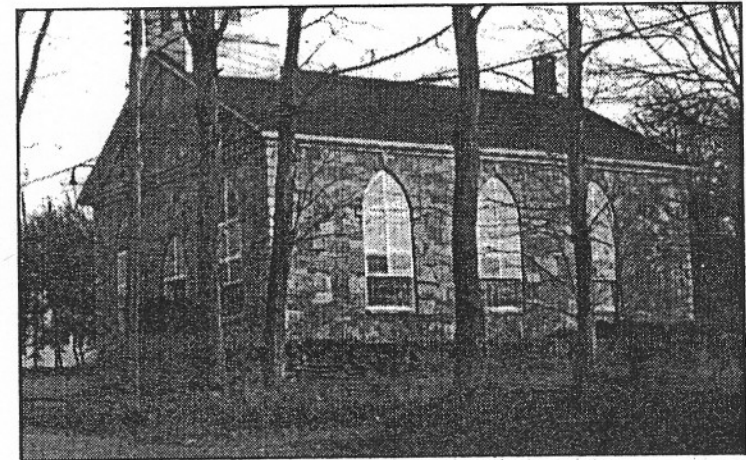
Between 1735 and 1832 visiting Episcopalian clergymen conducted services at Windham using the old courthouse, or other public buildings, as places of worship.



Tom
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On Dec. 21, 1832, Windham merchant and industrialist Charles Taintor (1762-1854) addressed a meeting at the Masonic Hall, Windham, and presented a constitution for an Episcopalian church society to be organized under the name of St Paul's Church of Windham.

The sale of stock shares raised
(A Weir, Page 10)



St. Paul's Church of Windham

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the necessary funds, and the construction of a church edifice got underway in June 1833. It was built from gneiss stone, quarried locally and from lumber cut from the Windham woods. The bishop of Connecticut and the founder of Hartford's Trinity College, the Rev. Bishop Thomas Church Brownell (1779-1865) came to Windham and consecrated the building on April 14, 1834.

The first service was held in the new church on Christmas Day, 1833 and the congregation included some of the wealthiest individuals in the town. On March 26, 1834, the church's first

wedding and baptism took place. The church's first rector, the Rev. L. H. Corson, married John A. Perkins (1809-85) and Emily Johnson (1812-97) and baptized Charles Taintor's son Giles Taintor (1802-1882). Taintor and Parker were two of Windham's leading 19th century citizens.

Perkins' obituary described him as "a native of this town belonging to that class of courteous old country gentlemen familiar to the last generation and his taking off is the removal of a landmark." Perkins farmed, was the proprietor of the Windham village apothecary and was a long serving director of the Windham

Bank.

Taintor attended Yale and went into business in New York City. He retired at age 33 and spent the winters in a New York hotel, and summers on his Windham estates. Giles Taintor is best known as the founder of the Fitch Academy in 1850, a school in Windham that prepared students for Yale.

The church was supported throughout the 19th century by generous contributions from its congregation, which included the Smith and Winchester families, who built the paper-making machine industry at nearby South Windham, and the Lathrop, Bingham and Holmes families. Such

contributions enabled the society to buy a new organ in 1857, costing \$600, and to undertake interior reconstruction projects in 1875 and 1886.

The Windham Episcopal Church celebrated its centenary in June 1934, an occasion planned by the Rev. Benjamin Styring, who held the joint pastorate of St. Paul's at Willimantic and Windham.

Special services were held in the morning and afternoon. The Rev. Chauncey Brewster of Hartford, a retired bishop, celebrated Holy Communion at the morning service at 10:30 a.m. He was a native of Windham and his father,

Joseph Brewster, had been the church's ninth pastor.

Brewster consecrated several memorials, including a staff and cross and a prayer desk. The most impressive was presented by the Weir family, who donated a painting, "The Flight into Egypt," painted by American impressionist painter Julian Alden Weir (1852-1919), who is buried in the Windham Center Cemetery.

The 150 guests retired at noon to enjoy a luncheon in the parlors of the Congregational church and in the afternoon, former pastors and older parishioners gave a series of reminiscences about Windham and the church.

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