



Maine Historical Society

Coll. 2786

**First Free Baptist Church & Society and the Free Street Baptist Church records
Ca. 1839-1930**

Accession #: 2011.322

Processed by: Nicholas Peterson, MHS Volunteer, 2013-2015

Access: Unrestricted

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Size: 4.25 linear ft.

Administrative note: These records have been owned by the Immanuel Baptist Church since 1923. They are the official records of two churches, The First Free Baptist Church & Society and the Free Street Baptist Church, that came together to form the Immanuel Baptist Church of Portland. Williston-West (a United Church of Christ congregation) merged with Immanuel Baptist Church in 2011.

Scope and content note: Record books (31 v.). Includes historical reports by Douglas W. Cruger of Portland, Maine.

Provenance: Gift of Williston-Immanuel Church

Inventory

Box 1:

Vol. 1: (unknown title) Meeting records 1839-1900

Notes: This early record book gives rather detailed descriptions of each meeting. One of the important events mentioned in this book is that on June 30th, 1884 the Baptist Church purchased the Plymouth Congregational Church. The book goes into the organization detail of the newly acquired church.

Vol. 2: (unknown title) Meeting records 1862-1878

Notes: This record book contains newspaper articles about the church relocating to Casco Street. The articles also mention about the rise of the church at Casco Street. The first Fourteen pages give a brief mention of the history and origin of the church. It also mentions the formation of a committee to oversee certain matters of the church in the beginning years. It was during a December 3, 1877 meeting that it was recommended that the church form special committees to be in charge of each branch of the church.

There are a series of newspaper articles located on page 243, addressing several important events of the church. The first article mentions the church observing “Children’s Day” and all the festivities that took place, the second article are about the First Free Baptist society finalizing their purchase of the Plymouth Church. Then the last few articles talk about the formation/transition/services of the Free Baptists taking over the Plymouth Church. Lastly the record book notes the formation of eight new articles to the church’s constitution.

Vol. 3: Record Book No. 1: Woman’s Missionary Society of The First Free Baptist Church of Portland, Maine 1873-1899

Notes: There is a small pamphlet of brief meeting notes of the meetings of the Woman’s Missionary society (1919-1920). These notes state the date of the meetings and the subjects covered by the members in charge of each subject presented. Also noting the hostess of each meeting and that each meeting ended with a roll call.

This book labels each annual meeting by year (1st) and month and day (2nd) in chronological order. Each meeting opens and ends with a prayer, one or two matters are discussed and/or voted on during each meeting. The last remaining pages list society member’s names and if they paid their dues. (This is organized by year.)

Box 2:

Vol. 4: Record Book No.2: Woman’s Missionary Society of The First Free Baptist Church of Portland, Maine 1899-1910

Notes: Inside the book there are three envelopes, 1) “A Five Minute Biographical Sketch of Myself” by L.C. Coombs, Midnapore, India 2) “Letter from Miss Phillips, also one from Famine District” 3) Copy of Mr. Lougher’s Letter.

This book also contains notes about regular and annual meetings in the same format of the “Record Book No. 1”.

Vol. 5: First Free Baptist Parish of Portland, Maine. By-Laws. 1884

Notes: The First few pages note the fourteen by-laws in regards to the Baptist Church. These by-laws were officially adopted in December 1884 at the annual church meeting.

The second part contains a twelve page list of possible church members (only their names) and the corresponding page, if the member listed is deceased. There are hardly any dates to match up with the date of when the members passed away.

Vol. 6: Records of the First Free Baptist Church 1891-1913

Notes: This book was specifically designed for church clerks to record a list of the all the church Pastors, Deacons, Clerks, and Treasures. Each church officer is listed with name, dates they settled; years served, and were dismissed. Next the book goes over the by-laws of the First Free Baptist Church with eight article topics. Located on page 123 is a newspaper article submitted by Pastor Lewis Malvern (served 1897-1906), giving his resignation to the Church and moving on to the Baptist church in Lynn, Massachusetts

Vol. 7: Records of the First Free Baptist Church, Portland, Maine 1913-1923

Notes: The first few pages of this book lists the resident and non-resident members of the First Free Baptist Church by their name, "When and how received" (Baptism or letter), and "When and how left" the church. The rest of the book keep record of all regular and special meetings of the First Free Baptist Church. Each meeting recorded gave a brief description of the subject covered and matters voted on. Located on the margins of each page were subject headings giving the reader an idea of what each new paragraph is about.

Box 3:

Vol. 8: Record of the First Free Baptist Church of Portland, Maine 1901-1923

Notes: This record book is unique compared to some previous record books in that notes about electing officers and committee members during each annual meeting (annual meetings were held once a year).

It should be noted that this book keeps very detailed and organized notes on the actions taken during each meeting. Most of the meeting notes keep a list of each action taken and would end with a statement by the Parish Clerk certifying that the records written are actuate of the actions taken during each meeting.

Vol. 9: Book No. 3 1911-1918: Woman's Missionary Society, First Free Baptist Church. Portland

Notes: Starts with the November 9th, 1910 meeting and ends with the December 11th, 1918 meeting. Each written entry talks about the details of each meeting. Unlike the previous two record books, nothing is written about meeting dues.

Vol. 10: Book No.4 -1918-1923: Woman's Missionary Society First Free Baptist Church. Portland

Notes: This book contains records of each meeting and some entries mention the dollar amount of collections taken or donations made at each meeting. Page 148 contains a written constitution of the Woman's Missionary Society (three articles). Page 149 contains a one article amendment statement and a detailed list of the society's by-laws. The by-laws are separated into two sections, "Meetings" and "Committes" (5 articles)

Box 4:

Booklet: Church Covenant and Declaration of Faith 1836-1837

Vol. 1: (unknown title) Records. Free St. Baptist Church 1835-1880

Notes: This record book reads more like a journal. It begins by giving brief summaries of the Free Street Baptist Society's meetings starting as early as December 21, 1835. Their regular meetings did not occur each month, but rather every other month.

During one of their early meetings, it was decided among members to form another church in Portland. In order to accomplish this, the church sent small group of members to help form the new church. (Twelve brothers and forty sisters) The new church was to be called, "Free Street Baptist Church". During their next meeting, the new formed church members started to organize themselves. After prayer Deacon Byron Greenough moderated and Henry B. Hart sat in as clerk and set up a committee to prepare the articles of faith, a church covenant, and give a report at adjourned meetings. It was decided that if members were to leave for another Baptist church, they needed a letter of recommendation for communion and to give their former church information on their residence and spiritual conditions. Lastly, this book mentions the roles and expectations of the permanent church officers (Pastor, Deacon) and the church clerk. The book also notes about the reception of members and rules of discipline.

Vol. 2: Records. Free Street Baptist Society Portland, ME 1871.

Notes: It can be noted that during the first Annual meeting of the Church's New Year elections were held with eight open seats: Moderator, three assessors, a prudential committee, and Finance committee, committee of music, a Treasurer, and a collector of taxes. Other important meetings were held to discuss and vote on matters brought forth by each of the elected committees who would present their matters during each annual meeting of the church.

This record book notes an important event on January 31, 1875 when Rev. James McWhinnie was officially recognized as the pastor of the Free Street Baptist Church. (Page 67 contains an official booklet of the Recognition Services of Rev. James McWinnie) It is on page 68, that newspaper articles are found on the recognition exercises of Rev. McWinnie as well as brief letters from former pastors wishing the new Pastor good luck. It was not until 1884 that McWhinnie would resign from position as Pastor of the church. The church had a challenge trying to find candidates to fill the pastor role of the church.

The last half of this record book mentions the church committees changing various wording to their existing by-laws and changes to their amendments of the church's constitution.

Box 5:

Vol. 3: (untitled) Free St. Baptist Church Portland, ME October, 1880

Notes: This book begins with pages of recorded meetings of the Baptist church. A majority of these meetings at the beginning of the book are about the church's budget from the treasure's report. The book also notes an important church event, the semi- centennial anniversary. During this celebration, many of the former pastors and members come and talk to the church's congregation. There is mention of the passing of notable church officers like Deacon John C. Phoenix and active members such as Mrs. Harriet B. Knight. It is also mentioned about the resignation of Pastor Thomas S. Lawson and his replacement Rev. Joseph Kennard Wilson. Located on page 309 there is a sheet of the public services in recognition of Rev. Wilson and a booklet of "Patriotic Sunday" at the Free Street Baptist Church on July 3rd. 1898. In between pages 318-319 is a small

booklet on the Annual meeting and roll call of the church on October 27, 1898. Then between pages 344-345, is a public notice of a special day of "As a day of special really and reunion" on November 1900, which was a day for social and spiritually gathering. On page 372 there is mention of "Old Home Day" (November 3, 1901) which was considered a day of reunion for members of the Free Street Baptist Church.

Lastly, between pages 456-457 are six pages of the church's bylaws with nine article topics. I. Rights of the Church II. Officers of the Church III. Committees, VI. Meetings with order of business V. Reception of Members VI. Dismal of Members VII. Discipline, VIII. Bible School, and IX Miscellaneous.

Vol. 4: (unknown title) Record. Free Street Baptist Church Portland, Maine April 2 1907-Nov. 29 1907

Notes: This book only contains a few pages written by the church clerk, Albert S. Ventres on various meetings of the Free Street Church. It also mentions an event where Scandinavian Baptists were dismissed from the church in order to form their own separate Baptist church as requested by Swedish branch of the Baptist church. It is also written in the book, reports to the Cumberland Association on the yearly status of the Baptist church.

Box 6:

Vol. 5: Corporate Records- November 18, 1907-1921 Free Street Baptist Church. Portland, Maine

Notes: The book begins with a state of Maine letter to the Justice of Peace of Cumberland County /State of Maine, George F. Gould, Esq. The letter is sent as a request by the undersigned, resident members of the Free Street Baptist Church to incorporate as an independent local church in Portland and to be known as the "Free Street Baptist Church of Portland, Maine." under the provisions of sections 25 and the seven sections of chapter 16 of the revised statues of the state of Maine. The next page is the responding letter from the Justice of Peace to Loren D. Austin, Joseph H. Day, and Clarence L. Marston of the Free Street Baptist Church. The letter mentions setting a date for a meeting to discuss incorporating the church under the provisions of chapter 16. The official meeting occurred on November 18, 1907 and it was voted unanimously in favor of incorporating the Free Street Baptist. This also means that the church must draft a new series of by-laws and represent them officially to the state.

Vol. 6: "Free Street Baptist Church Portland, ME" Ecclesiastical Records 1907-1922

Notes: This record book opens to a list of members of the Free Street Baptist Church as of November 18, 1907. The lists were organized by year members joined, if they were baptized and their maiden names in italics. During their first meeting of the year, the advisory board drew up a policy for members who chose to be dismissed from the church and join another Baptist church in the state. Then a majority of this book talks about the Free Street Baptist's involvement in the Cumberland Baptist Association and how annual the church would send delegates to report on how the church was conducting itself each year.

During a December 17, 1911 meeting, the pastor helped establish a Benefit Fund by the American Baptist association for any disabled or needy Baptist ministries and missionaries. The donations and offerings would be given to the Church's treasurer. The Free Street Baptist Church also started a movement called, "The New Religion Forward" movement that would eventually go nationwide. The object of the movement was to keep local male members more involved in

the church with services and work. The method also asked every male to find a position in the church to be more actively involved in the church.

Lastly, the book mentions resignation of Rev. Frank Wilkins, D.D. to Providence, R.I. and the welcoming of Rev. Frank Otis Erb of Chicago and how this whole event was important to the city of Portland at the time (April 13, 1913).

Box 7:

Vol. 1: Church Records of the Free Street Baptist Church. February 15, 1836-Sept. 1842

Notes: These early records note daily regular and special meetings of the church. Notes written were brief summarizations of matters discussed or voted on and listed the church members who were involved at each meeting.

Vol. 2: "Record Book" October 11, 1848-Sunday May 24, 1863

Notes: This book records a series of different church meetings of the Free Street Baptist Church. The notes of each meeting start with a prayer and a brief description of topics/matters discussed in each meeting.

Vol. 3: (unknown title) October 5, 1865-May 10, 1895

Notes: This book recorded events and matters discussed at the meetings of the Free Street Ladies Social Circle. During each Annual Meeting (once a year) new officers and committee members were voted into office for the following year (President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer). During this time two new committees were formed, "The Table Committee" and "The Box Committee."

Vol. 4: (unknown title) Record Book of Expenses /Budget of the Free Street Social Circle 1868-1922/1923

Notes: The Free Street Social Circle was an organization that was part of the church made up of female church members. This book records the expenditures of their group's activities, meetings and other events. The records are organized by year, month, and day. There is no mention of which actives are connected to the recorded budgets.

Vol. 5: Catalogue of Members of the Free Street Baptist Church Portland, ME with Historical Notes, Covenant and By-Laws 1886

Notes: This book begins with the Church's history. It mentions how the church was formed, the great pastors of the church that led the church, and the people who filled the position of deacon. The next article is a copy of the Covenant and followed by a list of Free Street Baptist by-laws. The rest of the record book is an organized catalogue of members.

Vol. 6: (unknown title) The Free Street Social Circle Meetings & Records 1896- April 9

Notes: This book records the meetings of the Free Street Social Circle which was formed by the women of the church. The book records three different types of meetings involving the social circle: Annual circle meetings (reflecting the group's yearly report), the directors of the social circle (voting on matters involving the group), and Board of Directors meetings (these meeting represented the social circle group and the board of directors to report on matters together).

Vol. 7: Free Street Baptist Church: Treasurer's Report Year Ending April 30, 1923 (1907)

Notes: This record book was the church money account records. Each page is labeled by year and month and the transactions of each month and the day during that specific month, writing what kind of transactions occurred on that date.

Box 8:

Vol. 1: Board and Society, Early Record: Records of the Free Baptist Woman's Mission Society 1873-1881

Notes: The book begins by recording the constitution for the Free Baptist Woman's Missionary Society. Each article of the constitution briefly describes the roles of each officer of the society group. During August 16, 1883, the Free Baptist Woman's Society looked to the Legislature of Maine to grant them power to hold meetings in any state in the union and choose their officers. This request required special legislation that the Free Baptist Woman's Society had to explain to the Judiciary Committee of Maine about the importance of wanting the charter. The charter was eventually granted, which required the society to write specific charter guidelines on how they conducted themselves in further meetings. Also they drafted new constitution and by-laws (amending previous constitution and by-laws)

Vol. 2: Board of Managers of the Free Baptist Woman's Missionary Society 1883-1897

Notes: This record book notes all of the various issues discussed and voted on during the annual and adjourned meetings of the Board of Managers of the Free Baptist Woman's Missionary Society. All the matters presented and voted on during the meetings were brought forth to the Board of Managers by the committees and officers of the Free Baptist Woman's Missionary Society.

During the meetings, the Board of Managers would consider the matters brought to them and cast a vote of action upon the matters presented to them. These issues ranged from expense reports from the treasurer, foreign missionaries, appointing new committees to handle new actions and to authorize committee members to take action on important issues.

Vol. 3: Free Baptist Woman's Missionary Society Book 2nd Records of the Free Baptist Woman's Missionary Society 1883-1902

Notes: This book starts with the Woman's Society assembling for a meeting in Dover, N.H. and setting up their State of Maine charter. The charter covered six sections about how the society would conduct themselves. They also wrote a constitution and a detailed list of by-laws. The by-laws were a written guide on how different parts of the society would operate effectively.

Vol. 4: Board Records of the Free Baptist Woman's Society 1898-1906

Notes: This book records the minutes and actions taken during meetings for the Free Street Baptist Church's Woman's Missionary Society during the years 1898-1906. The subjects voted on were financial matters regarding construction repairs on local church buildings, helping fund the society's activities, giving a committee authorization to complete a task, and to approve of individual members completing various tasks for the benefit of the society. The records mentioned in this book are during the early stages of the Woman's Missionary Society, therefore much of the subject matter deals with the start of the organization issues for the society.

Box 9 (in 2019 Box 9 and 10 combined)**Vol. 5:** Records of the Executive Board of Maine Free Baptist Association 1901-1930

Notes: This book contains written record of the Free Baptist Church Executive Board Meetings and each annual meeting. The subjects that were discussed and voted upon were about property left by church members, fund donors, appropriations, and authorizing the President or the Treasurer (of the Executive Board) to take care of specific matters involving the Baptist

Church. This book differs from other record books because it gives brief, non-detailed descriptions of each meeting.

Included in the book are copies of the Constitution of the Maine Free Baptist Association. The copies only contain sections 4-13, omitting sections 1-3.

Vol. 6: Free Baptist Woman's Missionary Society: Board of Records 1906-1927

Notes: The majority of this record book contains meeting records on the Free Baptist Woman's Missionary Board meetings. The book mentions about a union between W.A.B.F.M.S. and the Free Baptist Woman's Missionary Society to conduct better work towards foreign mission work. They designed a detailed plan on how their united together would help their work in foreign missions.

The last half of this record book, mentions that a small series of by-laws and articles of constitution that were amended.

Vol. 7: Free Baptist Woman's Missionary Society Meeting Notes (1922) 1923-1927

Notes: This small book records brief descriptions of annual board meetings and annual society meetings. Most often one or two subjects were brought to the meetings for discussion and to have things voted on among members present.

Included in this book is a letter by Mrs. Lena F. Dennett of Providence, R.I., who was the corresponding secretary of the Free Baptist Woman's Missionary Society of the Storer Trustees. There is also a letter written to the society by Storer College (Harpers Ferry, Virginia) Dean of Women, Elizabeth M. McDonald. Lastly, a report of the Storer College Conference (1928), and society report by the Treasurer (1932-1933).

Vol. 8: A Concise History of the First Free Baptist Church of Portland, Maine 2010

Notes: This book gives the most detailed information about the Baptist Church society in Portland. Author Douglas W. Cruger mentions that the First Free Baptist Church does not have a clear start date. Though mentioned that things started in April 3, 1862, there is information that mentions it was organized in 1827 or 1843. This book helps explain the Baptist Church community evolution though the events and actions taken by the Pastors and other various members of the church to the present day, Immanuel Baptist Church.

Vol. 9: A History in Pictures: Immanuel Baptist Church Portland, Maine 2010

Notes: This book is unlike any of the previous books in the "Portland Baptist Church Records" collection. It is a recently written report on the whole history of the Baptist Church community. Some of the information explains and further illustrates information mentioned in various books in this collection. The book begins to explain how a congregation known as the "Christian Society" and the "Free Will Baptists" formed in Portland in 1827 and continues through the current state of the Baptist community in Portland.

Box 9 and 10 combined in 2019, so no Box 10