

Bicentennial Minutes - Chestnut Street Baptist Church

“Bicentennial Minutes” read aloud in 2008 at Chestnut Street Baptist Church – in chronological order

1768 ... Founding of Camden, its growth, etc.

Did you know that the name " Camden " was given to the Township as early as 1768? The Tarratines (an Indian tribe) were in the area at that time. James Richards, from Dover, New Hampshire, came to Camden with his family in 1767. He erected a rude log cabin at his home, and this is the family best known as Camden 's First Settler.

In the year 1791 the population of Camden was 331 when it was incorporated as the Plantation of Camden in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

During the first half of the 19th century, Camden had a slow but steady growth in population, and at the opening of the year 1850, the town had attained a high degree of industrial property.

The Civil War caused Camden to send 468 men to the cause of Union and Liberty, and the war lasted about five years, or until 1866.

1808 ... Founding of the Second Baptist Church of Camden (later CSBC)

Did you know that, on July 14, 1808, nine persons besides visitors met and organized the Second Baptist Church of Camden, the First Baptist Church having been organized a short time before in what is now West Rockport ?

Did you know that, in the year 1810, there was a candidate for baptism? A number of respectable spectators went down to the waterside at the head of Sherman 's Cove, where it was probably held.

Did you know that, in 1817, the church usually met once a month by appointment for business and religious exercises at the home of Ephraim Wood?

The front window in the wall to your left is a memorial to the Wood family. That remarkable family were an active part of the church for over 140 years, more than two-thirds of our total history.

Ephraim Wood was a sixth-generation descendant of the immigrant William Wood, who settled in Concord, Massachusetts, in 1638. Ephraim was born in Concord in 1773. His father, also named Ephraim, was a judge of the Court of Common Pleas in Middlesex County, Massachusetts. Our Ephraim came to Camden about 1795 at age 22.

Thirteen years later, in July 1808, Mr. Wood associated himself with the Second Baptist Church (now Chestnut Street Baptist Church). The first organizational meeting may have gathered in the Wood home. Subsequently, according to Pastor Leroy Campbell, “Until 1817 the church usually met once a month ‘by appointment’ for business and the relating of their religious exercises at the home of Ephraim Wood.”

Mr. Wood was twice a widower and married three times. He fathered 12 children, four by each wife. Six of the children died in infancy or childhood.

Mr. Wood was a clothier by trade. He built a mill in town by the Megunticook River and subsequently moved his very successful business into a larger building.

In his Sketches of the History of Camden, John L. Locke epitomizes the life and character of Ephraim Wood: “Enjoying a large degree of the confidence of his townsmen, he was by them many times chosen Selectman, and appointed on important town committees, and for two years represented the town in the State Legislature. The most prominent traits in his character were his firmness of purpose, reliability of judgment, and integrity of mind. A consistent member of the Baptist church, he was foremost in supporting, by his means and influence, its various institutions.”

1808 ... More about the founding of the church..

Early in this series of Bicentennial Minutes let's take a moment to note and appreciate the historical context of that July 14, 1808 meeting of nine who committed themselves to the start of what is now Chestnut Street Baptist Church.

That first meeting did not occur in Camden, Maine, but in Camden, Massachusetts, for Maine was not yet a state. Our church is twelve years older than our state.

The year 1808 was 32 years after the Declaration of Independence. Thomas Jefferson was the third President of the United States. It was four years before the War of 1812 and 53 years before the Civil War. Had George Washington still been living, he would have been 76. Our second President, John Adams, was alive and in good health at age 73.

In a longer view of history, our church has spanned 10 percent of the total Church Age - from the birth of Christ to the present. Our oldest member, Flora Wright, if she is still living on earth in May, as we celebrate her one-hundredth birthday, will have lived 5 percent of the Christian Era.

1810 ... Discipline in the church

From its earliest days, our church was concerned about the discipline, piety and purity of its membership. Two years after its founding, the church's records of 1810 read, “The church met according to their appointment on August 31” and “after laboring with [Jedediah Higgins, one of the charter members], according to the gospel rule, excluded [him].”

At that same meeting the church “chose Charles Morse and Benjamin Higgins to labor with Jane Matthews.” The historian observes: “Thus began a long record of labor and exclusions. In this manner six of the [nine] charter members found themselves outside the church.”

“On September 6 [1817] the church chose Oakes Perry and Enoch Heal to ‘visit Nathaniel Palmer and labor with him for neglecting to perform the duty of prayer with his family.’ Some months later it was voted to ‘travel along with Brother N. Palmer under the existing circumstances praying for him that he may be able to take up the duty of family prayers.’”

Twenty-one years later, in November 1838, “a committee was chosen to visit each family ‘that are members of the church and report whether family prayer is maintained or not.’”

January 9, 1839 was observed as a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer. “A tender spirit was manifest among us, though there was not that deep feeling of sorrow for backslidings which is sometimes seen.”

1814 ... Brief bio of Oakes Perry and an account of how he may have saved the time during the War of 1812

Oakes Perry was born in 1781 and came to Camden from his native Hanover , Massachusetts about 1810. He was received into church membership on May 16, 1816.

Mr. Perry was a merchant. It is said that “... he was a careful and methodical businessman” (R. Robinson: History of Camden and Rockport , p. 233.) One of his ledgers “was kept in the most business-like way possible...” with impeccable penmanship and bookkeeping. The ledger is notable in that “nearly all the names of the principal men in town ... appear ... and almost every one of the accounts were settled and closed.” Reuel Robinson observed “that people paid their bills somewhat better than at the present time” (1907).

Robinson epitomized his life: “Mr. Perry was an honorable and valuable citizen and a devout religious man.” You can read below that he was one of a committee chosen by a town meeting to deal with alcohol abuse in the village.

Oakes Perry and his wife, Nancy, had five children, two of whom died in infancy. Mr. Perry himself died on January 10, 1829 at age 47.

In a letter to his father in 1816, Mr. Perry wrote about a frost on June 10 in that “year without a summer” when ice formed to a thickness of window glass. Of his letters in general, Robinson said they “breathe a spirit of intense religious feeling, and a desire for the advancement of the Christian faith”.

HOW OAKES PERRY MAY HAVE SAVED THE VILLAGE

In 1814, as the War of 1812 was winding down, the British were occupying Castine. Along the midcoast there was much pirate and smuggling activity by small private boats.

On November 1 an American craft with an armed crew of six seized a British sloop near Turtle Head on the northern end of Islesboro. The sloop was loaded with a valuable cargo of cloth goods. She was brought into Camden harbor and her cargo off-loaded and immediately transported to Portland . Because the selectmen did not want the vessel to remain in the harbor they hired three men to sail her around to the St. George River and to hide her there.

The next day, November 2, a British frigate, sporting 38 guns, appeared at the entrance to the harbor. British officials demanded that the sloop and cargo be returned or payment of \$80,000 be made, or else “ Camden and Lincolnville would be laid in ashes”.

A Town Meeting was hastily called to deal with the emergency. Captain John Pendleton recommended that the citizens try to raise the \$80,000. Oakes Perry opposed that motion, arguing that \$80,000 would be more than sufficient to rebuild all the houses that might be destroyed in a bombardment. The meeting concurred with Mr. Perry's view and dispatched two selectmen to the frigate to inform the naval officers that return of the sloop was not possible since she and her cargo were no longer in the harbor. The Americans were given three days to seek a resolution of the impasse. Two leading selectmen were held aboard the frigate as assurance of the good faith of the town.

During the three days a large number of armed militiamen were summoned to the village from surrounding towns to defend in case of an invasion. After several days of severe tension, on Sunday, November 7, the dreaded frigate departed without further incident. The next day the out-of-town troops were discharged. After being detained for another two weeks in Castine, the two hostages were gratefully received home.

A month later, On December 24, the Treaty of Ghent was signed, ending the war.

1815 ... Beginnings of the temperance movement

In 18 th -century Europe, the technology of distillation led to increasing alcohol abuse. By the 1820s, people in the United States were drinking an average of seven gallons of pure alcohol per person per year. President Lincoln said that intoxication liquor was “used by everybody and repudiated by nobody.”

Portland, Maine, was a center of the rum trade with the West Indies. Local liquor outlets abounded, resulting in poverty, suffering and disorder. Young Neal Dow responded with determination to counteract the terrible conditions by outlawing the liquor trade.

The temperance movement had had its origin in Maine. The world's first total abstinence society was founded in Portland in 1815. By 1834 there was a state association of temperance societies.

Neal Dow, called the “father of prohibition,” authored the first state law to ban the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages in 1851. After two terms as mayor of Portland and a stint as a Civil War general, Dow ran for president in 1880 as the candidate of the Prohibition Party.

Dow's “Maine Law” became the basis of the 18 th “Prohibition” Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which stood from 1919 till its repeal by the 21 st Amendment in 1934.

The Neal Dow Memorial, home of the Dow family in Portland, is the headquarters of the Maine Women's Christian Temperance Union. It is open to the public.

A future Bicentennial Minute will focus on the use and abuse of alcohol in Camden and our church's response.

1817...Temperance, continued

In earlier Bicentennial Minutes, we looked at alcohol use and abuse and prohibition in the US and in Maine. Today we consider the same subject in Camden

In 1817 alcohol was being seriously abused in the village. “Liquor was sold as freely as molasses by all the groceries. It could be bought by the glass to be drunk in the stores or in bottles or jugs to be taken away, and nothing was thought of it.” (Reuel Robinson: History of Camden and Rockport, Maine, pp. 208, 209).

A town meeting was convened on July 12 to see what measures the town might adopt for the suppression of intemperance. The citizenry voted that there be a committee of five to work with the selectmen “to carry into effect the laws of the Commonwealth regarding the retailing and drinking of spirituous liquors” in the stores.

Three of the five who served on the committee were members of Second Baptist Church (now CSBC): Ephraim Wood, Oakes Perry and Alden Bass.

Reuel Robinson in his History of Camden and Rockport notes “that this was the first public action . . . taken by the people of Camden on the subject of intemperance and liquor selling.” Robinson adds, “. . . the action of the

town was a more or less bold and radical step, and indicates that the social and moral status of the town was much in need of reformation.”

Fifty-four years later, in March 1871, the use of fermented wine in our communion service (at CSBC) was discontinued and unfermented grape juice was substituted.

1818 ... More about the church before the current building was built

Did you know that, in May of 1818, an attempt was made to hire the Hadley schoolhouse for a place of worship, but without success? According to Robinson's history, this was the old one-story brick building on Mountain Street, which was removed in 1852 to make a place for the new brick school, which now serves as a funeral parlor. Julie Clement and John Long are partners in Camden Funeral Home today.

Did you know that, in January of 1823, a committee was chosen to hire the brick schoolhouse for \$10? In that year several members were disciplined for absence. The story is told that a man by the name of Oakes Perry saw that his daughter was about to wear a hat with a colored ribbon to church one morning. He compelled her to take it off and also burn it up at once!

1820 ... The beginning of the Sunday School program

The origin of the modern Sunday School movement is generally ascribed to Robert Raikes in Gloucester , England . Raikes, the editor of a local newspaper, became concerned for the poor unchurched children who were running wild in the streets, getting into trouble and causing troubles. Raikes decided to start a Sunday school to reach those poor and poorly educated children. His work was very successful. That was in July 1780.

Forty years later, in Camden, Maine, in May 1820, two men from our church, “Isaac Morse and Oakes Perry organized the first Sabbath School in Camden.” Because the church was not yet able to gather for worship every Lord's Day, it is probable that Morse and Perry's Sabbath school was an independent entity rather than a function of the church. Private sponsorship of Sunday schools was more the norm than the exception in those early days.

The first notice of a church sponsored Sunday school in the May 1839 record says that “Brother Hemmingway, A, Pendleton and John H. Pendleton were chosen a committee to arrange the Sabbath School ” in the new meeting house. In the following April “Winthrop O. Thomas was chosen superintendent of the Sabbath school.”

In 1864 there was an average attendance of 80 scholars and teachers, somewhat higher than our average these days. In 1871, singing was added to the Sunday school curriculum.

In May of 1906 Chestnut Street Baptist Church hosted the Maine State Sunday School Convention.

The high water mark for Sunday school enrollment and attendance may have occurred in 1933, after a period of growth of church membership to 230.

Today our Sunday school has good facilities, an excellent core of teachers, well balanced curricula to apply the whole truth of the Scriptures – and we have room for many more children, youths and adults and we have hope that all of you will join us in the study of God's Holy Word each Lord's Day morning in our Sunday school.

1825 ... Strife and decline in the early church

The church's bicentennial journey is marked by “many dangers toils and snares” that could well abort that journey. Two such perils occurred in our early years.

In 1825, the historian observes, “the church had seen hard times for the past year or two.” For the next decade there was strife among the members of the small congregation. In 1829 the record says that “... the church appears to have experienced a decline,” and might have expired. After several more lean years, without settled pastors, in 1836 the Maine Missionary Society sent Henry Kendall as a missionary to this destitute church, which began a period of growth leading up to the dedication of this meetinghouse in December 1837.

The second crisis occurred during the run-up to the Civil War. From a high of 112 in 1843, membership had plummeted to 25 in 1863. The historian noted that “the decline was due to continued dissention within the fold.” After one altercation a member was reported to have asserted that he “would be glad to see the church in flames!”

In 1863, “the future of the church was as dark ... as the future of the Northern States in the struggle against slavery.” There was “considerable discussion about disbanding the church. The men were generally in favor but the women (God bless them! – who would not have voting privileges for eight more years!) [were] opposed and their voices prevailed.”

In 1864 the very able Nathaniel Butler was called as pastor, and his ministry “marked the beginning of new growth.”

1835 ... The decision to build a church building

Did you know that, in 1835, a paper was circulated saying, “Whereas some members of the Second Baptist Church & Society in Camden have it in contemplation to erect a house for the worship of Almighty God, and opened a subscription, having made a grand plan for said building to be 52 x 40 feet divided so as to contain 60 pews and a share” ? Those are probably the very same pews that you are sitting on today. One man paid \$78 for his pew. The church sold only 42 shares locally, and the Lincoln Association bought the remaining shares.

Did you know that there is only one brief record for 1861, the first year of the Civil War? The future of the church was as dark in the year of '61 as was the future of the Northern States in the struggle against slavery.

Did you know that, on May 13, 1864, the church corporation changed its name to the Chestnut Street Baptist Church Corporation, and the old building was razed, and new construction proceeded?

1837 ... Memorial window - Alexander Copeland Dunbar

The front window on the northwest wall memorializes Deacon A. C. Dunbar.

Alexander Copeland Dunbar was born in 1837 (the year this building was constructed) and he died on March 11, 1914.

After completing his formal education in the Warren schools, he learned the painter's trade, which in time took him to the South. When the Civil War broke out in 1861, he headed north. After several thrilling experiences, he managed to catch the last train that would take him out of the Confederate States.

In 1871 he came to Camden as Assistant Superintendent of the Knox Mill. He proposed that the workday be shortened from eleven hours to ten, which was not favored by Superintendent Johnson. Johnson later consented to a two months trial of the new plan, which was then adopted.

In 1855, at age 18, Dunbar became a Christian and joined the Warren Baptist Church. In 1873 he united with the Chestnut Street Baptist Church. He was chosen a deacon the following year and served in that office the rest of his life. He was elected church clerk in 1890, serving 24 years until his death. He taught in the Sunday school for 41 years and served as Superintendent for 15 years.

His obituary stated, "He served the church in every position except pastor, faithfully for many years. He was a good man – true in heart, wise in counsel."

1837 ... More about the pews

In an earlier Bicentennial Minute, we learned that the cost of construction of the original meetinghouse in 1837 was met by the sale of pews. Today, you are sitting on those antique pews.

The pews originally had center partitions until 1904, when the congregation voted to remove the partitions and replace them with armrests.

Did you ever notice that the pews are numbered?

(Ask the person sitting nearest the center aisle to note and remember the number on each pew.)

(Ask the occupants of pews 31, 32 and 33 to stand.)

A ship berthed in the harbor last evening. About 20-25 of the seamen are expected to worship with us this morning. You folks will have to vacate your pews to make room for the sailors.

Just kidding! But one Lord's day that could happen. Listen to an entry in the record of a meeting of the Second Baptist Church Society held in the newly erected meetinghouse on January 6, 1838:

Voted, "That three pews, that is numbers thirty-one, thirty-two and thirty-three, be appropriated for the benefit and use of seamen so long as the house stands".

Wouldn't we welcome sailors who wished to worship with us and learn of Christ – and wouldn't we be glad to reserve those pews for them?

1838 ... Memorial window – Pastor Edward Freeman

Memorial windows have been placed in our sanctuary to help us remember and appreciate departed saints who have served God here. The middle window on the northwest wall is dedicated to Pastor Edward Freeman. I want to introduce him to you.

On February 21, 1838, the congregation voted "to invite the Reverend Edward Freeman to preach to this church and society for one year, for which we promise and agree to pay him one hundred and fifty dollars together with the use of the vestry for a school room during that period." Brother Freeman was pastor here from March 1838

through March 1842. He was the first preacher to serve in this building. During his tenure, membership increased to more than 100.

His school in the vestry provided classical preparation for young men who would go on to college. He also taught navigation to many young sailors.

Mr. Freeman was born April 6, 1806, in Mendon, Mass. He was a graduate of Brown University. He taught school in Bellingham, Mass., and Waterville, Maine. In 1836 he was ordained a Baptist minister. In addition to Camden, he served churches in Oldtown, Maine, and Bristol, R.I.

In 1843 he returned to Camden and settled on a farm, where he lived the rest of his life. He continued to preach and teach. For a time he served as chaplain at the Maine State Prison in Thomaston. He also served for many years as superintendent of Camden schools.

Edward Freeman was the father of 13 children; three of his sons served in the military throughout the Civil War. He died in Camden, January 28, 1882, at the age of nearly 76.

1838 ... Dedication of the church building and the hymn written for it

This building in which we gather was dedicated on March 18, 1838 – almost exactly 170 years ago today. At that service, and again at the 150th anniversary celebration of our church, on July 14, 1958, a hymn was sung, “And Will God Indeed Dwell on Earth?” It was written by Philip Doddridge, who lived in the first half of the 18th century, and is sung to the tune “Old Hundredth,” which was the common setting of the metrical version of Psalm 100.

While I could read the words in one minute, it will take a minute or two longer to sing it.

We bring the tribute of our praise,
And sing that condescending grace
Which to our notes will lend an ear,
And call us, sinful mortals, near.

And will the great eternal God
On earth establish His abode?
And will He, from His radiant throne,
Accept our temple for His own?

These walls we to Thy honor raise;
Long may they echo with Thy praise;
And Thou, descending, fill the place
With choicest tokens of Thy grace.

Here let the great Redeemer reign,
With all the graces of His train;
While power divine His Word attends,
To conquer foes and cheer His friends.

And in the great decisive day,
When God the nations shall survey,
May it before the world appear

That crowds were born to glory here.

1840 ... Stained-glass window – Sylvester and Hannah Arau

In 1840 on the island of Messina, Sicily, a future member of the Chestnut Street Baptist Church was born. He was Sylvester Arau, my great-great-uncle. Sylvester fought with Garibaldi in the revolution that would eventually create Italy. A few years later, Sylvester and his younger brother Leo, my great-grandfather, emigrated to the United States. They arrived in Camden in the late 1860s.

Sylvester owned a barbershop on Main Street. After the downtown fire destroyed the wooden building, Sylvester rebuilt it in brick in 1893, and the Arau name is memorialized on the facing of the second story.

Sylvester married a woman named Hannah, and they had a daughter, Teresa.

I asked an uncle why the Italians worshipped at Chestnut Street Baptist Church. He told me that the closest Catholic churches were in Belfast and Rockland when they arrived in Camden, which was too long a journey. Therefore, they and the other Italians converted to the Baptist religion.

Sylvester lived to be 91, and was recognized with the Boston Post Cane late in life as the oldest citizen in Camden.

There are a couple of vestiges of Sylvester's time spent at Chestnut Street. The stained-glass window at the rear of the sanctuary has Sylvester's and Hannah's names, and there is a plaque on the chimes with their daughter Teresa's name.

1864 ... Rev. Nathaniel Butler and Hannibal Hamlin

In an earlier Bicentennial Minute we recounted that Chestnut Street Baptist Church hit a low point during the Civil War, but that the coming of Rev. Nathaniel Butler in 1864 marked “the beginning of new growth.”

According to our 1934 church history, Rev. Butler was “a man of large abilities.” He spent the winter of 1865 serving as secretary to Vice President Hannibal Hamlin, Abraham Lincoln's first vice president.

Rev. Butler returned to his position as pastor of our church and by 1868, his last year as pastor, he was earning \$1,000 a year for his services.

Here's a little information about Hannibal Hamlin: He was a U.S. representative and senator from Maine as well as a Maine governor. He was elected to the U.S. Senate as a Democrat in 1848 by the anti-slavery wing of the party. But he left the party to become a Republican in 1856.

His last government position was Minister to Spain from 1881 to 1882. He devoted the remainder of his life to agricultural pursuits and died in Bangor in 1891.

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1865 ... CSBC Social Circle organized

Did you know? The Chestnut Street Baptist Social Circle was organized in 1865. They met at the home of Capt. Isaac Sherman. In 1868 the circle purchased new cushions and carpet for the church, and new lamps, also a new chandelier in 1875. The women earned money by sewing for individuals; they received fifty cents for tacking a comforter and upon one occasion they sewed buttons on eight and one-half dozen shirts for 68 cents. Other sources of income were dues, festivals, fairs, and socials. After 1880 church suppers were frequently served. A kitchen must have been devised at about this time, although water was not piped in until 1889.

1868 ... Clock History

The church edifice was rebuilt and enlarged in 1868 and its name was changed to the Chestnut Street Baptist Church.

The town clock was put in the steeple of this church. It was a George Stevens steeple clock movement, and included a 2,000-pound bell. It was because of the untiring efforts of David Knowlton of Knowlton's Machine Shop that the clock is there. The cost at that time was \$475.

In 1910 the original movement was replaced with a larger and more powerful E. Howard clock movement.

By the mid-1960s, unfortunate electrification of the winding mechanism led to disintegration. The restoration of the clock to its original condition by the Balzer family was completed in the 1990s.

The town of Camden provides money each year in its budget for electricity. Bill Brawn climbed inside the steeple faithfully for 31 years to wind, set and make repairs to the clock. Since his passing, Bob McGowen has taken over this job.

1881 ... Pipe organ installed – and later replaced

A fine pipe organ was installed in our church in 1881 and it served faithfully for 70 years. This replaced a melodeon (which is a small reed organ) that had provided "fine music" since 1846.

In 1951 it became necessary to replace the pipe organ with an electronic organ.

That organ, in turn, was replaced in 1975 by an Allen Computer organ. According to a church history of that time, the organ "lends much to the services of worship for the congregation."

On July 13, our Bicentennial Homecoming Day, we will have the privilege of hearing the organ played by Margaret Stanley Small. The organ concert will be held prior to the worship service, at 10 o'clock.

1887 ... More about Prohibition in Maine

From 1964 through 1972 our family [Dan Zeigler's family] lived in Staten Island, one of five boroughs that comprise New York City. Some of our church families lived in a neighborhood called Westerleigh – originally named Prohibition Park.

In 1887 the National Prohibition Party purchased a large tract which became a prohibitionists' campmeeting, with a large central assembly hall. People would come during the summer, live in tents and lend their support to prohibition. By 1907, having run its course, it was disbanded.

In my frequent visits, I noted that certain streets were named for states, including Maine Avenue, and others for persons, one of whom was Mainer Neal Dow. Maine was honored as the first state to ban the sale of alcoholic beverages in 1851 and Neal Dow was a leader of the Prohibition movement.

Prohibition became the law of the nation in 1919 and lasted till 1933.

In a future Bicentennial Minute we'll look at Neal Dow and Prohibition in Maine as part of the context of our church. Later we'll see how CSBC related to the use and abuse of alcoholic drink.

1888 ... History of the parsonage

The Rev. F.M. Preble became pastor in 1888 and served for 9 years. During his pastorate the parsonage was built.

In 1896, a committee was formed to purchase a lot and build a parsonage. Two lots were purchased from the Hall heirs on Belmont Avenue for \$600.00 and C.P. Brown, contractor, at a cost of \$3,397.00, built a house during the summer.

This charming home for the pastors of this church for many years to come was largely the gift of two members.

"Mr. Darius Sherman, who is described as 'a quiet man, a faithful Christian for more than half a century; not given to speech, but liberal in giving to the church and to missions.' He bequeathed \$1,000.

"Mrs. Mary Thomas, widow of Rev. W.O. Thomas, left a legacy of \$1,153, which with Mr. Sherman's gift and the offerings of the people made the present parsonage a possibility. We bless their memories for their devotion to the future welfare of the church they loved so well."

1900 ... Pastor Ernest Lombard

My [Jim Lombard] great-great grandfather, Ernest Lombard, was pastor of this church from 1900 to 1903. He went to Andover for a few years after Camden and then spent most of his ministry in West Springfield.

According to my grandfather, who knew him, he was a wonderful man. Ernest was from Turner, Maine. His dad, Emery, died when he was just 15 or so. Besides going to high school, he also worked part-time as a carpenter to support his family. He had graduated from Colby College in 1892.

Great Grandfather built a cottage in Freeport around 1910-1915; it took several years to build. They purchased the land right on the coast in S. Freeport for \$100, which was an inheritance. He loved Maine and wanted his family the experience Maine summers like he did.

He loved this area very much. He loved the people. He was a big outdoorsman - he would take abandoned boats and rebuild them.

He never lost that Maine connection. He ended up moving back here in 1949. The day he died, he had been climbing a tree cutting down branches. He was 80 years old.

This prayer was likely said at church services and it became our family prayer:

Lord Jesus be our Holy guest,
Our morning joy, our evening rest,
And with each passing day, impart,
Thy love and peace, to every heart

More info on Grampa and great-grandfather can be found here:

<http://www.kenyaevangelicalmission.com/truestory.htm>

1903 ... Repairs, remodeling and additions to the church

During 1903 and 1904 the church received extensive repairs. A proposition to sell the building and lot was previously considered and rejected. Sylvester L Arau served as chairman of the repair committee. At this time a basement was dug under the vestry, the furnaces moved down, and a kitchen arranged at the street end, the food being brought up on a dumb-waiter. An addition was built on the opposite end of the church, extending halfway across, which provided for a Beginners room off the vestry and an organ room off the auditorium. The organ was moved from the gallery at the rear of the auditorium to the new space at the other end. At the same time the baptistery was moved from the vestry to the auditorium, where it is now located. A new carpet was purchased, and the cushions were repaired. For these changes \$1,800 was raised. \$750 of which was not paid off until 1910.

Again, in April 1919, extensive remodeling and repair was begun on the church building, with Eugene Young as contractor. By this time the last of the pews had been deeded to the church. The repairs began with the tower and the rebuilding of the stairs to the auditorium with square landings. A twenty-foot addition was built on to the rear of the church, replacing the older and smaller addition. Thus a ladies' parlor and a new kitchen were added down stairs, a classroom, a pulpit chancel, and a remodeled organ room upstairs. Still another room was provided above the pulpit. Folding doors were installed in the vestry to provide classrooms. Mrs. Fred A. Packard also gave memorial offering plates. The outlay on the part of the church was \$23,000. During the remodeling the services were held in the Y.M.C.A. building. The church was re-dedicated on May 16, 1920.

1912 ... James Perry, the first foreign missionary from our church, and his martyrdom in Syria

In 1912 James Perry was licensed by Chestnut Street Baptist Church to preach the Gospel. Subsequently he became the first foreign missionary to go abroad from our church. He went to work in the Middle East under the YMCA, which was at that time very evangelical, in contrast to today's "Y's," which are virtually exclusively committed to providing facilities and programs for physical and social benefit.

According to Pastor LeRoy A Campbell's 1934 history of our church, "In 1920 [James Perry] was slain by Turkish bandits near Aintab, Syria, while carrying supplies to the starving Armenians." At that time Armenians were being persecuted and killed in a widespread genocide.

William Howard Taft, after serving as President and while he was Chief Justice of the United States, wrote a book, *Service with Fighting Men*. Following is a quote from President Taft:

Work was going well in Aleppo and Aintab in northern Syria by the beginning of 1920, when on February 1 st two workers, James Perry and Frank L. Johnson, were brutally murdered fifteen miles south of Aintab by reputed brigands. ... In a very real sense Mr. Perry and Mr. Johnson were martyrs to the cause. They were both prominent and widely-known Y workers in the Near East, and their untimely loss cast a gloom over the whole American colony. The American sailors of their own volition held a meeting in their club in Constantinople in memory of these men who had served them so unselfishly, and had lost their lives in the line duty.

Brother Perry was buried in the Missionary Compound in Aintab.

1913 ... Hardwood floor laid in sanctuary

There is an ancient saying, "He who hath big feet hath a good understanding". I agree it's kind of corny. But when we come to meeting and stand to sing, we're glad for a substantial floor under our feet. And when we sit, we put just as much weight on the floor as when we stand. At our recent Bicentennial Celebration there were more than 200 persons in the room and the floor held firm

The hardwood floor in our sanctuary was laid ninety-five years ago, in 1813 at the phenomenal cost of \$279.00. I'd say that was a bargain. What say ye?

1923 ... Fund drive

Did you know that, at a prayer meeting in August of 1923, it was voted to start a drive on August 14 of five days to raise \$5,000? The purpose was to use this fund about as follows: \$2,500 to pay off the mortgage on the parsonage; \$800 to pay off two unsecured notes; \$200 to cover the cost of shingling the parsonage; and the balance to reduce the mortgage on the church building.

When the building was rebuilt in 1918, the cost was some \$23,000, and the debt had been reduced to \$9,900, which may be classed as a modern miracle.

1927 ... The village green and painting the church

The Camden village green provides an odd note in the church's history. After the Bay View Hotel burned down, the heirs of Mr. Seaton decided to sell the property. An oil company was said to have made an offer for the purpose of building a gas station. A group of local worthies – Bok, Gribbell and Keep – purchased the property in 1927 and gave it to the town of Camden for the purpose of a village green.

One of the donors, Mary Bok, preferred that the church next door to the green be painted white, even though it had only been freshly painted a light yellow in 1928 at a cost of \$245. She paid for the paint and labor to paint it again.

1942 ... Improvements to the church and new activities

Did you know that, in 1942, Rev. Melvin Dorr, Jr., came to Camden to be the pastor? During the years following, many improvements were made in the church property. The Ladies Circle was an active group and many gifts were given in memory of some of the loyal members, such as chimes in memory of Teresa Arau, and Christian and American flags by the Youth Fellowship in memory of all servicemen.

A new classroom was built in the church basement. New restrooms were provided and a new room added to the parsonage.

Fellowship suppers were served each month.

Chadavae was a busy group starting in 1948, and Pioneer Girls was organized in 1951. The Sunday School enrollment grew from 100 in 1942 to 241 in 1958. Church membership in 1958 was 351.

After 150 years the Church faced the future with faith in its mission, and courage to carry on.

1979 ... A new spire thanks to Eagle Scout Bill Young

The Chestnut Street Baptist Church first lost its spire in 1853 when many planks of wood rotted out and the structure was deemed unsafe. The spire was replaced, but had to be removed again in 1887 because it began to lean toward the Cushing House.

In late 1979, 16-year-old Bill Young of 33 Sea Street in Camden was determined to replace the spire to earn his Eagle Scout rank. Bill had looked out of the window of his home across the harbor at the spireless steeple for ten years, wishing it could be replaced. Finally, he decided to stop wishing and do something about it.

Billy contacted the pastor, Reverend Robert Walden, who encouraged his endeavors. With the help of his family and the Baptist Church Steeple Committee – Judith Simonton, Philip York and Howard Johnson – Billy began work with his friend and Camden architect Christopher Glass to make his dream come true.

A Hingham, Mass., contractor, Burgess Steeplejacks, was chosen to erect an authentic 40-foot spire, complete with a gleaming gold leaf weathervane given by Mr. Burgess, himself a Boy Scout leader. In the meantime,

Billy launched an intensive fund-raising campaign, with the help of Camden National Bank, to raise the \$15,000 for his project.

With donations pouring in from everywhere, by early September he had reached and exceeded his original goal. Billy's many letters, phone calls, personal visits and speeches to organizations, along with newspaper articles and spots on WRKD, had brought him success.

By the end of 1980 the new white wood shingles and flying weathervane welcomed all people from ashore and the sea to Camden, the prettiest spot in Maine.

1983 ... Brian Vanden Brink

My Bicentennial minute looks at a small piece of CSBC's more recent history. Twenty-five years ago, almost to this day, a young man from Nebraska came into Chestnut Street Baptist Church for the first time, hoping to make peace with God, find forgiveness and maybe even some answers to life's difficult questions. After attending for several weeks, and listening intently to the gospel message being faithfully preached, he came forward up this aisle to make a public profession of faith in Christ during an invitation at the close of a service. Right here at this altar. Shortly thereafter, his wife and young daughter began to attend and eventually all were baptized and accepted as members.

Not long after that, this young man was approached by an older gentleman in the church named Frank Leonard, who was involved in an outreach at the Maine State Prison called Yokefellows. He invited the young man to come along sometime and see if this ministry might be something the Lord would want him to do. He went, and has been going almost every Thursday evening since.

In addition, the young man began to develop deep and close friendships with many of the people at the church and became more and more involved in the life and service of the church through teaching Sunday school to the children and participating on various boards and leadership teams.

If you haven't guessed, I was that young man. Now I'm getting old, but for me CSBC is not so much about the past, but the present and Future. This church has been used by God to help keep me and my family on track for the past twenty-five years, and I hope it will continue to do so for a long time to come.

2008 ... Operation Christmas Child

For some years, our church has participated in Operation Christmas Child. Through this ministry we join with thousands of fellow believers to send Christmas Shoeboxes to many thousands of children around the world as tokens of love and a witness to the Gospel of Christ.

This year, we hope to send at least 200 shoeboxes. To do so will require the participation of all of us.

Sheila Conner, a member of our church, is homebound. During a recent visit, she told me that she has not been out of her apartment for two years.

As her part in our preparation of the shoeboxes, Sheila is making a bookmark for each child. She has already completed more than fifty of them.

Recently Sheila was visited by a dental service provider. Sheila told her about our project and showed her one of the bookmarks. This dentist gave her the names of two contacts who may be able to provide a toothbrush and a tube of toothpaste for each child.

Let's all join Sheila and have part in this Bicentennial project. Some may want to pack one or more boxes. Others may give various items to be assembled in the boxes by volunteers.

Just keep in mind that the project must be completed by October in order to ship the boxes to Samaritan's Purse so the children may have them by Christmas.