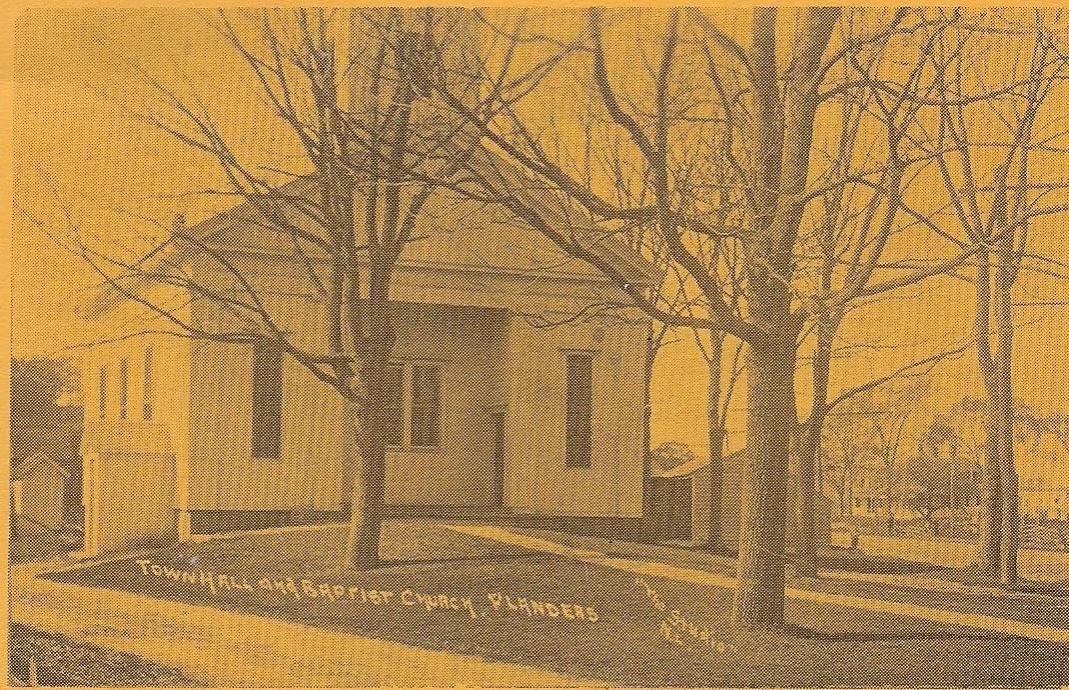


The Flanders Baptist  
and Community Church

Incorporated

East Lyme, Connecticut



Historical Sketch of  
The Flanders Baptist and Community Church  
of East Lyme, Connecticut

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by  
Ross Gordon Graves  
Church Clerk

**Updated by the Historical Committee of 1973**

Known as:

The Lyme Separatist Church	1748-1752
The Lyme Baptist Church	1752-1810
The First Baptist Church of Lyme	1810-1839
The First Baptist Church of East Lyme	1839-1929
present name	1929-to date

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## **Historical Names**

1748-1752	The Lyme Separatist Church
1752-1810	The Lyme Baptist Church
1810-1839	The First Baptist Church of Lyme
1839-1929	The First Baptist Church of East Lyme
1929-to date	The Flanders Baptist and Community Church

## **Preface to the 1973 Update**

Our task in 1973 is to update this history, so that the important events of the past twenty-one years may be recorded. We who are writing this have been involved in the Church since the 1920's and thus this is a lived and living history.

When Ross Graves (now a husband, father, English teacher, and author in Nova Scotia) completed this booklet to which this is an appendage we were still at war in Korea. We lost one of our own members before the peace was concluded, Roscoe Perry, son of Roscoe and Amy Perry. He is buried in the cemetery behind the parsonage.

After the Korean War the Church had a spurt of growth. Allen and Mary Scott moved into the Parsonage July 1, 1951. After graduation from Yale Divinity School in June 1953 Allen was ordained and called to minister to the Church and community.

In 1954 a building committee was formed, and the Sunday School addition was built in 1955. Arthur Saunders of Niantic very generously built the addition at cost.

The new building was ready just in time for the general increase in interest and attendance that was evident in the 1950's.

In those years we had one hundred and twenty-five attending Sunday School while Church attendance was usually about eighty. However, our Easter congregation increased to nearly four hundred. In 1958 we held two services Easter morning for the first time.

The decade after the ending of the Korean War until the assassination of President Kennedy was a pleasant, tranquil period, with peace at home and abroad. The Church experienced gradual but continued growth. Its ministry reached out further and further into the community until more than half its weddings, funerals, counseling, and visitation efforts were for those not affiliated with the Church.

It is noteworthy that a former pastor, Rev. Frederick Tholen and two sturdy pillars of the Church, John and Ebenezer Fraser, died during this period. Gertrude Storms Jackson, our volunteer choir director for a generation; Leon Rix, deacon for many years; Mary Weaver, long a president of the Community Circle also were called home in this decade.

During the sixties there was a quickening pace in the rate of change in Flanders. A new grammar school and a new high school were built across the road. More people were moving into our area. Many of

these became members of our Church. But many did not and we noted that what we had been reading as characteristic of these years was true of these newcomers. They were happy to have no church affiliation. They were the "new secular society."

However, our Church seems to be weathering this change as it has many others. We have this responsibility, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, and that now unto has been left this work of reconciliation;" and also that "Christ is the Head of every person born into this world" and not just those who are in the Church. Our task is to "show and tell" to use a phrase our children brought home from kindergarten.

We have good news to show and tell and others must judge whether or not the Church succeeds in that way. Others and the Other who alone is God must bear witness to that history. But this we wish to make clear for the record. We do not believe that God loves and accepts and forgives in any conditional manner but rather that his love and forgiveness and acceptance are for his whole creation. Our Calvinist heritage insists that what God proposes God can bring to fullness of completion. Our faith rests in God's goodness and power alone.

But we are historians now and not theologians. After the tragic death of President Kennedy our country entered a dark valley of trial and trouble, at this writing, we are in process of withdrawing from a dreadful decade of war in Southeast Asia. Our community lost two nineteen year old boys in that conflict; David Rogers and Donald Walsh, The two candlesticks on the communion table were given in their memory.

The Church Choirs, under the able and dedicated direction of Gladys Prince from 1958 to 1972, were outstanding in those years. The women's organizations continued actively to put on Church suppers, have bi-weekly work parties to make articles for their annual Christmas sales and summer bazaars. The Hawthorne Club gave us the new piano in memory of Helen Richmond Banning and Helen Beckwith Fraser. They also contributed heavily toward the purchase of the Allen organ and have continued to pay its insurance and part of the cost of the organist. A new kitchen was built at the parsonage by this same club in 1960.

The Junior Circle was organized May 7, 1952 with the Sunday School as its primary concern. Over the years they have made great contributions to the Church, providing funds for the folding doors, the new addition, as well as providing nearly ten percent of the annual income of the Church.

The Community Circle is the older of the three women's groups. Many of its present members joined in the 1920's. For years these ladies were the main-stay of the Church with their labor, their presence, their money, and their love.

What has been said of the Community Circle can be equally said of the Hawthorne Club and the Junior Circle. The Church owes much to the women of the Church. Without their continuing efforts and concern this history would be much different.

The fortunes of the Young People of the Church have varied.

We have had good years under the leadership of Lallance Adair, the William Bieniks, the Charles Livandoskis, the Allen Scotts. Many happy occasions and memorable events have characterized Young Peoples. Due to the fact that the membership of this group changes so rapidly it does not have the continuity so characteristic of other societies in the Church. A very good year has sometimes been followed by a very low year.

'One of the most loyal and hard-working groups in the Church are the Sunday School teachers. This is a difficult and demanding task and it has been well done these past twenty-one years.

We have been reluctant to mention names because the Record Book is full of names. But how can we not recall the deaths of Rev. George Strouse, our pastor during World War II, and Hattie Gillette, deaconess and friend of all. We are a family, members one of another, and we miss those who go home before us.

Quite possibly our grandchildren will look back on this age and wonder about us as we wonder about our grandparents, how were they able to endure those times? Our answer is that looking around in this age not merely of catastrophe but of wonder, a century of opportunity in the fullest and deepest sense, we are confident that to be born into this stormy era of revolution may be a cause of rejoicing rather than lamentation. The problems to be resolved demand, and create, spiritual resources which the prosperous ease of a golden and serene age will never inspire.

And so we conclude this brief summing-up. It may be that we have overlooked certain events that should have been given greater prominence. Such as the fact that Rev. Allen Scott and Father Kenneth Flint of St. Paul's Church exchanged pulpits in the sixties. The ecumenical movement is now so well established it is difficult to remember the old fears and animosities.

Our mission giving has increased ten-fold'. We have been a larger part of the larger community. We believe our Church to be a source of help and health for the whole area in which we are called to serve. Our hope is to press on and do better, to the end that God's will might be done in us and through us.

And to that the whole congregation says, Amen.

## The Beginning

It was in 1620, on the twentieth of December, that the Pilgrims made their landing at Plymouth. By one of the interesting paradoxes of history they and the Puritan settlers who followed them, all of whom theoretically were at least in part seekers for religious freedom, proceeded at once to make their civil and ecclesiastical policy one. They now had religious freedom, but this freedom which they valued so highly and for which they had paid such a price they did not grant to others. The Church and state were identical. The Churches were organized by law, and political suffrage was dependent upon Church membership. Taxes were levied on all citizens for the support of these Congregational Churches, and all were compelled by law to conform to their doctrine or suffer the penalty of disfranchisement, imprisonment, public whipping, or banishment.

In all of New England there was but one colony which allowed religious freedom, and that was the colony of Rhode Island. It had been settled by Roger Williams, a Baptist clergyman banished from Massachusetts, and the first Baptist Church in North America had been founded there. Baptist sentiments were not slow in creeping over the border into southeastern Connecticut. The first baptisms in this state were in what is now Waterford, in 1674. The event created great excitement at the time and the General Court was invoked to put a stop to this innovation.

The first Baptist Church in Connecticut was established in 1705 in what was then Groton. Its membership was composed of the few scattered Baptists in the southeastern part of the colony. A petition sent to the legislature the year before for permission to form a Church had been ignored, but the small group proceeded in spite of the tremendous opposition to organize. Valentine Wightman, a young preacher from Rhode Island, became their first pastor.

Five years later another Baptist Church was organized in what is now the town of Waterford. For twenty-five years these were the only Baptist Churches in the state. Several members of this second Church resided in Lyme, and gave impetus to the growth of Baptist work in that town. In 1727 they invited Rev. Valentine Wightman to come from Groton to Lyme to preach to them.

Before commencing the actual history of Baptists in Lyme, it is necessary to understand what the town of Lyme consisted of in the middle of the eighteenth century. The township of Saybrook, of which Lyme was originally a part, was first settled by the English in 1635, and claimed land along the Sound from what is now Clinton to what is now Niantic village, a distance of about twenty miles, and extended northward into the country for several miles; the boundaries were quite vague. In 1664 the township of Saybrook was enlarged, upon the condition that two plantations or towns be made within three years. Consequently the following winter the township of Saybrook was divided into two distinct townships, Saybrook and Lyme, with the Connecticut River the boundary between the two. The township of Lyme, then, contained practically all the territory now included in the towns of Lyme, Old Lyme, and East Lyme, as well as parts of East Haddam, Hadlyme, and Montville. As usual the new town, considering itself a Congregational parish, built a house of worship, settled a minister, and taxed the inhabitants of the town to pay his salary.

The town of Lyme being so large for a single parish, it being so difficult for townsfolk residing in the northern and eastern parts to attend the Church which stood in the southwestern section, in 1719 the eastern section was formed into a separate parish, and in 1724 the northern section was constituted a separate parish. Thus there were three ecclesiastical parishes within the town of Lyme: the first society, the second or eastern society, and the third or northern society. In general, the first society comprised what is now Old Lyme; the east, East Lyme; and the north, Lyme.

About 1740 the religious revival known as the Great Awakening swept over New England. Thousands were brought out of their spiritual apathy by the near-fanatical preaching of Edwards and Whitfield, and, disgusted with the cold deadness of the state religion, they set up their own congregations. They were known as "Separates" because they had separated themselves from the legal Congregational Church. Separates were considered practically identical with Baptists, and both were adjudged to be

dangerous radicals. It was the opinion of Connecticut colony that "*loathesome Hereticks, whether Quakers, Ranters, Baptists, Adamites, Separates, or some other like them*" had no place in the colony. Action was soon taken by the Congregationalists, who had the law behind them. In February 1744 a Separatist meeting was being held at Saybrook, with several Lyme sympathizers present, when suddenly the local magistrates descended on the gathering and took them to court. The charge brought against them was: "*For holding a meeting contrary to law, on God's holy Sabbath Day.*" They were arraigned, tried, fined, and driven on foot, through deep mud, to New London, a distance of twenty-five miles, and thrown into prison, without fire, food, or beds, where they remained, enduring dreadful suffering, for several weeks, and probably would all have perished had not some local Separates brought them provisions.

In 1745, there were enough Separates and Baptist sympathizers in Lyme to form a Separatist (Baptist) Church, which they did in spite of the strong opposition. The pastor was Joshua Rogers who had been ordained two years previously. He soon fell into disrepute and the tiny band was left pastor less. After a year or so they disbanded (in 1747) and this, the earliest Baptist Church in the township of Lyme, became extinct.

### **The Lyme Separatist Church**

But the cause had not become extinct and sometime in the year 1748—or, to be more specific, sometime between the dates of 28 December 1747 and 30 December 1748—another Separatist Church was organized. Here we commence the actual history of the Flanders Church, which was organized not in 1752 but in 1748; and proof that this is so has been found and recorded. This Church was composed mostly of residents of the eastern parish of the township, and for the first four years of its existence was strictly Separatist. The leaders of the flock were Ebenezer Mack and Elisha Miller. On 12 January 1749 (new style) Ebenezer Mack was formally ordained as a Separatist minister over the struggling Church. We find a reference to the group dated May, 1752, stating that Elisha Miller "*at Sundry times Officiates as a Publick Teacher Among ye Separates.*"

By the summer of 1752, the seeds of Baptist theology which had been sown by Valentine Wightman's preaching were ready to bloom. Ebenezer Mack, who was a close friend of Elder Wightman (preachers were known as "Elders" at this time), embraced the Baptist belief and was baptized by immersion. And as so often happened in those days, the Separatist Church of which he was pastor became Baptist also. It was only a step from one to the other, for there were actually only two denominations, Congregationalists and non-Congregationalists, and the Separatists banded with the Baptists. There were very few Separatist Churches which did not either turn Baptist or else become extinct before they were able to.

### **The Lyme Baptist Church**

And so the small band of Separates called a council to convene at Lyme on 20 August 1752, at the home of Silas Smith which stood near the present Stone Ranch, on the left side of the road going north from the Post Road. Delegates were present from established Baptist Churches in Connecticut and Rhode Island. With the meeting of this council the Church formally became Baptist and was so recognized by sister Churches. At this meeting three important matters were taken care of. It was decided that

although Elder Mack had not been baptized prior to his ordination and consequently not ordained as a Baptist preacher, since he had subsequently adopted Baptist principles his ordination was deemed valid and he was accepted as a bona fide Baptist minister. Another very important decision reached was the agreement to hold open Communion, to allow all to partake of the Lord's Supper, although this was not in accord with the strict Baptist principles rigidly observed in neighboring Churches. The Church followed the policy of open Communion until 1795.

The last business done by the council was to nominate Nathan Marvin and Elijah Smith to serve as Deacons, which, next to the Pastor, was the most important office in the Church. After some consideration they accepted the office and were duly ordained as the Church's first Deacons on 23 February 1753. In addition to their regular duties of taking care of the poor, "*propagating ye Gospel*", and nurturing the spiritual life of the Church, the Deacons were to take care of the Church treasury. This latter function they held until the year 1818, when the first Church Treasurer was elected. The first trustees were elected in that year also.

This council meeting is the first dated entry on our Clerks' books. Records of the Church from 17--j8 to 1752, if any were ever kept, have all been lost. From 1752 on, however, a more or less complete record has been maintained. The earliest membership list is dated April 1753 and contains 66 names--31 brethren and 35 sisters.

The first meetinghouse stood on Meetinghouse Hill and was probably erected the summer of 1754. A tablet now marks the site. It was a most convenient place for the Church to be located. At that time what we now call the Meetinghouse Hill, Whistletown, and Lower Four Mile River Road sections were much more densely populated than at present. There the Post Road crossed the highways running north and south, making it a converging point to the people from a wide region round about. Folks used to walk to Church from Black Point and equally far distances, while those who could afford it drove a horse and wagon. The horse would be put into the horse shed by the side of the Church where he would have to remain until the afternoon service was over. Right near the site of the original meetinghouse there is a large fiat rock, a local landmark. In olden times the worshippers used to carry their shoes in their hands and, when they arrived at the rock, stop to put them on before going into the Church. Shoes were expensive items and were to be worn only on Sabbath days at Church.

The history of the Church for the first twenty-five years is one of struggle and questionable success. One period of over five years, 1760- 65, and another of about a year and a half, 1766-68, are left entirely without record. Those were trying days. The members not only had to support Elder Mack but had to pay taxes for the support of the Congregational minister in this east parish of the town of Lyme as well. In 1761 and again in 1767 they petitioned the County Court to be released from this odious taxation but their petition was refused. About this time the large emigrations from Lyme to New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, and Nova Scotia started, and with no new people to replace those lost the membership dwindled.

As evidence of the lack of interest and the attempt to overcome it, I quote a resolution passed by the Church 23 November 1765: "*Voted that for the time to Come that If any Brother Neglects to attend*

*Church Meetings when Legally worned they Shall be Looked upon as offenders Till they give Satisfaction there for.*" A similar resolution was passed concerning those who failed to attend the public worship and Communion.

But more trouble was brewing for the struggling Church. In June of 1768 Elder Mack requested to be released from his pastoral office on account of ill health. The Church discussed it and suspiciously asked if there were any other reason for the request. Mack replied no, and added, "*I shall know my friends, for they that are my friends will be fur releasing me.*" After much talk and many questions the Church agreed to release him from the pastorate, but retained him as a member. His true reason for resigning the pastorate became evident the following year (1769), when Mack informed the brethren that he did not think it consistent for a Baptist Church to have open Communion, to allow the Congregationalists to partake of the Lord's Supper with them, and that inasmuch as this Church followed that policy he no longer desired to remain a member. But the Church refused to dismiss him. So he and some of his followers simply stopped coming to Church. The next year a committee was sent to enquire their reasons, and reported that Mack and his followers would stay away from the Church as long as the Church admitted unimmersed members to the Communion table. Then abruptly in 1772 came news that he had joined the Baptist Church in Groton, over which his friend, Valentine Wightman, had been pastor. The news that their former pastor had united another Church without a letter or their consent grieved the Lyme Church, and it proceeded to discipline and finally to excommunicate Ebenezer Mack. A number of Baptist Churches were called together in October to meet at the Lyme Church, and in conference decided that the Groton Church had done wrong in receiving Elder Mack when he was under discipline by this Church. At a second council meeting held the next month at the Groton Church, the action of the Lyme Church in excluding Elder Mack was condemned, and it was agreed that the conscientious scruples he entertained should have had weight with the members of this Church; that is, although they had the right to exclude him, they ought not to have done it. This council was the start of the Stonington Union Association, which therefore was founded in this Church.

But before this the pastorless Church had lost several of its members who withdrew over the open or closed Communion controversy. There remained only nine members to keep the Church alive. The condition of the Church was so low that there was talk of disbanding. However, a few steadfast souls held together and fought bravely on, keeping up their meetings and laboring with offenders and delinquents. Preachers from neighboring Churches occasionally preached, and a few members were added.

The Church felt sorely in need of a pastor, and this became such a burden to them that 6 June 1772 was set apart as a day of fasting and prayer that God would send them a "watchman". Before the day closed they began to consider whether the man who should lead them was not already in their midst. In a few months it was freely talked in their meetings that Brother Jason Lee was fitted for the work, although it was more than a year later when they gave him a formal call, and an- other year before they called a council to ordain him (7 December 1774). Jason Lee was the son of Elder Joseph Lee, pastor of a Church on Long Island.

Times were still poor for the Church, discouragement still ruled them, and they were face to face with extinction. They had sent Elisha Miller to the Stonington Union Association, asking for advice. In the records of the Association we find, "*And after weighing and considering the case, the association determined to leave them to the freedom of their own minds, either to unite (i.e., remain) together as a Church, or to put themselves under the government of any of the Churches in fellowship, as they liked best.*"

But the coming of Jason Lee as their pastor began a new era in the life and progress of the Church. He was the strongest pastor this Church has ever had, and turned its path from destruction to prosperity. When he became pastor there were about twelve members. Two years later he had increased it to 20. As his experience as a preacher grew so did his abilities. In 1778 he added 28 to the membership and the next year 46. By 1780 there were 61 members, which, in the next decade, he quadrupled to 240. When he died in 1810, the Church numbered 431. He was pastor for 36 years, and in all those years there was only one in which he did not add to the membership by baptism. Discipline was vigorously maintained and the influence of this Church was felt not only in the east parish of Lyme but throughout the State. There was hardly a Church council called in this section of New England to which Elder Lee was not asked. Seven men were ordained in this Church body and three daughter Churches were formed.

Within the first few years of Elder Lee's ministry Elisha Miller, a wealthy and childless man whose broad acres and hospitable mansion stood near the Church and who had been an active member since its founding in 1748, died, leaving his estate to be divided, one half for the support of the schools in the east parish or society and the other half for the support of the ministry of this Baptist Church. That the prudent Jason Lee had a careful eye to this windfall is proved by an entry in the record book of the east society of Lyme, wherein he is voted certain shillings "*toward what he paid to get Captain Miller's will established.*" The heirs for a while disputed the bequest and took the matter to court, but the case was settled in favor of the Church and they came into full possession of it. In 1784 Jason Lee was given a life lease to the farm. This then was the Church's first parsonage, and it stood on what is now known as Dean Road (the former and correct name of it is the Jason Lee Road) near the vicinity where it connects with Lovers Lane.

Further, now that this Baptist Church was so powerful it was at last able to stop the odious taxation for the support of the Congregational minister. They became more numerous than the Congregationalists in the parish and the latter were no longer able to tax them for the support of the state Church, for when they met to vote on it the members of this Church banded together and voted that only Congregationalists should be taxed, and being in the majority always carried their vote. As the Baptist Church at that time did not tax its members, membership in it meant exemption from all tax for the support of the Gospel. People might disagree on the subject of infant baptism and be hazy all along the line of Calvinistic theology, and yet have a clear and harmonious conviction that it was well to leave a Church which could seize your property for arrears on the minister's rate and connect yourself with one that exercised no such prerogative. Thus the Baptist Church flourished while the Congregational Church grew weaker and weaker, until, it is said, there' were but two aged women left members.

## **Daughter Churches**

Three daughter Churches were formed. One was in what is now Waterford, near the present Lakes Pond Church. It was a branch of this Church from 1780 to 1813, when it was constituted a separate Church under the name, "The Waterford and Montville Church", with 24 members. Rev. Jonathan Ames was the only pastor, from 1813 to 1830. It grew very weak and dissolved about 1837. The number of members never exceeded 56.

A second daughter Church was formed in a section of the north parish of Lyme later called Chatham, about the same time as the first. (This is not to be confused with Chatham in Massachusetts or New York, for this Church never had a branch in those towns.) It was constituted a separate Church in 1784, and Christopher Minor, an evangelist ordained here two years previously, became pastor. It became extinct about 1831.

The third was formed about 1781 in Marlow and Lempster, New Hampshire, to which district a huge colony had emigrated from Lyme. (Before emigrating they met at this Church and organized both as a Church and as a town.) It was constituted a separate Church in 1800, and Nathan Champlain, an ordained member of this Church, was sent to be their pastor. In 1821 they sent one of their number to Lyme to be ordained in the mother Church.

## **Meetinghouse**

In 1788, repairs were made on the meetinghouse. One of the members did the work and was paid £24 for the job. In 1804, it was plastered for the first time. The Church goers of an earlier day had none of the comforts of this modern age. Plush pews, heated and ventilated buildings were unknown in that era. In winter the women used to bring bricks heated in their ovens on which they would rest their feet during the morning and afternoon services. During the latter part of Lee's pastorate a small stove was put into the Church.

I have not been able to find out very much about the structure of the first meetinghouse. It had doors on three sides and the pulpit was in the center of the main room and was elevated a good distance above the floor level, so that the minister towered above the heads of his congregation. A spiral staircase led up to the pulpit from the floor. The pews had straight backs and were un-cushioned, although several families used to leave small cushions in the pews which they rented. Each pew had a door to it and a shelf below the seating ledge. Here the family would store a blanket and eating utensils which it would use for the dinner it had brought to eat between the morning and afternoon services. In summer the blankets were spread on the lawn behind the meetinghouse under a grove of large chestnut trees and they would have a regular picnic. The ladies would gossip and the men discuss the affairs of the week, for they would not meet again until the next Sabbath. This was not only their Church; it was their newspaper, radio, and telephone.

During these years of prosperity there was at times a lack of "Gospel order" and time and again Congregationalists had sat down, invited and uninvited, at Communion, to the dismay of those who wished to maintain the character of a Baptist Church. Finally in 1795 it was voted to have closed Communion. As a result a group of Baptists in Saybrook who had formerly looked askance at this open-

Communion Church now united with it. "*All hearts were now united in brotherly love,*" we are told, "*and consequently in the years 1798-99 and again in 1806 this Church enjoyed the most powerful revivals it has ever seen.*" Eighty were baptized during the revival of 1798-99 and 69 in the revival of 1806.

But the strenuous work of these meetings and his labor told on the health of the pastor, and in the year 1810, on the 14th of March, he passed away. The following entry on the records shows the esteem in which this man of God was held:

"Died-At Lyme, on the 14th inst. Elder Jason Lee,-pastor of the baptist Church in the 2nd Society of that town. After a most disstrissing illness of three months which was borne with exemplary patience and Christian fortitude, he resigned his breath, firm in the faith of a crucified Redeemer, and in earnest expectation and well grounded hope of a glorious immortality. .In the seventieth year of his age, the fortieth of his ministry, and thirty sixth of his pastoral office, he was gathered like a shock of corn fully ripe. As his years were lengthened to a good old age, so were they adorned with numerous graces and virtues, and stained with fewer errors than generally fall to the lot of humanity. At once a pious christian, an agreeable neighbor, society bas lost a valuable member, the church a brilliant ornament, the flock of his charge a successful teacher, his disconsolate wife and afflicted children a tender husband and affectionate parent. A large concourse of people at- tended his funeral on the 16th inst. when a pertinent and affecting discourse from 2d Timothy. 4th Chapter, 7th and 8th verses, was delivered by Elder Asa Wilcox, and the solemn attention of the audience in paying the last sad rites to their departed friend, exhibited the highest evidence of their attachment to him when living"

We are told that over a thousand people attended his funeral. He was buried in the Old Stone Church burying-ground in this town. To Jason Lee this Church owes more than it does perhaps to any other single person. He came into leadership over a tiny band of about twelve, wracked by controversy, discouraged, close to extinction; and he built it into one of the most flourishing Churches in the state, 431 strong, with three daughter Churches founded, seven men ordained for the ministry, a parsonage and a farm of 7S acres; and then, worn out from working for this Church, he left it for the Church Eternal.

Elder Asa Wilcox, who had preached the funeral sermon for Jason Lee, was called to be his successor. Lee's influence was still present and the Church continued to grow. The membership was 431 at the time Elder Wilcox became pastor, and although 2S members were dismissed to form the Waterford branch already mentioned and others to the newly established Second Baptist Church of Lyme (later the North Lyme Church) the Church had a roll of 441 members at the close of his pastorate, in 1818.

The pews at this time, and in fact up to the present century, were always rented, the money thus raised being used to pay the pastor's salary. In addition to the pew rent and money raised by contributions, Elder Wilcox was given a five year lease on the Church parsonage and farm.

In 1814 it was voted that "*the singing in futer at time of public worship be carried on without lining.*" In the early days hymn books were so expensive that the Church could not afford to have copies distributed among the congregation, and so when a hymn was announced the Deacon who had care of the Church's only hymn book would read the: first line of the hymn and blow the starting note on a small pitch pipe. The congregation would sing the line and then stop while the Deacon read the next line and blew the next note, and so on until the entire hymn was sung. It took quite a little time but time

meant very little, for the morning service lasted two and a half hours and the after- noon rarely less than three and a half. Elder Lee especially was noted for his long sermons.

Asa Wilcox terminated his pastorate in 1818 as a result of disagreements over baptism, and was followed by Elder George W. Appleton who remained three years.

In 1819 the Church applied for its share of the appropriation of \$145,000 granted by the legislature of Connecticut for the support of religion and literature. The amount received by this Church was seventy dollars, a large sum in those days. Joseph Strickland (the first regular Treasurer) was appointed to receive it from the Baptist board in 1820, and it was voted to use it as a permanent fund, the interest to be used for the support of the ministry. That same year (1819) Joel Loomis, Christopher Strickland, and Joseph Strickland were empowered to lease the Church parsonage and farm, which had been given by Elisha Miller, for a term of 999 years, and deposit the proceeds in the bank or invest it in mortgage on landed estate. The amount received for the parsonage and farm of 75 acres is not given in the records, nor was I able to learn definitely what became of these two funds, although it seems certain that they were used when the present Church building was erected at Flanders in 1843.

In 1822, Elder Appleton requested to be released from the pastorate, giving these reasons:

1. For the want of success in the Ministry.
2. For the neglect of the Church in regard to discipline – "*it exists onely in name.*"
3. For neglect of the Church in regard to my support.

Elder Appleton was released from his pastoral office, but remained a member of the Church. Shortly after, he set up meetings of his own on Sundays, and a Church committee was appointed to visit him and ask why "*he neglects to attend our Covenant meetings and also why he holds meetings on Sunday at a remote corner of the Society which the meeting house which is the proper place of worship on the Lords evidently tends to draw off a number of the Brethren and Sisters from day and also enquire why he should censure the Church so hard as he had in saying that there was not a member in the Church that would go ten rods to have the gospel preached to them.*" The answer was soon apparent. The Church voted to pay Appleton the money owed him and his private Sunday meetings ceased.

In 1824, Nathan Wildman was ordained and soon after was called to be the pastor. He baptized nearly a hundred and the resident membership, which had greatly fallen due to new Churches being organized close by, rose to 309. During his pastorate, we find the first definite amount named for the support of the pastor. In March of 1829 it was voted to raise \$220 for this purpose, but during the year he spent four weeks in Ohio and that proportion of his salary, amounting to \$17, was deducted. A report of the treasury about this time shows a balance of \$711.60. By now the Church had a regular Treasurer and trustees to take charge of these funds.

Minor repairs were done on the meetinghouse in 1830, and the next year the rear roof was shingled. To raise the amounts necessary for these and other Church projects, each member was assessed according to his wealth. A contribution was taken after Communion on the first Sunday of each month for the benefit of the poor of the community. It was the duty of the Deacons to administer this Poor Fund.

Nathan Wildman terminated his pastorate in 1831 and after an interim of about a year Rev. Frederick Wightman of Middletown accepted a call to serve here. The first Church project he entered into after receiving his call was to organize a Church School which he did in October 1832. In 1835 the Church School reported 78 scholars, 15 teachers, and a library of 250 volumes, which was not bad for a School only three years old. At this period the Church had 203 resident members and 58 non-resident.

Elder Wightman closed a peaceful pastorate in 1837 and was followed by William Palmer. Always during these years there was difficulty in raising the pastors' salaries. The interest on the "permanent funds," the rent from the pews, and the assessments on the members never seemed to be enough, and the Church almost invariably fell behind on its payments.

## Historical Perspective

At this point I should like to digress from the usual order of Church histories and speak of the actual life of this Church 100 and 150 years ago. As Rev. C. M. Reed has written, "*Two things were prominent in the Churches then, viz., watchcare and discipline .... The Church then felt a deep responsibility for their members that seems to have lost some of its force at the present time. If a brother strayed, the Church felt it their duty to bring him back into the fold if possible, and if that could not be done, to cut him off for the sake of the rest of the body, even as a physician now will remove a diseased member in an attempt to protect the perfect parts of the physical body.*"

Allow me to mention some of the things that were then considered worthy of discipline. (By discipline I mean rebuke, admonition, cut off from the Communion or exclusion from the Church, or all of them.) They disciplined for improper conduct, for drunkenness. One brother was disciplined because he had his children pour water on his hay before he sold it. A servant girl was disciplined for stealing. A brother was excluded because he would not pay \$10 a year toward the support of his mother, and another for misrepresenting the age of his horse in a trade. Two brothers were debarred from Communion until they should settle a lawsuit and cease saying hard things against each other. One was converted and received back into full membership, and afterward it was learned that about ten years before he had stolen a cow. Though he confessed his crime and paid for the cow, yet it was thought to be [or the good of the Church and the honor of Almighty God to hold him under admonition for a time. Members were disciplined for dancing and swearing, for gambling and smoking. They were disciplined for failing to attend Church, covenant, and business meetings. Parents were disciplined for allowing their children to go to balls. Some of these instances seem to us severe, and perhaps they were, and perhaps they were not all of them wise, but yet I think we must concede that back of them was the noble purpose of watching over the covenant brethren and keeping the Church pure. A single instance will serve to show that they were not always moved by selfish motives. A brother, Nehemiah Huntley, had in some way become involved financially and was likely to lose his farm. The Church came to the rescue and voted to assess themselves to redeem his farm. Instances are numerous where their methods were effectual, and offending and delinquent brethren came, confessed, were forgiven, and became useful members in the Church.

I want to quote here an account of labor with a brother in the very early days. This took place in 1785.

"And at Same Meeting took ye Case of our Brother Richard Mack into Consideration and found by labouring that it is the Mind of god for this Chh to take up their watch Care over him the sd Mack for Reasons as fallows first sd Church found sd mack giltey of the Sin of Carde Playing Joining with the Vain youth in Chanting to the Sound of the Viol and the Awfull Sin of Swarring and other Varey Sinfull Practises all these Varey Contrey to that Covenant hee esayed to Make with god and this .Church."

This practice of disciplining and exerting an oversight on the daily affairs of the members fell into disuse about the second half of the nineteenth century.

### **The First Baptist Church of East Lyme**

From its organization until about 1810, this Church was known as the "Lyme Baptist", and with the organizing of another Baptist Church in the township at that time the name of this Church became "The First Baptist Church of Lyme." In 1839, the east parish of Lyme, together with that part of Waterford lying west of the Niantic River, was formed into a separate township to be known as East Lyme, and the name of the Church was accordingly changed to "The First Baptist Church of East Lyme."

In March of 1842 twenty members of the Church residing in Lyme (later known as South Lyme and then as Old Lyme) petitioned to be set off as a separate Church, and were accordingly constituted a daughter Church in May. They soon erected a meetinghouse on land donated by Stephen Peck; it is now used as a Roman Catholic Church. The Old Lyme Church became extinct in the 1920's.

The fifth and last daughter Church was formed at Niantic by members residing there in December of the same year (1842) and a meetinghouse was erected by them the following year. This daughter Church still exists today as the Niantic Baptist Church. It has been said that the "*old Church on Meetinghouse Hill divided and the members were constituted into the two Churches at Flanders and Niantic.*" This is incorrect. This Church, the one in Flanders, is the original Church body which removed from Meetinghouse Hill to Flanders; and before it ever moved both the Old Lyme and Niantic Churches had been set off as daughter Churches. This is made clear in both the Church and Association records.

Elder William Palmer closed his pastorate in March of 1841. During the interim before another pastor was obtained they were supplied by Elders Avery and Watrous. Elder Watrous held a series of revival meetings during the winter of 1841-42 and baptized 61 into the fold.

### **A New Building**

During all these years the population of the east parish had been gradually shifting eastward toward Flanders and southward toward Niantic. The Church on Meetinghouse Hill was no longer in the center of the community. New Baptist Churches had sprung up in Lyme (now Old Lyme), North Lyme (now Lyme), Chesterfield, Quaker Hill, and at Lakes Pond (now Lake Konomoc). About the time that the members in Niantic village were contemplating being formed into a daughter Church, many members began seriously to consider changing the location of the meetinghouse. Then, too, the old building was almost a century old, and although repairs had been made several times, the members felt that a new building in a more central location would be the solution to their problems.

And so in May of 1842 a special Church meeting was called to consider the project. After a rather lengthy discussion, it was "*Resolved that we will Erect a house of public Worship for said Church provided*

*the necessary means can be attained by subscription and the Church be agreed where said house shall be located.*" The logical place for the new edifice to be built was at Flanders, at that time a more thriving community than Niantic. Here was a fairly large settlement, due mostly to the mill at Pattagansett Lake. (I might mention here that it was the mill which gave the village its name; the earliest mills on the lake were cloth-weaving and the district was given the name of Flanders from the cloth-weaving country of Europe.) A definite site in the village had to be decided upon, however, and when a vote was taken "*it was found that 9-14th of the Brethren were of the opinion that the house be built on the ground belonging to the Estate of E. Way.*" The idea of 9-14th of the brethren being thus inclined is carrying the degree of accuracy and completeness quite far for this Clerk, who later kept so few records that a single page included the minutes for two entire years.

The Church was given an option on the property but lost it when they were unable to raise the funds in time. Other sites were considered: a lot near Mildred Lougheed's present home, and the corner across from where the post office now stands. Eventually the Church agreed on the present site and a committee was appointed to draft plans for the new edifice: and authorized to commence building. It was begun the fall of 1842, and enough had been built by the following spring to allow the Church to transfer itself from Meetinghouse Hill to Flanders.

It is sometimes said that the old building on Meetinghouse Hill was moved to this site. That is incorrect. The present edifice was first built and then the old building which had stood since 1754 was torn down and sold for lumber, for the money was needed to pay for the construction of the new building. The Church had several subscriptions and used up all its funds to pay the costs, and even then was forced to accept a proposition of the town that in return for money to finish off the basement the town would be allowed to hold its meetings and keep its records there. This arrangement has continued until recent years when the Hall of Records was built at Niantic village.

The new meetinghouse was dedicated on 1 June 1843. Elder Jabez Swan of the First Baptist Church in New London preached the dedication sermon. It was many years before the Church was able to pay off its indebtedness. It did not even have sufficient funds to purchase a bell for the steeple. The bell now in the possession of the Church was a gift from Dr. John Smith, one of the members, in 1851. The same year the new building was painted for the first time.

In 1844, Elder Chester Tilden was called to the pastorate and remained here two years, at a salary of \$300 per annum. He was succeeded by Elder Palmer G. Wightman in 1846. During these years weekly prayer meetings were held. The membership averaged slightly below the 200 mark. Members were still assessed for the support of the Church, and frequently individuals complained in meetings that his or her assessment was too high, and asked the brethren to reconsider his or her case. In one instance when the Church reconsidered, it found that the original levy had been too low, and the brother who had requested the reconsideration was assessed double his amount. There is no further record of his appealing the original assessments.

Elder Wightman left in 1851 after having increased the membership to over 250. He was called back in 1853, after some bargaining on the salary he was to receive. During the interim the Church was supplied

by Rev. Augustus Bolles. Elder Wightman appears to have been a strong preacher; in February 1855 he baptized 31 into the membership and 41 the winter of 1857-58. The membership again went over the 300 mark. He resigned in November, 1858, although the Church had requested him to withdraw his resignation in September. The members called G. W. Abrams to be their pastor in December of the same year.

In 1858, the Church sold the site of the first Church building on Meetinghouse Hill to the first school district of the town, which soon after erected a school on the property. The land on which the Church now stands, although used from 1843, was not bought by the Church until 1862. The grantor was Ezra Beckwith, and the selling price was twenty-five dollars.

Rev. Abrams terminated his pastorate after only a year. The Church was then without a pastor for two years, during which time they extended calls to five men, but none of them accepted. Finally in 1862 Rev. T. O. Judd accepted a call and remained one year. He was followed by Elder G. F. Post in 1864. The pastors were paid about \$400 yearly.

The first trust fund was left to the Church in 1860 by Jerusha Hayden, a member residing in Essex. The sum was \$100, and the interest from it was to be distributed yearly among the poor of the Church. The principal was lent to the East Lyme Cemetery Association in 1860 and paid back in 1867, after which it was either lost or spent. The Church recently voted to reinstate the fund so that the name of the donor might be perpetuated.

In the late 1860's and early 1870's, much work was done on the meetinghouse. A new stove was installed, the steps in front of the building were repaired, and the interior was plastered. This last project was done at a cost of about \$165. Later the entire interior was repaired and redecorated at a cost of \$800 which was raised by subscription. While the repairing was being done services were held in the schoolhouse which formerly stood near the entrance to the cemetery. A new furnace was installed soon after.

George H. Lester of Waterford was called to preach in 1869 and the congregation was so well pleased with him that he was hired as pastor and a council called to ordain him (10 November 1869). He was the thirteenth man to be ordained within this Church body. He served until July of 1871. The Church was then without a pastor until 1873 when Rev. Percival Mathewson was called to fill the chair at a salary of \$500. He remained four years and was followed by John W. Holman.

We find an entry in the Clerks' book dated 1872 wherein Fanny Manwaring was given a vote of thanks for playing the melodian during the year. The instrument had been purchased by the Church ten years previously to accompany the singing. (The first organ was purchased in 1882.) There was also an active choir at this time, led for almost fifty years by Justin I. Beckwith. The fine set of three pulpit chairs now in the Sanctuary were given in 1881 in memory of Mr. Beckwith by his daughter, Mrs. John Luce. The Luces were great benefactors of the Church. In 1878 when the Church was considering hiring Rev. Holman for \$600 and wondering how the money could ever be raised, Brother John Luce stated that if the Church could raise two thirds of the amount by subscription and collections he would supply the remaining \$200. He and his brother, Captain Edward Luce, were generous contributors to the treasury.

It was during Rev. Holman's pastorate, in 1879, that the Church's present parsonage was built, although there is no record of it on the records other than a reference to a meeting held at the parsonage in 1880. Edward Luce gave the lot to the Church, containing more than two acres, with a frontage on the main street of 126 feet. John Luce and his wife personally supervised the building of the parsonage and donated a good share of its cost, which was about \$3500 to \$4000.

Thirty-five were baptized in 1878, bringing the number again over the 200 mark. The Church School at this time had an average attendance of 110. Two years later the lists were revised and 43 who had lost contact with the Church were excluded, bringing the total down to 152.

Elder Holman ceased his connection with the Church in 1882. A. J. Wilcox, an un-ordained preacher, supplied the pulpit occasionally until 1885, when Rev. D. H. Taylor was hired at a salary of \$500, the use of the parsonage, and a donation. It was the custom at this time for the congregation to bring yearly donations of food, clothing, furniture, etc. to the pastor and compensate for the meager salary which they were able to pay him. The Church during these years was almost always in debt.

The last few months of A. J. Wilcox's supplying in this Church he baptized 30 and during the interim before Rev. Taylor was called a visiting evangelist baptized 20. These accessions again brought the membership to the 200 mark, the last time this figure was to be reached. Rev. Taylor resigned in 1888 and was followed by M. F. Lee who remained only one year. Four members of the Ladies' Society canvassed the community to procure funds for the pastor. Rev. Lee was given a salary of \$550, a donation to exceed \$50 in value, and the use of the parsonage and grounds. The money raised from renting the pews was included in the \$550. (I might mention here that when the Church attic was cleaned in 1949 an old board carrying on it a diagram of the Sanctuary was found, showing who had owned each pew in the late 1890's. The highest rent paid was \$15.00; the lowest, \$10.00.)

In 1891 Rev. Silas Weaver became pastor. He stayed until 1893 and was succeeded by Rev. A. J. Wilcox who had supplied the Church ten years before while he was yet un-ordained. Rev. Wilcox remained only a year, after which poor health forced him to resign.

In October of 1894 a letter from Rev. Post, one of the former pastors, was received, recommending H. E. Martin, who had just been graduated from Colgate University, to this Church. Brother Martin was asked to preach several times, and, although un-ordained, showed such promise that the Church proceeded to settle him as their pastor and soon after (January 1895) called a council to ordain him. He was the fourteenth and last man to be ordained within this Church body to date (1952).

Repairs were made on the Church during his pastorate. The grounds were graded, the building re-plastered, and the Sanctuary remodeled. A second organ was purchased. The envelope system of giving was begun about this time, although no record books have been preserved. It may have stimulated Church giving, for they were able to raise Rev. Martin's salary to \$600. He was also given a vacation of two Sundays in July, but no mention is made of deducting this proportion from his salary as had been done for Nathan Wildman seventy years before. During these years annual roll calls were held and were well attended. The custom was observed until the 1930's, when it fell into disuse.

Rev. Martin closed his labors in October of 1898 and in December of the same year was followed by Rev. Charles M. Reed, one of the most loved of recent pastors. He was a noble man, a fine Christian, a hard worker for the welfare of this Church. He held the second longest pastorate-nineteen years-and was pastor up to his death in 1917. •He officiated as Church School Superintendent for several terms, building the School into an actively functioning unit and increasing local interest in that phase of the Church's activity. In addition to serving this Church he supplied the Lakes Pond Church, which was unable to hire a pastor, for a long period.

In 1904 Rev. Reed introduced the following resolution at a Church meeting: "*Resolved. That while we do not invite any to join us in the observance of the Lord's Supper except those who have been baptized on credible evidence of Faith in Jesus Christ, Thus following the example of the Apostles we will not turn away any of His professed followers who are walking considerately before Him. For has He not forbidden us to judge another's conscience. Matt 7-1 Rom 14-4.10 We as a Church reserve the right however to reject anyone in case of discipline or any case where the good of the Church demands it.*" This resolution, when presented for adoption, was defeated 6 to 16, whereupon Rev. Reed tendered his resignation. At a special meeting called soon after it was voted to pass the resolution, 16 to 6, and Rev. Reed withdrew his resignation. Thus the Church reinstated upon Communion for the first time since 1795.

The meetinghouse was painted and re-shingled with the help of \$200 given by Morten Plant, a local philanthropist. During Rev. Reed's pastorate electric lights were installed in the building (it had formerly been lit by oil), a new furnace and organ installed, and the present steel ceiling on the Sanctuary was put in. legacies and trust funds were also received. In 1904 \$500 was received from the estate of Allen Keeney, the interest of which was to be used for the upkeep of his parents' family lot in Head-of-the-River Cemetery at the Golden Spur. His nephew, Frank Keeney, left the Church a thousand dollars, and Frank Keeney's wife bequeathed a like amount. (Also, Frank's brother Griswold bequeathed another thousand about 1928 and a third brother, George, bequeathed yet another thousand in 1934.) Mrs. Frank Keeney also presented the Church its first individual Communion set in 1905. A silver plated set of a pitcher, two goblets, and two plates had been used since 1876, and prior to that an old pewter set had been used since Jason Lee's ministry. Another trust fund of \$500 was received from the estate of John D. Stanton in 1911.

The old horse sheds were also repaired about this time. They stood in a semicircle around the rear of the meetinghouse, and I have been told that they were partly or wholly built out of some of the lumber from the old meetinghouse on Meetinghouse Hill. How true this is it; is impossible to say. The present Church building could not possibly have been built out of lumber salvaged when the old meetinghouse was torn down, but the horse sheds could very well have been. They were built shortly before 1847 and were torn down in the early part of the present century, as by that time they had served their purpose and were no longer needed.

In March of 1917, the Church was greatly grieved to lose its pastor who had labored faithfully for almost eighteen years. He died on a Sunday evening after preaching as usual in the morning. Resolutions passed by the Church to express its sympathy to Rev. Reed's widow and daughter show the esteem in which he had been held in this community, and remind one of the time the Church had similarly been bereaved of

a beloved pastor over a century before. A successor to him was found in Rev. Walter Reynolds of Rhode Island, who commenced his duties in the fall.

At this time there arose a bitter controversy within this Church, breaking ties of Christian fellowship and threatening to break the body asunder. It is best not to speak of the misfortune which the Church suffered in detail; such a matter should be left to the future historian who can tell the story fairly and truthfully with no fear of giving offense. As a result of this trouble the Church lost some of its most faithful workers who had labored for many years, and scars from it have lasted even to the present day.

Rev. Reynolds left in 1922 and was followed by Rev. P. S. Collins in 1924. Between these two men Rev. F. S. Leathers supplied the pulpit as interim pastor. The Sanctuary was again repaired and redecorated and the tablet now on the front of the building was presented by the Church School. A trust fund of \$400 was received from the estate of Raymond Beckwith for the purpose of lighting the meetinghouse. By common consent among the members the name of the Church was un-officially changed to "The Flanders Baptist Church of East Lyme."

Rev. Collins terminated his pastorate in November of 1925 and was followed by Rev. Herbert Plumbe. The pastor's salary at this time was \$1200, made possible only by a yearly grant of about \$300 by the state Baptist board. The 1920's were trying years for the Church, The membership dropped to slightly over 100 with only about threescore resident members. Without aid from the state board it would have been impossible to have had a resident pastor. In addition to these troubles, the Church was experiencing difficulty with its pastor. The state Baptist board was called upon for assistance, and when the facts in the case became known the members voted to dispense with the services of Rev. Plumbe (1927).

### **The Flanders Baptist and Community Church of East Lyme**

As a result of this trouble several members took their letters and the membership, already depleted by the controversy six years before, fell even lower. The pulpit was supplied by S. D. Ogden from the Seventh Day Baptist Church in Waterford for several months and after he left this section of Connecticut other neighboring ministers and students from Yale Divinity School in New Haven officiated. But the members were anxious for a resident pastor who could again built the Church into an actively functioning unit, and the community was canvassed for funds to hire a man. With the sum raised (over \$1200) the Church extended a call to Rev. Marion Neilsson from the Yale School, who accepted and commenced his duties in July of 1929. He found the congregation at a low ebb. The membership had dropped to 74 with only about 50 living in the community. The only solution to the difficulty appeared to be changing the body to a non-denominational Community Church, which was done, although connection with the state and county Baptist organizations was maintained. The name of the Church was changed to "The Flanders Baptist and Community Church of East Lyme," and a fine set of by-laws was drawn up and adopted. Now that the Church was no longer wholly Baptist, several residents in the community who had formerly refused to unite with it now joined, and the membership again rose to over 100. The Church had come long way toward recognizing the common ties of Christianity since the open Communion controversies of 1768-70 and 1904. Now not only Communion was open to all denominations but membership as well.

With the changing of the body into a community organization the early history of our Church closes. It is difficult to speak of its history for the subsequent two decades, for only the future historian can look back with the perspective of time and see the salient points; and the story is already well known to us as it is so recent. However, a resume of the outstanding changes may be made.

Rev. Nilsson terminated his pastorate in August of 1931 as he had been granted a fellowship at Oxford, and another Yale student, J. H. Pennebaker, became the next pastor. During his term the parsonage was remodeled; the second floor being made into an apartment for the pastor and the first into rooms for the Church School at a cost of about \$800. The membership roll was revised and 35 were placed on an "In-active List," bringing the total to below 100. The earliest Church record books were deposited in the State Library for safekeeping.

Rev. Pennebaker resigned in 1934 and was followed by Rev. Rival Hawkins who remained three years. In 1938 Rev. Frederick Tholen came to the pastorate. During these years various repairs were made, the parsonage was painted, the Church basement redecorated, and a new choir organized. During Rev. Tholen's stay the Church exterior was painted.

In 1942, Rev. Tholen closed his labors and the following winter a call was extended to Rev. George Strouse, long a minister in this vicinity and at one time a missionary in Africa. He accepted and remained our pastor until 1948. The Church at this time was going through a financial struggle, and the highest salary they were able to pay Rev. Strouse was only \$1200 – one third of the average salary for Connecticut pastors during the war years. In spite of this and other discouraging factors Rev. Strouse stayed on and labored faithfully and diligently in this Church until his pastorate came to a close four years ago. While he was with us a new furnace was installed at a cost of eleven hundred and a new floor laid in the Sanctuary for over eight hundred.

Since 1948 we have had no regular pastor, but have been supplied with students from Yale. One of these, Peter Chiolero, and, before him, the former pastor of the Seventh Day Church in Waterford, Ronald Hargis, have both acted as interim pastors. In 1950 the Church was incorporated under the laws of the state, and as a result this spring an entirely new set of by-laws was adopted. At present Allen Scott, one of our members who is studying for the ministry and an earnest worker for the Church, performs the duties of resident pastor.

The earliest women's society of which I find record was existing in 1868 under the name of the "Ladies' Social Circle." In 1874 a Missionary Society was organized with over sixty members. It became defunct in the 1880's. In the next decade a Women's Temperance Society was formed but did not last very long. In 1895 a Ladies' Aid Society was started and lasted until 1922. The next year it was revived and named the "Social Union." In 1924 it was reorganized as the Community Circle, the next year as the Ladies' Aid Society, and finally in 1926 as the Community Circle again, since which time it has lasted to the present day. It is impossible to estimate the work of the Ladies' Aid and the Community Circle; to speak of the ways in which this group has helped the Church would require a sketch as long as this present one. The present president of this organization is Mrs. Minnie G. Lewis.

A second Missionary Society was organized in 1907 and lasted until before 1911; a third in 1923, lasting to about 1927, and a fourth in 1946, lasting to date (1952) through the efforts of its leader, Mrs. Nita M. Wheeler. A society for the younger ladies of the Church was formed in 1939 as the Hawthorne Club. The organ now in the Sanctuary was given by them in 1941. Also, there has recently been formed a Junior Circle.

The young people's societies have been- many in number and short in duration. The first one on record was organized in 1894, and in 1897 had 30 senior and 40 junior members. It dissolved in 1898. At least five separate Baptist Young People's Societies were organized during Rev. Reed's pastorate. A "Christian Endeavour" organized about 1920 lasted until 1925, and four more separate societies bearing this name were formed in the 1930's. Another society formed in 1944 lasted to 1946; another 1947 to 1948; and the most recent held together but five months in 1949. Since then no regular society has been organized but the young people have met with Allen Scott as leader for informal discussion periods.

Our present membership is 122, of which 80 are resident and 42 are non-resident members. The Church building and property are valued at \$10,000 and the parsonage and property at \$8,000.

And so with these few strokes I have tried to present a synopsis of the history of our Church for the long and varied period of its existence. The former days, dark oftentimes with difficulty, are colored with glory, and the periods of greatest struggle were indeed the periods of triumph, of which today we are proud. But we as a Church would do well to learn from the tutelage of these past days, and, realizing that no Church is permanent which forgets its past, remember the story of sacrifice and struggle of those into whose labors we have entered, and pass on the work to those who come after us, with a glory undimmed, and the cause of our Savior advanced.