



# THE WATERBOROUGH

Published by the Waterborough Historical Society  
July, 1982

## THE CHURCH ON OSSIPEE HILL Compiled by: Evelyn A. Thompson

The first Free Will Baptist Church in Waterborough was organized October 27, 1791. "Elder Benjamin Randal performed his usual tours of the East and the same Fall in company with others EMBODIED a church in Waterborough, Maine, at a place called Ossipee Hill."

Two years later this church, together with the churches in Cornish and Fryeburg were admitted to the New Hampshire Association. In 1797 "A great blessing of God succeeded the meeting of the Association at Waterborough, which a few, a very few years ago, was a howling wilderness."

On the day of October 4, 1798, a number of the General Provision Baptists collected at George Bickford's at Parsonsfield to consult on what may be expedient to be gone into concerning the subjects of the late Reformation here and in adjacent towns." As a result of this gathering the Parsonsfield Quarterly Meeting of this body was held at the home of Brother Henry Hobbs in Waterborough on January 2, 1799. "It was an exceedingly solemn meeting and there was great travailling pangs for sinners and for the rise of Zion."

On November 1, 1798, seven years after the organizing of the first Free Will Baptist Church in Waterborough, a few General Provision Baptists met for conference at the home of James Carll. Elder Tingley was chosen moderator and Henry Hobbs, clerk. They voted to keep up monthly meetings

and to by a BOOK OF RECORDS" The faithful ones met from month to month and the records kept until August 28, 1832.

At the May meeting in Parsonsfield, Bro. Hobbs related his call out of darkness unto public improvement to general satisfaction. He was already beginning to supply various churches in the Quarterly Meeting. The matter of his ordination was discussed at the October Meeting and was referred to the next yearly meeting to which he was appointed one of the messengers.

The May Quarterly Meeting was held at Gorham, after Two days of profitable meeting they adjourned to attend the ordination of Bro. Henry Hobbs at Standish on the afternoon of May 22, 1801. "Said ordination of setting apart of Bro. Henry Hobbs was attended with great solemnity, after a solemn extempore declaration of Eld. John Buzzell respecting the great and arduous work of a minister or servant of Jesus Christ. Prayer with laying on of hands of Pelatiah Tingley, James Weeks, James McCarson, and John Buzzell. Pelatiah Tingley giving the Right Hand of Fellowship and John Buzzell the very solemn charge in the audience of a very solemn though not very numerous assembly."

Their first minister in town was Pelatiah Tingley, formerly of Sanford, one of the early settlers in town. He was educated as a Congregationalist but later became a Free Will Baptist. He was earnest and active in his administration, and was one of the founders of the Church of which Henry Hobbs was the first minister. Hobbs was converted and baptized

on October 14, 1799 and within a week preached his first sermon in the dwelling of Timothy Ricker of Ossipee Hill.

Henry Hobbs was born in Berwick March 7, 1768. He came to Waterborough as an early settler where he served the town as one of its selectmen from 1798 to 1802 and from 1817 to 1826. He also served as Town Clerk in 1810 and as a Representative to the Maine Legislature 1809 to 1813 and from 1827 to 1831 and from 1833 to 1835. He was a member of the Governor's Council from 1837 to 1839 and a Justice of the Peace from 1821 to 1834. He was Chaplain of the Fourth Regiment of Maine Militia from 1828 to 1839 and a member of the Convention when Maine was organized as a separate State.

From 1805 church meetings were held in private homes. I have no record of a church being built but do find this, "The Meeting House was first occupied on May 2, 1805. It soon became known as the "Rev. Henry Hobbs Meeting House" as he was the only "settled" minister." Records are not available of the years of his active ministry, which ended in 1845 when he became partially paralyzed. He was succeeded by various supply.

The Parish consisted of a part of the Ossipee Hill Road, The old Mountain Road, Cluff Lane, a few homes near the old Coach Road, and quite a number of families on the Cross Road from Ossipee Hill to Middle Road, and that part of the Middle Road adjacent to the Mountain. The location of the Church was just where the old Mountain Road corners with the Ossipee Hill Road.

From the Free Will Baptist Repository 1847 (Published by Eld. Benjamin Buzzell and Son 1845-1852) "A new Church in Waterborough:" "The first church in Waterborough, the Church of which Eld. Henry Hobbs has for many years been a member and pastor, met in conference on the 18th inst. at Bro. Hobbs house; and in view of the state of the Church, it was voted that it be dissolved and a new Church be formed of such members as are in union with each other and were striving for the faith of the gospel. For the past two years, Bro. Hobbs has been confined to his room with palsy, and for some time previous to

this paralytic attack he was very feeble and unable to devote that attention to the Church which was necessary, in order to keep up gospel order and discipline. Consequently the brethren became somewhat scattered and discouraged. There were cases that required labor, and the living members of the Church felt themselves unable to regulate it and restore gospel order. For these reasons the brethren desired to be organized into a new Church. Bro. Hobbs has long felt desirous that something might be done, that such as were trying to live might have a home and enjoy the blessings and privileges of a living Church; its ordinances etc. before he might be called hence to be here no more. Accordingly, by request, we (Benjamin Buzzell) attended the above named conference, and after learning the wishes and fellowship of the brethren and sisters present, we proceeded in the organization of a new Church, Elder H. Hobbs and James Gray becoming members of it. Bro. Hobbs, although he is infirm in body enjoys his reasoning faculties perfectly, and is strong in the Lord.

The exercises on the occasion were solemn and interesting.

#### The York Association 1847

The business of this session was transacted in about an hour and a quarter, and rest of the time in the forenoon was spent in prayer, singing, and exhortation. A number of spiritual exhortations were delivered and no one present could doubt that the Lord was in our midst.

A meeting of worship was held in the afternoon, and although it was very rainy, a large congregation assembled, and the blessing of God attended. A discourse was delivered by Eld. John Buzzell, followed by a number of exhortations. A deep and solemn interest seemed to be felt throughout the congregation. Meetings were held in the evening at the Meeting House, and at the School House in what is called the Hill neighborhood, Middle Road. Notwithstanding, it continued to rain, both meetings were fully attended, and much of the heavenly, melting power of God was felt and enjoyed. Eld. R. Gaskill preached at the Meeting House and Eld. R. Tash at the School House.

Sabbath morning at nine o'clock, we repaired to the side of a pleasant pond, beneath whose waters many happy converts have been immersed in days past, and there Eld. James Gray baptized a happy believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Notwithstanding the weather continued wet, and the prospect of fair weather at a distance, yet before the hour of public worship had arrived the Meeting House was filled to overflowing, so that many were compelled to stand without beneath their umbrellas, or sit in their carriages to hear the word of life.

Eld. Henry Hobbs living in the vicinity of the meeting and feeling a great desire to meet with his brethren in worship once more, having been confined to his room for more than two years with the palsy, was brought to the meeting in a chaise and was able to remain in the meeting through the day. His presence with other brethren who were his early associates in the gospel ministry added great interest to the meeting. His health is about as it has been for the past year. His strength would not admit of his speaking, as he had a strong desire to do.

The Meeting House on Ossipee Hill has seen frequent revivals of Religion. There folks met to pray and praise God every Lord's Day and at other times. Eld. Hobbs was faithful in preaching the Word of God.

He died on March 20, 1848 and is buried in the family burying ground on Ossipee Hill. Mrs. Etta Holmes Butler, a Hobbs descendant, told me that the Meeting House was twice struck by lightning--once while Eld. Hobbs was preaching.

The Church declined soon after his death. The Meeting House was used as a Town House until 1854 when it became so dilapidated that it was abandoned for a better building and was afterward torn down by the proprietiers.

From History of York Co. by Everts & Peck 1880

"In the Summertime they went miles on foot to the Quarterly Meetings. Jonathan Woodman, when a boy of 18, walked from Sutton, Vt. to Parsonsfield to attend a yearly meeting. Mrs. Hannah Thorn of Lewiston walked several times to

Westport, 35 miles to attend the Yearly Meeting. As different processions of pilgrims joined each other at highway junctions, they would sometimes, as they neared the place of meeting, aggregate hundreds in line and the surrounding forest would echo with songs of devotion."

In his life written by Rev. Frederick Wiley this mention of his labors in this section. "The Church at Weeks Corner in the town of Parsonsfield had for the first time invited the Quarterly Meeting. People heard about and wanted to see what it was like. On the morning of the first day the people of that section looked out over a level of snow, below which fences and other landmarks had modestly sunk out of sight. The most prominent objects in view were the big drifts which blocked all highways to Week's Corner. But those sturdy New Englanders were not to be daunted by anything so trifling as a snow storm, the snow retarded but did not prevent a large attendance. Churches were well represented, reports were encouraging, business was disposed of with harmony and dispatch. Devotional meetings were well sustained and preaching was well attended with much demonstration of divine power.

#### REVIVAL IN WATERBOROUGH

Written by Eld. Benjamin Buzzell

January 1, 1848

For the encouragement and comfort of all the friends of Zion, we would inform them that God has begun a glorious work of Grace in Waterborough in that part of the Town usually called the Middle Road. The meetings have been held at the Hill School House in that place. Ever since the August session of the York Co. Free Will Baptist Association which was held with the Church in Waterborough, there has been a deepening impression of the heavenly Spirit upon the minds of the people in that vicinity, which was sensibly increased by the labors of God's people at the November session of the Association held at Shapleigh, not far from where the work has broken out. Eld. James Gray has preached the most of the time since last Spring.

Two weeks ago last Wednesday evening we had meeting at the School House referred to and at

the close of the meeting nine penitent souls expressed their desire for salvation. That night one mourning soul, while pleading for mercy, found the pearl of great price.

One week ago last Wednesday evening we attended another meeting in the same place, and we found that the work was progressing gloriously. The whole community seemed to be under the solemn, melting influence of divine grace. The youth, middle aged and those somewhat advanced in life expressed their need for Christ.

Last Saturday afternoon and evening we had meetings at the School House and such a season we have not witnessed for a long time. Backsliders came home to Father's House, weeping. Converts praised God and the company of mourners greatly increased.

Sectarianism, formalism and scepticism, will yet have a tremendous shaking, if God's people stand upon their watchtower. Brethren it seems quite "old fashioned" to get down with a group of mourning, sighing, penitent souls, and while praying for them, to hear them pleading for mercy, and then sing the new song.

Some have supposed that if there were ever revivals again, they would be brought about by some NEW measure or means; but sinners in Waterborough kneel, weep, beg for mercy, and sing the NEW song in the old fashioned way.

From a Newspaper clipping for May, 1968

A marble memorial honoring the Rev. Henry Hobbs, who was a Free Will Baptist minister in Waterboro for nearly 50 years, also a statesman and town officer, will be unveiled at a special service in the East Waterboro Church Sunday morning (May 26) at 9 o'clock.

Forrest Abbott Sr. a Selectman for many years, will draw aside the curtain. The guest soloist will be Miss Susan Finley of Ocean Park, Miss Betty Mitchell will be curator of old fashioned treasures to be displayed in the vestry. The subject of the sermon of the Rev. Lester Holmes, interim pastor, will be, "Our Christian Heritage--Can we Keep it?"

## MEMORIAL RESURRECTED

The story of the marble memorial is interesting in itself. It is believed to have originally been in the Hobbs Church on Ossipee Hill. That building, after being discontinued as a Church, was used as the Waterboro Town House, and it is believed the marble slab was taken to the new Town House at Ossipee Lake, then removed and placed in the East Waterboro Church. There it occupied a place of honor for a time, but was moved when the Church was renovated some years ago. The Rev. Mr. Holmes discovered it behind the pump organ in the vestry.

This memorial to a great man will now occupy a place of honor again under the Hobbs Memorial window. Plans are under way, the Rev. Mr. Holmes said to restore the grave of the Rev. Hobbs in the cemetery on Ossipee Hill. The inscription on the marble slab is as follows:

### REV. HENRY HOBBS

Ordained a Free Will Baptist Minister May 22, 1801 Pastor of "Hobbs Church" Ossipee Hill for 40 years Represented the District of Maine In Massachusetts Legislature Member of the Convention that drafted The Constitution of the State of Maine Member of the State Legislature Also serving as a member of the Governor's Council Born in Berwick, March 3, 1768--Died Waterboro, March 30, 1848

\*\*\*\*\*

## CRAFT FAIR-1982

Don't forget the Annual Craft Fair on August 7, 1982, at the Johnson Mill Museum on Route 5 in North Waterboro. Bring donations for various tables and come to buy.

\*\*\*\*\*

## AUGUST MEETING

Early Waterboro Schools will be presented by Marion Waterhouse and Helen Brock, at the Town House at 7:30 on August 5, 1982.

\*\*\*\*\*