THE FORMATION OF THE FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY AND THE ERECTION OF THE CHURCH BUILDING 1870 – 1888

By
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The formation of a church society begins in the minds of the people who make up the society. To understand this atmosphere it is helpful to go back many years before 1870.

In early New England settlements and towns most of the people were of the Congregational faith and this became the State Church. The property of the settlers was taxed for the support of preaching and the erection of meeting houses for public worship. The small numbers of people who held to other faiths were not able to support their own churches and so attended the Congregational or State Church.

At first, requiring no set doctrine, the Congregational churches left parishioners free to believe as they chose. Later, doctrinal beliefs were stated, widening the differences among the people. By the early 1800s, the other denominations had grown and begun their own houses of worship. The people who attended and supported these churches objected to being taxed to support the Congregational church as well. The Free Toleration Act, which passed the New Hampshire legislature in 1819, allowed the followers of these different faiths to state their beliefs and avoid being taxed to support the Congregational church.

As the doctrinal differences among the Congregationalists became stronger, many people moved toward Unitarianism. This move was defined when the eloquent William Ellery Channing preached in 1819 in defense of Unitarianism. As he explained the liberal religion, Jesus was considered a divine guide, not a deity. Great stress was put on the goodness of man, his ability to emulate Jesus. The one-ness of God, not the Trinity was considered. Truth was the foundation of the religion. The Bible was seen as a great library by many authors that was not infallible.

Liberal Christian doctrines began taking hold in Milford and neighboring towns in the early 1800s. In 1824 a Unitarian church was begun in Amherst, and Wilton had a group of liberal thinkers also. The liberal thinking members of the Congregational church in Milford had been allowed a few Sundays each year for which to choose a preacher of their own views. This arrangement was not destined to work well for too long.

By 1831, tax money was no longer collected to support the Congregational church in Milford and the church became self supporting. At one point in the 1830s, the Congregational minister attempted to excommunicate the leaders of the liberal movement within the church. This failed, so he and the majority of the congregation left to form the First Congregational Church of Milford. The liberal Christian minority of about 50 or 60 families remained at the Town Hall and in 1833 formed a Unitarian church. This number increased somewhat as anti-slavery became an issue. The Congregational church would not take a stand against slavery and so lost some members who were vehemently opposed to it.

The church operated on a pay-as-you-go basis, holding services when money was available. The Unitarian churches of Amherst and Wilton aided the Milford church when possible. As some families moved and some members died, the society underwent a slow decline and had ceased to exist by 1849.

With the dissolution of the church, those remaining attended the Unitarian church in Wilton. The Milford Unitarian Society was gone, but the liberalism was there for good. As means presented themselves, there were occasional Sunday services. It is reported that Elizabeth Livermore, a woman who ardently supported the Unitarian Society with money and encouragement, was asked how the Unitarian thought of religion and worship had come to Milford. She replied, "It came on the air. It was all about us, in Nashua, in Wilton, and in Amherst. Anyone who thought upon questions of religion, and whose mind was upon its convictions, could not help [but] be a Unitarian."

How did the founders of the First Unitarian Society fit into the 1870 community? These people as a rule seemed to be individuals who cared for humankind. They were people who were ready to help in any movement which tended to promote morals or good citizenship. Many were ardent abolitionists. Among their numbers were farmers, doctors, shopkeepers, homemakers, lawyers, and teachers. Some were wealthy. Some were not. They included school board members, a school superintendent, congressmen, and officers of civic organizations. Some were educated in local schools, others were college educated. All contributed to the welfare of Milford in ways large or small.

It appears that the fairs, suppers, and entertainments conducted by the women of the Unitarian church were well accepted by the community. They were well publicized, often with extra praise, and well attended.

How the church stood among the Christian community is not as clear. They were most likely not considered 'true' Christians by others of that name, possibly because of their beliefs, such as those about Jesus and the Bible.

By 1870, attentions were no longer caught up with the Civil War. The slaves were free, by law. Is it necessary to state that the Negroes were hardly welcomed into society? Then and now it is not possible to legislate love of fellow humans. Many Northern abolitionists had believed in abolishing slavery for freedom's sake, not for the sake of the Negro, and many were prejudiced against blacks. Elizabeth Livermore stated an opposing view, perhaps also held by other Milford abolitionists, when she wrote her belief that "the coming civil war was a working out of divine retribution for America's criminal treatment of the Negro race."

In 1870 this Christian war on hate had still to be won. Perhaps this was one of the reasons that drew a company of men and women together in 1870. Their purpose was to discuss forming a new religious society in Milford. A committee was chosen to ascertain how much money could be raised to support preaching for one year. These people also decided that if a society could be formed it would be known as a Unitarian society.

Anticipating the formation of this society, thirteen women met on June 24, 1870 to form a society "…as a means of aiding the Christian Union formed for sustaining the institutions of religion, and for Christian work." This statement was incorporated into the by-laws of the Ladies Christian Union (LCU).

They began their treasury with 25¢ annual membership fees - $3.25 [total from the 13 women]. The industriousness of the ladies of the LCU was to make this amount grow immensely and become an important element in the welfare of the First Unitarian Society. An indication of their cleverness is seen in their decision to allow men and women to become honorary members for 50¢ annual dues.

Acting as clerk of the anticipated society, Mr. J. M. Blanchard began a correspondence with the American Unitarian Association (AUA) in Boston and with various ministers to obtain a supply of preachers. On June 12, George Young, secretary of the AUA was called to preach. Over the next six months several men were heard as the new society searched for a firm sure base. At times it was tedious to supply services; many letters passed between the society and preachers for this Sunday or that.

The society members were not to be satisfied easily. One F. W. Holland thought he could be of great service to this new church as he had experience in getting several other churches started. There began a series of misunderstandings as to when and how often Rev. Holland would preach. It appears that he only met with the Milford people once, giving a lecture on Palestine. His offer to bring a similar lecture on Egypt, which would include a mummified hand and cat, was not accepted by the society as they seemed to prefer a more 'lively' speaker and a more rational individual.

After this experience, the Milford society sought the personal help and advice of Leonard J. Livermore, Elizabeth's brother. He began to get a feel of what they were seeking and after speaking with some of the men who had supplied Milford's pulpit, he admonished them, "Your people have the same disease that afflicts almost all our congregations; they thirst for smartness more than for wisdom, scholarship, piety – a real power. I believe that as many of our societies are killed by this passion for fine speaking as by any one cause. It is impossible that one should live and thrive [solely] by the ministry of a mere fine speaker."

In addition to searching for a pulpit supply during this time, the society met to choose officers and write out the seven articles for their Platform of Fellowship of the First Unitarian Society of Milford, N.H. This article is an indication of their search for Christian truth. "We bind ourselves to no creed and will lay none upon those who wish to join us; but receiving Jesus as our divinely given Teacher and Guide, and earnestly working to have in us a measure of the same spirit that was in him, we pledge ourselves to follow the truth, as it shall be made evident to our minds, both in belief and life."

In September, 1870 L. J. Livermore sent John Edgar Johnson to supply the Unitarian pulpit. Johnson was a young minister searching out his own truths and he appealed to the

society in Milford. Johnson was also drawn to them and believed he could build up a church there.

As it began to appear that Rev. Johnson would come to Milford as their resident minister, other steps were taken for the official start of the society. On December 28, 1870 a committee was chosen to draft the by-laws for governing the society. This done, the executive committee met and announced the following: "Notice is hereby given that William Lane, J. B. Moulton, George C. Gilmore, C.S. Averill, I. J. Burns, J. W. Pillsbury, and others have formed an association and taken the name of the First Unitarian Society of Milford, N.H., agreeable to the provisions of the statute authorizing the formation of voluntary corporation.
(Signed) J. W. Pillsbury, Clerk, Milford, February 1, 1870."

At this time Messrs. Lane, Averill, and Pillsbury were chosen to confer with Rev. John E. Johnson with regard to supplying the pulpit for a year for a salary of $1,140. The society rented Eagle Hall for services. Rev. Johnson did accept their call to become their minister and the new society was now using the same building for Sunday services that the original Milford Unitarians had used about forty years earlier.

In the financial area, the subscription amounts and the AUA appropriations were so favorable that measures were taken toward erecting a church. Unfortunately, the times were not good for money raising ventures. Difficulties had been continuing in the business community since the "Black Friday" of 1869 which forced gold prices up. Conditions were leading up to the depression of 1873. There is no record of money being raised at this time for building purposes and the question was to come up several more times before action could be taken.

The Unitarian society found 1872 even more difficult financially. The year ended with a balance of four cents. There were only seven individual subscribers in addition to the Ladies Christian Union. Rev. Johnson had gone and Samuel Priest preached until March when services were discontinued for lack of funds. Through the year the society had occasional social gatherings, largely through the LCU's efforts at fund raising with fairs and suppers.

The society kept looking into the possibility of raising money for preaching but this was not established with any regularity until the fall of 1873. They held to the pay-as-you-go principle of the earlier Milford Unitarians and were able to enter 1873 without debts.

As the society then began to be more active, many felt that the way to continue this growth was to have a resident minister and their own church. In February Elizabeth Livermore considered leasing a portion of the Livermore estate, the northwest corner which fronted on Elm Street, to the society as a building site. If a large enough building fund could be raised, she also planned to donate $500, but the society was not able to raise the money.

By April, the directors of the N.H. Unitarian Association (NHUA), hoping to help the struggling Unitarian movement in Milford, suggested that they hold their annual convention there. The convention in June was a success for Milford. Several of the New Hampshire clergymen were hopeful of the society's chances for success. They met to explore what aid they could offer to expedite the building of a church for Milford Unitarians.

Meanwhile subscription papers were circulating through the membership of the society in an attempt to raise as much money as possible for preaching. By August, $900 had been raised by 42 subscribers.

As spokesman for the NHUA clergymen, Aubrey M. Pendleton from the neighboring Wilton church offered a proposal to the Milford society relative to supplying its pulpit. After several drafts the following proposal was accepted by both sides in September 1873. In order to aid in the building of a church, clergymen of the N.H. Unitarian Association agreed to supply the Milford pulpit for one year if the following conditions were met:

1. The Ladies Christian Union (which had a treasury of $300) would deposit this with the treasurer of the First Unitarian Society as the beginning of a land fund;
2. Each time preaching was supplied the society would add $20 to this land fund;
3. The society would provide a suitable place of worship and pay the preacher's expenses.
4. If by September 1878 (five years hence) the society had not built and occupied a church, or failed to operate the church for more than three years, the funds or buildings, if any, would revert to the NHUA for erecting or maintaining Unitarian churches.

Agreeing to this plan, the society was able to resume regular Sunday services and to build up the land fund. The following spring, Rev. Pendleton suggested the Milford society look into purchasing a particular parcel of land, but nothing developed from this.

The plan of supplying the pulpit worked out fairly well until near the end of the year when some minor difficulties became more annoying. Not all of the preachers pleased the audiences. The times of the services were not consistent as the time depended upon the convenience of the preachers, many of whom conducted services in their own churches as well. There was an occasional misunderstanding which resulted in having no preacher at the last minute.

Mr. Pendleton assumed the position of advisor to the Milford society, encouraging them not to give up. There was some feeling of dispensing with the plan and resuming part time preaching. Pendleton believed this would only prolong the end of the society. He suggested continuing the plan a while longer thereby increasing the land fund, or hiring a full time minister and taking charge themselves. One problem of the latter suggestion was that, as most of their money would have to go to the ministerial salary, they would not be able to increase the land fund. Furthermore, as Pendleton pointed out, with their limited finances, it would be very difficult to find a minister.

With Rev. Pendleton's encouragement, the society agreed to continue the plan for another year. The difficulties persisted, however, discouragement increased, and attendance decreased. Another difficulty arose in that it was becoming very difficult to find a volunteer pulpit supply. Rev. Pendleton suggested that a partial payment would be acceptable to the preachers and the remainder of the $20 could be put in the land fund.

In its dissatisfaction and discouragement that it would never attain a permanent existence, the society caused Pendleton to be concerned about its earnestness. He had difficulty understanding why they now seemed to prefer to discontinue the plan, dismissing the opportunity of adding a possible $1,000 to the fund. The society was far more concerned that some of its people were going, with their purses, to stronger societies. They felt an able resident minister would stop this decline in membership and so decided at the January, 1875 annual meeting to seek a resident minister.

A correspondence was begun with the American Unitarian Association regarding possible candidates. They heard three men – L. E. Beckwith, F. P Hamblett, and George Piper. As they were eager to choose a man, the members met on March 12, 1875 to give their preferences. Twelve ballots were cast for Beckwith, three for Hamblett.

Subscriptions of $900 were raised and an application was made to the AUA for $200. With some idea of how much money would be available, Mr. Pillsbury continued corresponding with Beckwith and Hamblett. Hamblett felt he could not accept an offer of $1,100 as he was well situated in West Bridgewater with a higher salary.

Being aware of Milford's situation, financial and otherwise, Messrs Fox and Shippen of the AUA encouraged the choice of Mr. Beckwith, fortunately the choice of the majority of the society. Mr. Fox warned the society not to delay long and chance losing him.

Beckwith was eager to accept the Milford position. The society had been waiting to extend a call until the AUA accepted its application for $200, but after hearing and meeting Beckwith again at the end of March, it was decided to call him. To facilitate matters regarding the application, Beckwith then spoke with Shippen, indicating he was inclined toward Milford, but with the money problem, was unsure of securing housing for his family. The AUA then voted to appropriate the $200 to Milford, and Beckwith was engaged for one year. Hoping to raise another $100 by subscription, the society offered Beckwith a salary of $1,200. The audiences increased under Rev. Beckwith's ministry and the society began to consider it has some elements of prosperity.

By the beginning of 1875 the society had been able to pay its expenses, leaving a balance of $41 in the treasury and to accumulate $1,355 in the land fund. Rev. Pendleton was still concerned that the plan to have a resident minister would deny the Milford church the chance to increase the land fund. He reminded the people that their right to the fund would end in three and a half years.

No one will ever know who would have been right…if the society could have succeeded on its own or not. Elizabeth Livermore, who in 1873 had considered a way to help in securing land for the church, made a generous donation to this end now. In December, 1875 Miss Livermore became aware of a piece of property for sale on Elm Street. This lot with building was two lots from the Livermore property. She purchased the land for $2,000 and then brought it to the attention of the society's executive committee (of which she was a member). On December 21, the society met to discuss and act upon Miss Livermore's proposal to sell this property to the church for $1,500. The society felt this land, which is the site of the present day church was in a desirable location and quickly passed a unanimous decision to accept the proposal and appropriate the money from the land fund.

The society thus entered 1876 owning a piece of land suitable for a church and having a little less than three years left of the contract with the NHUA. The building fund was not large, but was added to by leasing the house on the Elm Street property. Eagle Hall continued to be rented by the society for church purposes.

The people were pleased with Rev. Beckwith and wished to engage him for another year. After money raising efforts, the society was able to pay Mr. Beckwith $1,119, a decrease of $81 from 1875. Nonetheless, attendance at services was up and the society felt it was building itself up firmly and fairly, without taking advantage of its members.

In October, 1876 a building committee chaired by Dr. Hinds consulted with builders about erecting a church or chapel. When the estimates were in they realized they still could not afford to build. The financial matters of the society were still not stable. Some felt regular church services should be suspended during construction of the church; others felt this would lead to disintegration of the membership roll. In January, 1877 the AUA was again asked for aid to help in maintaining preaching during the erection of a church, but it was unable to appropriate additional funds to Milford.

When the financial problem was discussed in March, it became clear that the society could not raise the money to build a church while supporting a resident minister. Many members were in favor of retaining Mr. Beckwith and voted to postpone building a church, even though only a year and a half remained before the right to the land and building fund would pass to the NHUA.

The amount yielded by subscription was so low that Mr. Pillsbury was asked to ascertain Beckwith's lowest acceptable salary. Mr. Beckwith was not inclined to remain, however, as he was discouraged by the long indecision of the society regarding the building of a church. He had a deep interest in the church but felt it would be best for the society to discontinue services for awhile and concentrate all its efforts into building a church. Since the society was very much in favor of his staying, Beckwith did agree to stay for a salary of $1,000 if construction of a church began by September.

Much effort was put into finding a solution, but the financial picture was too discouraging. Mr. Beckwith's resignation was sadly accepted and he left in April. It was

decided to suspend preaching and discussion on the building until the financial matters could be improved. All avenues for raising money were explored.

By the end of May, the need of services was obvious and steps were again undertaken to secure pulpit supplies. Through the summer some volunteer ministers preached and by Fall the society could afford to pay for four Sundays of pulpit supply at $15.

The society sought help from the N.H. Unitarian Association. Rev. Henry Powers of the NHUA preached on October 21, 1877 and remained to lead a meeting of the society to discuss the problems of building a church. The problems were lack of money for building and preaching and lack of time as only a year remained under the 1873 contract with the NHUA clergymen. The society resolved to take active measures and give more labor and means to reach the goal of a church.

At Rev. Powers suggestion a motion was passed that he delegate Rev. Aubrey Pendleton to the First Unitarian Society of Milford with the power to initiate work on the church. Mr. Pendleton was to be paid by the NHUA and all money raised by the society could then be put into the building fund.

Under Mr. Pendleton, the building committee, consisting of Dr. Hinds, Rev. Pendleton, Messrs. Rowison, Averill and Richardson resumed meetings. By the annual meeting of the society in January, 1878 the committee was able to recommend the plans of Mr. Rand, a Boston architect, to the society and NHUA representatives. The society accepted the plan which recommended that the building, a modification of an English chapel design, be constructed of stone. It called for a main auditorium, vestry, ladies' parlor, kitchen, library and anterooms on the first floor, with rooms under the building for furnaces and store rooms. To relieve the lines of the low structure there would be twenty angles or corners in the outside stone wall. A tower of sixty feet would be above the front entrance.

Rev. Pendleton remarked at the time that the "building, as designed and contemplated, would be in better taste than any building in town and…would lift up the society in public favor." Most of the members seemed to agree although Phoebe Lovejoy remarked that she couldn't imagine a stone church there but would respect the decision of the building committee.

The knowledge that Rev. Pendleton would act as its minister was a burden off the society, but this could not solve all its problems. Money was still difficult to raise, and the society members decided to move as finances allowed in building the church. The building was committee empowered to obtain all plans, drawings, and materials as means provided. It also took charge of disposing of the buildings on the land. The talking stage was finally over; work began in earnest.

But the middle of May, excavation had begun. Several loads of stone from the Milford quarry of Everett Hutchinson, the lowest bidder, were delivered for the granite edifice. Final arrangements were made by architect Rand, the surveyors and contractors, and the

stone laying began the last week of May. At the end of June the foundation was laid, the ashler work begun, and the floor of the auditorium laid.

Although the work was progressing rapidly, it could not possibly be completed by September, 1878 under the terms of the NHUA contract which called for occupancy of a church by then. The executive committee sought an extension of time from Mr. Pendelton. As he was overseeing the work, and knew that efforts were underway, he readily granted the extension until January 1, 1879 provided that a room be completed for Sunday services.

By mid-October, 1878 the outside of the building was almost done and it and the tower were nearly ready to be roofed with slate. Interior work was begun, but with the society's decision to build as means provided, work progressed slowly. Another extension was requested, and Mr. Pendleton granted this also, saying he was prepared to grant any reasonable time for completion of the building. Finally in January, 1880 the building committee reported that for $1,000 each, the auditorium and the vestry could be made comfortable for occupancy. It would be possible to complete one by summer. All bills incurred thus far had been paid or were provided for.

As the vestry would take less time to complete, the building committee decided to go ahead with that, making it possible to have services in the church sooner. A platform was built across the back wall, the south side, of the vestry, with a room seven and a half by fifteen feet to the right which would be the library. To the left of the platform was a room twelve by fifteen feet, eventually to be the kitchen. At the west end of the room was a stained glass window depicting Jesus blessing the little children. On the north and east walls were hung sliding vertical doors, constructed of wood and glass, which separate the vestry from the main audience room and the ladies parlor.

When it was clear the vestry was nearing completion, plans were made to begin services there. After a three-week vacation, the members of the First Unitarian Society met for services in their own church on August 22, 1880, meeting the terms of the NHUA contract in an approved seven years.

The ladies' parlor was also nearing completion. The ladies of the Christian Union donated money and skills to furnishing the room. A fireplace in the room was set with tiles depicting biblical scenes. A door from the room led up to the tower. This room was finished by January, 1881 when it housed the annual meeting. There was no longer a need to rent halls for regular church use. The Unitarians had their own facilities.

The work of the society itself continued through these and the next eight years. A major topic of annual meetings was the subject of raising money which continued to be difficult. Each December an attempt was made to raise money so that the New Year could begin without debt. Usually the LCU was able to give the necessary amount to the society. The pay-as-you-go method was commendable, especially as the Town of Milford was itself, several thousand dollars in debt at the time.

The Ladies Christian Union continued their many social and fund raising activities, for which the ladies received commendations for their "enterprise and interest manifest in the welfare of the society."

The Sunday school was growing under the leadership of Mr. Pillsbury, though not without its problems. The importance of teaching the children was stressed. Members were encouraged to give their time enthusiastically to aid the young minds in learning the liberal Christianity of their church.

As money became available work was continued on the church. In the main audience room, white plaster walls offset the Georgian pine trusses which support the roof. To the left of the chancel a pastor's room was constructed; to the right, and organ room. This would house the organ Elizabeth Livermore purchased in 1875, until 1894, when A. E. Pillsbury gave a new organ in memory of his parents, Josiah and Elizabeth Pillsbury, both hard workers during the formation of the society. Rev. Dr. Bellows of New York City presented a stained glass window of the Good Shepherd which was installed above the chancel.

Chandeliers were hung throughout as the rooms were put into use. These were given by the LCU as were the two side stained glass windows in the audience room. The one on the south side, dedicated to the Unitarian society, 1833 – 1870, depicts the parable of the Good Samaritan. The window on the north side, a memorial to the first ten years of the society's formation, 1870 – 1880, represents Jesus and the woman of Samaria at the well.

The ladies were responsible for many furnishings of the church from furnaces and stoves to tableware and carpeting.

The church was nearing completion in 1887, but it had taken a long time. The numbers of the society had not

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Since then each church has been able to sustain itself.

Today, one can take a few minutes from the fellowship of the members to step back and admire the beauty of the building and its history. Even a brisk walk outside in this December chill is enough to show the beauty of the ashler work and the lines of the building. Inside, in the words of Curt Witt, is an "atmosphere of peace." The stained glass windows, all of bloodless scenes, are peaceful scenes of people caring for people. I believe that care was the basic element in the formation of the First Unitarian Society of Milford and its church on Elm Street, from 1870 to 1888.

APPENDIX A
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF SOME
FOUNDERS OF THE FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY

Josiah Webster Pillsbury was raised as a Congregationalist and had a liberal education. He actively supported abolition, even leaving Phillips (Andover) Academy because of these views. His brother Parker was also an abolitionist and was a leading associate of William Lloyd Garrison.

Josiah came to Milford in 1844 and engaged in teaching. Here he became an active member of an anti-slavery society and allowed his home to be used as a headquarters for lectures on abolition.

For several years he was a member and chairman of the superintending school committee. In 1862, he was appointed school commissioner.

That he had a quiet way of advocating an unpopular cause without causing criticism and an active interest in town affairs, being always ready to help in any movement tending to promote good morals or good citizenship, was well known in the town.

Elizabeth Pillsbury, Josiah's wife, was also a teacher and was as actively interested in reforms as he. She was "the kind of woman everyone called on in the time of need."

William H. W. Hinds was a prominent and well-known physician and surgeon who came to Milford in 1865, at the age of 32. He was a faithful and active member of the Unitarian church who went on to become a state representative and then senator.

Elizabeth Livermore is mentioned in the town history report of her father, Solomon Livermore, as one of his children who "living to mature years attained honorable positions in society."

When Elizabeth was 17 her father turned, with his family, to the earlier Milford Unitarian Church. Elizabeth was exposed to liberal idea all her life. Her grandfather was Jonathan Livermore III, the first resident minister of Wilton who settled there in 1763. He was an outspoken extrovert who did not exemplify a typical clergyman. He was soon shunned or criticized by his parishioners and eventually permitted to resign to save face over being fired in 1777. He died in 1809, nine years before Elizabeth was born.

Sarah Livermore, Elizabeth's aunt, was an early advocate of women's rights. As was the custom of the times, she remained at home, unmarried, to care for her aging mother. One daughter usually did this. After her mother's death, she became more active in discussion groups, often expounding on the injustices of women with no voice in government.

Leonard J. Livermore, Elizabeth's younger brother, became a Unitarian minister. They shared their father's strong reform views, particularly on abolition, and were both liberal thinkers.

Elizabeth remained unmarried and stayed at home to care for her parents, as her aunt Sarah had done. Her nephews and niece spent some time with them after their mother's death, until their father could send for them. She and her niece Mary, never in good health, became very close and Mary stayed with Elizabeth when her brothers joined their father, Elizabeth's brother Thomas. Mary looked upon Elizabeth as a mother.

Elizabeth's middle years were very active in home and outside. By 1869, when she was 51, her parents and her niece had died. Elizabeth was willed the house (now known as Livermore Community House) and portion of the $27,000 her parents left. She was finally independent and her own mistress. She began to travel, often visiting her sister in Baltimore. She became active in the First Unitarian Society of Milford and became its benefactress.

John Mills never held public office and was educated in local schools, but he became a "strong, respected, honorable citizen," "a delightful companion and true friend."

Clinton S. Averill was born in Milford in 1827. He went to Ohio as a teacher until forced to resign by ill health. He then studied law and was admitted to the bar. He was Milford's Superintendent of Schools for many years. From 1873-1875 he held the same position in Nashua. In 1875 he became the Treasurer of the Milford Five Cents Savings Bank. (Throughout this he kept his law practice active, at least regarding deeds, as his name is often found on the deeds of late 1800s at the Nashua Registry of Deeds.) "His personal character was above praise and his private life was a continuous example for good to all the young men of the town."

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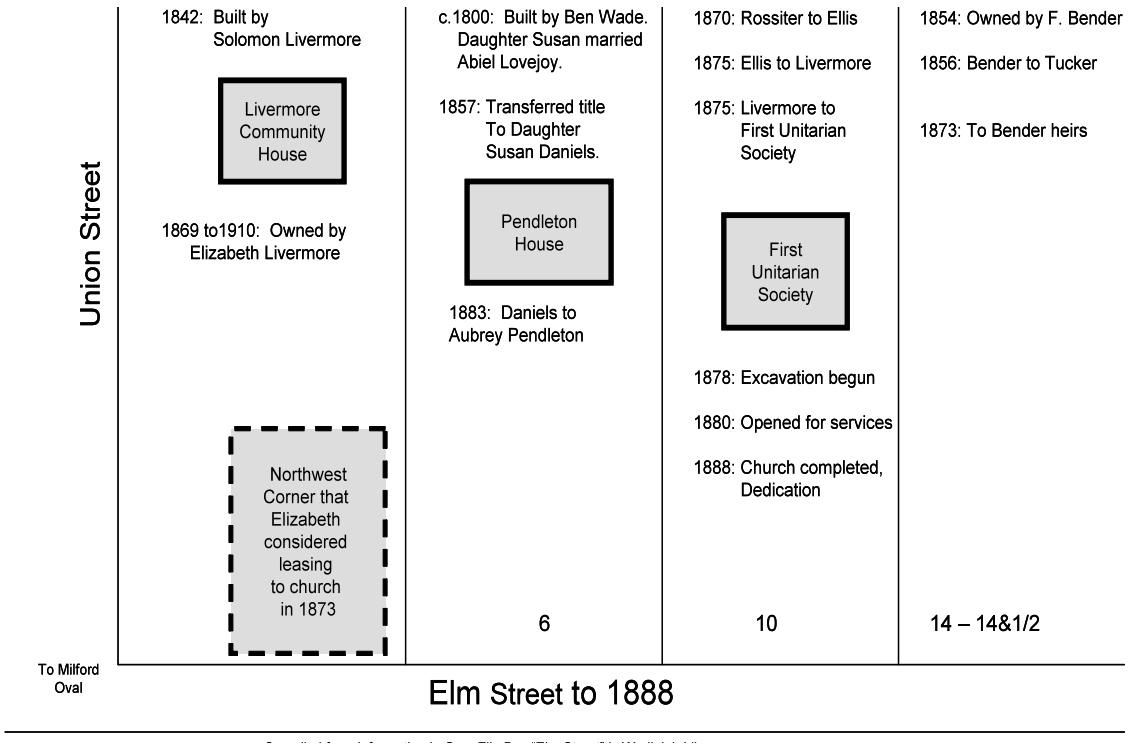
Union Street
1842: Built by Solomon Livermore
Livermore Community House
1869 to1910: Owned by Elizabeth Livermore
Northwest Corner that Elizabeth considered leasing to church in 1873
c.1800: Built by Ben Wade. Daughter Susan married Abiel Lovejoy.
1857: Transferred title To Daughter Susan Daniels.
Pendleton House
1883: Daniels to Aubrey Pendleton
6
1870: Rossiter to Ellis
1875: Ellis to Livermore
1875: Livermore to First Unitarian Society
First Unitarian Society
1878: Excavation begun
1880: Opened for services
1888: Church completed, Dedication
10
1854: Owned by F. Bender
1856: Bender to Tucker
1873: To Bender heirs
14 – 14&1/2
To Milford Oval
Elm Street to 1888