

**TOWN OF AVON**

*1888-1963 Diamond Jubilee*

**75** <sup>th</sup>

*Anniversary Celebration*

**FRIDAY - SATURDAY - SUNDAY**

**SEPTEMBER 13-14-15**





# Commonwealth of Massachusetts

in the year one thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight

## AN ACT

### TO INCORPORATE THE TOWN OF AVON



BE it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled and by the authority of the same as follows:—

Section 1. All that territory now the Town of Stoughton in the County of Norfolk, comprised within the following limits, that is to say; beginning at a point on the easterly line of Stoughton, where the Old Colony Railroad crosses said easterly line; thence southwesterly along the westerly side of said Old Colony Railroad about four hundred and sixty rods to a point on the westerly side of the culvert where Saulisbury Brook passes under said railroad; thence in a straight line south about five hundred and thirty-two rods to the westerly side of Oak Street, where it intersects South Street; thence southerly again along the westerly side of Oak Street about seventy-five rods to the Brockton line; thence easterly along said Brockton line about six hundred and eighty-seven and one-half rods to the Holbrook line; thence in a straight line northerly about eight hundred and ninety-four rods along the Holbrook line and the Randolph line to the point of the beginning is hereby incorporated as a Town by the name of Avon, and said Town of Avon is hereby invested with all the powers, privileges, rights and immunities, and made subject to all the duties, liabilities and requisitions to which other towns are entitled and subjected by the Constitution and laws of this Commonwealth.

Section 2. The inhabitants and estates within said Town of Avon and the owners of said estates shall be holden to pay all arrears of taxes which have been legally assessed upon them by the Town of Stoughton and all taxes heretofore assessed and not collected shall be collected and paid to the treasurer of the Town of Stoughton in the same manner as if this act had not been passed; and until the next State valuation the Town of Avon shall annually in the month of November pay to the Town of Stoughton, twenty per cent of all the State and County taxes that may be assessed upon said Town of Stoughton.

Section 3. The Towns of Stoughton and

Avon shall be respectively liable for the relief and support of all persons who now do or shall hereafter stand in need of relief as paupers. Whose settlement was gained whether by original acquisition or derivation within their respective limits; and the Town of Avon shall pay annually to the Town of Stoughton twenty per cent of all costs for the support or relief of those persons who now do or shall hereafter stand in need of relief or support as paupers and whose settlement by original acquisition or derivation was gained by reason of military service as a part of the quota of the Town of Stoughton or who cannot be located on the site whence their settlement was derived or whereon it was acquired.

Section 4. All suits and proceedings at law or in equity where the cause of action in favor of or against the Town of Stoughton arose before the passage of this act shall be instituted and prosecuted or defended by the Town of Stoughton with the same effect as if this act had not been passed; and the amount recovered in any such suit or proceeding by or against said Town of Stoughton shall be received or paid as the case may be by the Town of Stoughton, and reckoning costs and expenses, including counsel fees, shall be divided between the Towns of Stoughton and Avon in the proportion of twenty per cent to the Town of Avon and eighty per cent to the Town of Stoughton.

Section 5. The corporate property belonging to the Town of Stoughton at the date of the passage of this Act and the public debt of said Town existing at said date shall be divided between the Town of Stoughton and Avon in the proportion of eighty per cent to the Town of Stoughton and twenty per cent to the Town of Avon; and said Town of Avon shall receive from said Town of Stoughton twenty per cent of whatever amount may hereafter be refunded to said Town of Stoughton from the State or United States to reimburse said Town of Stoughton for bounties to soldiers, or State aid paid soldiers' families after deducting all reasonable expenses; and said Town of Stoughton and said Town of Avon shall jointly bear the expense of making the survey and establishing the line between the said Towns of

Stoughton and Avon.

Section 6. In case the said Towns of Stoughton and Avon shall not agree in respect to a division of property, debts or town paupers, the Superior Court for the County of Norfolk shall upon the petition of either town appoint three competent and disinterested persons to hear the parties and make award thereon; and their award or the award of any two of them being accepted by said court shall be final, in making said award said Commissioners shall assign the real estate belonging to the Town of Stoughton at the time of the passage of this act to the town within which said estate shall be situated so far as such a division shall be practicable.

Section 7. The Town of Avon shall, until otherwise provided by law, continue to be a part of the second Congressional district, of the second Councillor district, of the second Norfolk Senatorial district, and the Seventh Norfolk representative district, and at all elections the inhabitants of the Town of Avon shall vote at polling places to be furnished within the said Town. The Selectmen and the Clerk of the Town of Avon shall make returns of elections as if the Town had existed at the time of the formation of said district.

Section 8. Any Justice of the Peace within and for the County of Norfolk may issue his warrant directed to any inhabitant of the Town of Avon requiring him to notify and warn the inhabitants thereof qualified to vote in town affairs to meet at the time and place therein appointed for the purpose of choosing all such town officers as towns are by law

authorized and required to choose at their annual meetings; and said warrant shall be served by publishing a copy thereof in some newspaper printed in the Town of Stoughton or City of Brockton, and by posting up copies thereof all attested by the person to whom the same is directed in three public places in said Town of Avon, seven days at least before such time of meeting, such justice, or in his absence such inhabitant required to notify the meeting shall preside until the choice of Moderator in said meeting is made. The Selectmen of the Town of Stoughton shall before such meeting prepare a list of voters in said Town of Avon qualified to vote at said meeting, and shall deliver the same to the person presiding at such meeting before the Moderator thereof is chosen.

Section 9. This Act shall take effect upon its passage.

House of Representatives February 16th, 1888  
Passed to be enacted Chas J. Noyes "Speaker"

In Senate February 20th, 1888

Passed to be enacted Halsey J. Boardman, Pres.

Witness the seal of Commonwealth.

February 21st, 1888

(Seal) Approved: Oliver Ames  
Secretary's Department

Boston, February 21st, 1888

A true copy.

Henry B. Peirce  
*Secretary of the Commonwealth*

A true copy of the Secretary's Copy.

George J. Smith, "Town Clerk"

#### FIRST SELECTMEN OF AVON — 1888



COL. GEORGE W. ROBBINS



HIRAM BLANCHARD



BARTLETT COLLINS



## *Historical Sketch of the Town of Avon*

*Edited By* ELIZABETH DOLAN, *Committee Historian*



ISTORY tells us that until late in the Seventeenth Century all the lands now comprising the towns of Stoughton, Canton and Sharon were wild and uninhabited, and were part of the town of Dorchester.

On November 20, 1637, the General Court fixed the southern boundary of the town at the Old Colony line granting to the town of Dorchester over 40,000 acres of land extending from the Blue Hills to the Plymouth Line making Dorchester at that time the largest town in New England. The lands now comprising the towns of Stoughton, Canton and Sharon, with the lands beyond it, were known as the South Precinct.

In 1684, Charles Josiah, son of Chicataubet, granted to Roger Clapp, Capt. John Capen, Lieut. Richard Hall, Ensign Samuel Clapp and Quartermaster Thomas Swift, and their heirs, the whole tract of land in the township of Dorchester, south of the Blue Hills, excepting the "Punquapang Plantation". This grant was given in consideration of money paid to Charles Josiah by William Stoughton, a high official in Massachusetts and its first Lieutenant Governor, and for whom the town of Stoughton was later named.

The owners of those lands were known as "Dorchester Proprietors" and in 1713 were incorporated as a distinct body. The town of Dorchester had nothing further to do with their affairs.

The lands were sold from time to time and the purchasers became lawful owners, independent and paying no tribute to any proprietor.

In the year 1726, with a love of freedom and self government, came the incorporation of those lands as the town of Stoughton. Not only did Stoughton include what is now the towns of Canton and Sharon, but also nearly all of Foxborough and one-fourth of Dedham.

Moses Curtis, the first settler of what is now

the town of Avon, was a blacksmith, born in Braintree, who in the year 1720 came with his family and settled on what is now North Main Street. He built the house on the west side of the street, the second from the Randolph town line, later known as the "Briggs" house, which was afterwards the home of Rev. Joel Briggs, for forty-one years pastor of the Avon Baptist Church. The house is still standing.

Moses Curtis was the father of eleven children, six of whom survived him. Of these, Edward the oldest built the house formerly the Isaac Blanchard house, and later the Packard home, at the corner of Main and East High Streets. Theophilus, another son, built his house on the westerly side of West Main Street, on the site of the Porter Farm later the Anderson Farm. Ashley Curtis, the third son, built at what is now the junction of West Main and Pond Streets. The house is still standing. William Curtis, the fourth son, built his house in 1756 on the site of the home of the late Benjamin Hammon on Central Street. The three daughters married: Dorothy to Benjamin Porter, of Braintree; Mary to Jonathan Carey, who inherited the homestead of Moses Curtis; and Hannah to Nathaniel Littlefield, who built their house on East Main Street, the property being known later as "McGonnigle's Farm".

In the year 1749, what is now the town of Avon was known as "Curtis Corner". Twice the Corner people asked to be annexed to Bridgewater. On "September 7, 1741: Voted that a Committee be chosen to meet the General Court on ye 9th inst. to show cause why Moses Curtis and others should not be annexed to the Town of Bridgewater; and to show cause also at the General Court—if need be".

This evidently was not approved as in 1755 "It was put to vote whether ye Town would sett off Capt. Moses Curtis and others with their estates to ye Town of Bridgewater, or see if the Town will vote off a corner of ye Town of Stoughton to Bridge-

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## HISTORICAL SKETCH—*continued*

water by any bounds as may be thought proper".  
"And it passed in ye negative".

Moses Curtis, the first settler, died in 1763, aged ninety years, and is buried in Ashland Street Cemetery, Brockton.

In 1749 Dependence French built his house on what is now South Street, which house was occupied by his descendants until the death of the last survivor, Alpheus French, in 1924. John French, twin brother of Dependence, in 1754 built his house on South Street, now the home of the Howland family. Caleb Howard, owner of considerable property, built and occupied the house on East Main Street, near the Montello line, now occupied by descendants of Charles Thayer.

Atherton and Nathaniel Wales, from whom many of the members of the Wales families of Randolph are descended, settled on the Cincinnati Road, off Page Street. The road was laid out for their benefit in 1756.

Nathaniel Hammond settled on land south of the house many years later built by the late Patrick Clark on West Main Street, and William Nightingale was an early settler on Page Street.

About the year 1760, Samuel Blanchard, with his wife and eight children, came from Braintree to East Stoughton and settled on a farm one-half mile east of what is now "The New Cemetery, on East Main Street." William, his second son, married Rachel Spear of Braintree, April 4, 1771, and soon thereafter erected a house on "Murray's Hill, East Stoughton", probably a part of the Isaac Beals house, now the home of Mrs. Wallace Beals, on West Main Street.

About the year 1790 the house in the village known as "Blanchard's Tavern" was erected, and William Blanchard kept a public house and general merchandise store there. William's son Lemuel, who succeeded his father in the ownership of the "Old Homestead", disposed of the property to his cousin Isaac Gardiner Blanchard, who lived there until his death on April 20, 1868.

In 1768 Amariah Harris came from Brookline and married Elizabeth Littlefield, of Randolph. He built the house, still standing, the home of the late Robert A. Paine, on West Main Street.

In 1737 the road West Main Street was laid out beginning with the property of Edward Curtis, and the only houses mentioned in the layout are those of Theophilus Curtis and Nathaniel Hammond.

In 1759 a road (Canton Street) was laid out just west of the North Stoughton Railroad to accommodate the people of Curtis Corner who wished to attend church in Stoughton.

As early as 1664 Page Street was known as "Pigwackett Road".

Pond Street was laid out in 1760 "from Ezra Fisher's near the Hammon house, over dams by Quincy's Mill, to land of Robert Freeman".

In 1763 East Main Street, then known as "The Lower Road" was built. "The road to be two rods wide except at ye brook two and three-fourths rods, for ye benefit of travelers for a watering place".

Among the early houses on the Lower Road was the home of Capt. Theophilus Curtis, grandson of Moses Curtis, on the west side of the road, the site of the present Gaffney home. The house came down by inheritance to Charles and Cassander Littlefield: the house of Nathaniel Littlefield on the east side; and the house of William Curtis, later known as the "Dolly Holbrook" house on the east side. Dolly Holbrook was a daughter of William Curtis. The house of Lot Leach, now the home of Carter Graham, was on the west side, and the houses of Barnabus Howard (or Hayward) and Simeon Leach were on the east side of the road.

South Street was laid out in 1770, and at that time Nathaniel Linfield built his house on the site of the Oscar Sewall house.

In 1808 Seth Alden, born in Abington, November 3, 1777, purchased about eighty acres of land from a Mrs. Howard and built his house on "The Lower Road". The original house was burned on November 22, 1819, and in the fire his son Adoniram Judson Alden, aged two years, five months, locked in a closet by an older child in play, lost his life. Two days after another Adoniram Judson was born. This house was always owned and occupied by a descendant of Seth Alden until Edith Glover Ryder, a great great granddaughter sold the property a few years ago to James F. and John N. Mennino.

In the old cemetery on East Main Street may

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## HISTORICAL SKETCH—*continued*

be found the names of Blanchard, Briggs, Alden, Curtis, Hammond, Littlefield, Wales and others dating back to the year 1770. In the Holbrook family cemetery on South Street lie buried the Beals, Holbrooks and Wentworths from the year 1808, and in the Curtis family cemetery, on Page Street, are buried members of that family dating from the year 1827.

The East Stoughton Cemetery, now the Avon Cemetery, was laid out in 1847, and St. Michael's Cemetery in the year 1880.

In a deed dated 1776 transferring fifteen acres of land from William Curtis to William Curtis, Jr., the following reservations were made:

"Reserving all the iron ore that may be found thereon to the use of the towns of Stoughton and Dorchester forever".

In 1657 the town of Dorchester gave one thousand acres of land, "the sale or income from which to be used for schools". Some of the land situated near Bridgewater was, in the year 1747, divided between the towns of Dorchester and Stoughton by committees chosen from both towns. Dorchester received one hundred and forty acres, Stoughton ninety acres.

On March 15, 1741, the town of Stoughton voted:

"That a moving school be kept in this town in the several places where it has heretofore been kept: as also in that part of ye town where Moses Curtis and others live".

About the year 1745 schools were kept in private houses in the town of Stoughton. John Dickerman was what might be called a traveling teacher, and no doubt the children of Curtis Corner were instructed by him. On November 6, 1754 it was voted:

"That Curtis' school shall be kept in sum convenient house as near ye meeting house".

At the time of the establishment of the school system the town was divided into School Districts, East Stoughton having two Districts, Numbers 1 and 2, corresponding to the Gifford and Littlefield districts.

Prudential committees were appointed to have full charge of the schools in each district; among the duties of each prudential committee was the hiring

of teachers and providing boarding places for them, supplying books and also building of school houses when necessary. A moderator was chosen to preside at the meetings, and a clerk appointed to keep the records. The record books to be returned to the town. In 1869 this school system was discontinued.

About the year 1794 or 1795 a school house was built near the former Anderson Farm on West Main Street. In 1831 one was built on West Main Street near the Hammond property (in the vicinity of Gill and West Main Streets).

In 1854 a school building was erected on the present site of the Littlefield School. This building was destroyed by fire on January 31, 1896, and the present building (now the quarters of the Veterans of Foreign Wars) replaced it.

On a map dated 1854 is a school building on the site of the present Avon High School. In 1872 the town of Stoughton voted to erect two school buildings, one at Stoughton Centre and the other at East Stoughton; thus the Gifford School was erected to replace the one so long in use. Part of the old building was removed to the east side of West Main Street and has been recently occupied as a bowling alley. The other part was removed to the east corner of Rock and West Main Streets and remodeled into a dwelling house by one James Doherty. It is still in use.

In the year 1936 the Gifford School was remodeled and enlarged, with a fine auditorium and gymnasium added, making it practically a new building.

The Town of Avon has reason to be proud of the patriotism of its citizens in time of war. First Lieutenant, afterwards Captain, Simeon Leach of East Stoughton was a member of the company raised by Captain William Briggs of Stoughton at the time of the Lexington alarm.

Among the names of those who took part in the war of the Revolution and whose services are credited to Stoughton, may be found Blanchard, Burrell, Crane, Curtis, French, Goldthwaite, Hall, Harris, Holbrook, Howard, Leach and Littlefield, all residents of East Stoughton.

In the War of the Rebellion of 1861, Stoughton, including East Stoughton, furnished her full quota of men under every call. There were five hun-

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## HISTORICAL SKETCH--*continued*

dred and five men on Stoughton's quota and thirty-five men served on the rosters of other towns, making a total of five hundred and forty. Seventy-eight of these brave men laid down their lives on the battlefields. In this war appeared for the first time names of men who during the past thirty years had come with their families from Ireland and settled locally, among them the names Conley, Connery, Lynch, Greelish, Walsh, Geary and others.

In the First World War, one hundred and six men and one woman from Avon answered their Country's call. Two of our boys, Andrew L. Goeres and Charles W. Whiting gave their lives on the battlefields of France. The name of Avon Square was changed to Goeres Square in honor of the former, and the local legion post named Charles W. Whiting Post in honor of the latter.

In remembrance of the men of Avon who fought to save the Union, 1861-1865, Mr. Orlando Leach, a native of East Stoughton, grandson of Capt. Lot Leach, who served in the War of 1812, and great grandson of Capt. Simeon Leach, who fought in the Revolutionary War, and who himself was a Captain in the Civil War and recruited a company from this section, presented to the town the monument which stands at the junction of East and West Main Streets, in the Square. The monument was dedicated with appropriate ceremonies on Memorial Day, May 30, 1905.

On August 24, 1780, a group of people numbering thirty-five, desiring to organize a Baptist Church met at the home of John Howard in the "east part of the Town of Stoughton, and under an apple tree opposite his house, on old Canton Street" now Page Street. On November 23, 1781 a committee was appointed "to purchase a spot of land to set a Meeting House on", which was secured from Caleb Howard "north of the boundary line between the towns of Stoughton and Braintree" (now the Avon-Randolph line). The sum paid was 4.10 shillings. On June 3rd, 1784, the Baptist Meeting House was finished. Cost was 261 lbs. 9s 9d. Dedication of the church is believed to have occurred November 23, 1784. In 1828 it was decided to "move and enlarge the building to a site over the line in the town of Stoughton (now the site of the garage on the easterly side of the Square) and on September 7, 1831, the rebuilt church was dedicated. On

March 9, 1846, a site for a new building was chosen opposite the church on land of Albert Smith, where the present church now stands. The new church was dedicated March 30, 1848. Cost of same \$7,363.06.

There are some interesting facts concerning the erecting of the present church building. Two sides were framed on trestles, or horses, on the ground, ropes and pulleys were then put in place by a sailor from Boston and a yoke of oxen hoisted the sides in place. Oxen were also used to pull the bell up into the steeple.

Between the years 1830 and 1840 several Catholic families settled in this section, and as there was no church of their faith in this vicinity they were obliged to attend services in Quincy and Boston, often walking to these places. Occasionally Mass was celebrated at private houses in the village by priests from Quincy.

At the completion of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Randolph, the Catholics of East Stoughton, who by that time had greatly increased in numbers, attended services in Randolph until arrangements were made by Rev. M. J. Burns for regular services in East Stoughton at Forrest Hall. (Forrest Hall was the second story of the building now occupied as a garage on the easterly side of the Square).

The congregation grew so rapidly that about the year 1871 under the supervision of Rev. Fr. Burns, of Randolph, work was begun on the construction of the present St. Michael's Church, and on August 11, 1872 the church was dedicated by Rt. Rev. John J. Williams, Archbishop of the Boston Diocese. The church was still in charge of the Pastor of St. Mary's, of Randolph, until February, 1888, when a new parish comprising Holbrook and Avon was established with the parochial residence in Holbrook.

On February 25, 1908, Avon was separated from Holbrook and made an independent parish, the first pastor being Rev. Edwin J. Dolan who arranged for and completed the purchase of the Hiram Blanchard estate for a rectory. The golden jubilee of St. Michael's was celebrated on November 2, 1922 under the direction of Rev. Leo J. O'Neil, pastor.

The early settlers of East Stoughton gained their livelihood from the soil, but as the manufacturing of boots became an important industry in this section

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## HISTORICAL SKETCH--*continued*

the little village became a thriving center of activity. As early as 1816 Jonathan Littlefield manufactured boots, and in 1820 Isaac Beals was a well known manufacturer. Among other names prominent in the industry were Tucker, Blanchard, Wales, Goldthwaite, and Foster.

While the village of East Stoughton was somewhat independent, yet it was a part of the town of Stoughton and greatly interested in the affairs of government in that town. It was fairly represented, although having less than one-third of the population of Stoughton, by one member of the School Committee, a Highway Surveyor, and a Constable. Late in the 1870's, the town of Stoughton voted to purchase two steam fire engines, one for Stoughton Centre and one for East Stoughton.

At the annual Stoughton town meeting held on March 5, 1887, it was voted to establish voting precincts in the town, Precinct 1, which included all residing west of Salisbury Brook, having at that time nine hundred and seventy-nine legal voters, and Precinct 2, including all of East Stoughton, having two hundred and seventy-five legal voters. At the State election held in November, 1887, Precinct 2 had the privilege of voting as an entity for the first time. The first election officers were Charles H. Felker, Patrick E. McGonnigle and W. Elmer Crane.

At that election, one of the citizens of East Stoughton, Mr. Bernard Dolan was elected as Representative to the General Court from the district composed of Randolph, Stoughton, Sharon and Walpole. Mr. Dolan was the father of the late John T. Dolan for many years a Selectman of Avon.

Prior to the year 1887, water was supplied to the town of Stoughton from private wells located on the property of the owners. For fire protection large wells or reservoirs were used, two of which were located in East Stoughton.

The "Stoughton Water Company" was granted a franchise to lay water mains in the town to furnish water to the inhabitants thereof. This was not adequate protection against fire, and on June 18, 1887 a special town meeting was held in Stoughton to see what action the town would take in relation to taking water from the hydrants of the Stoughton Water Company for fire or other purposes. This meeting was the first of at least seven special town meetings held in relation to a water supply. Finally on Oc-

tober 27, 1887, it was voted to establish a Fire Department and to hire from the Stoughton Water Company fifty hydrants. This delay and controversy caused great dissension in the town. The citizens of East Stoughton were regular attendants at these meetings and were opposed to the plan for furnishing water.

By this time there was no close bond between East Stoughton and Stoughton. Each had separate schools, churches and stores, and Brockton was a more convenient business center. Agitation grew for the establishment of the east section as a separate town and a bill was filed in the Legislature by Dr. Silas S. Gifford and eleven other signers to that effect. On December 28, 1887, at a special town meeting held in Stoughton, adjourned to December 30th, it was voted that the sense of the meeting be that a division of the town of Stoughton take place according to the tenor of the petition filed in the office of the Secretary of State, with the exception that the division line from the intersection of Salisbury Brook and the Old Colony Railroad be a straight line to the Brockton line at the west side of Oak Street.

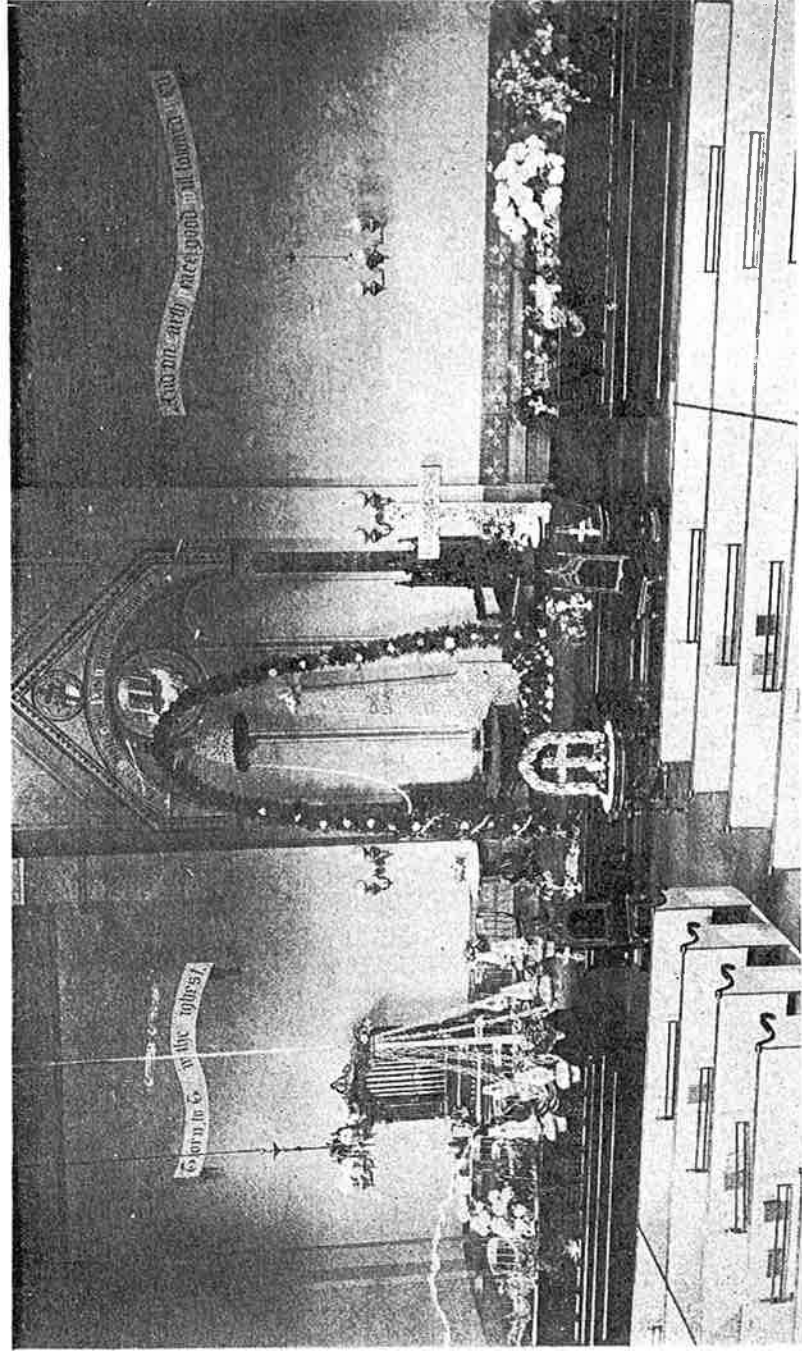
It was voted: That a committee of five, a majority of which shall be from East Stoughton, be appointed by the Chair for the purpose of presenting the matter to the Legislature. Appointed: D. C. G. Field, Hiram Blanchard, Henry H. Tucker, Elisha C. Monk and William O. Faxon.

Action on the petition, guided by our Representative to the General Court, Mr. Bernard Dolan, was taken by the Legislature early in the session of 1888. It passed both branches, the House and the Senate, and was signed by Governor Oliver Ames.

Now that the east section was a separate town, the next question was the selection of a name. A public meeting was called and all citizens urged to attend and express an opinion. Mr. D. C. G. Field, one of the leading citizens at that time, was chosen chairman. He suggested that all proposed names be written on a blackboard and voted for by a system of elimination. Among the names proposed were Avon, Austin, Grover, Garfield, Woodlawn and Standish. The name "Avon" received the highest number of votes and was declared the choice of the citizens. It had been considered a few years before when North Bridgewater became Brockton.

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Church Auditorium on Easter Sunday 60 Years Ago

## OUR THREE MEETING HOUSES

### First Meeting House

Stoughton, January 7th, 1784 – At a Church and Society meeting at Brother Wm. Blanchard's in order to Build a meeting house . . . Voted to Caleb Howard four pounds Ten Shillings L.M. for a Quarter of an Acre of Land to Set said house upon, said peace of Land Lying on the East Side of the Road by Capt. Jacob Wales . . . Chose three as a Committee to carry on said Building viz. Caleb Howard, Doct. Ephraim Wales and Benjamin Mann . . . Proposed to Build said house 36 feet Long and 30 feet Wide.

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Stoughton, April 6th, 1785 – The Receipt of Caleb Howard

This may Certify that I have been Chosen a Committeeman for the Baptist Church and Society to provide stuff, meteriel, etc., and to Carry on the Building of them a meating House in the South Parish of Braintree which I have Carried on as far as said House is finished, and have procured a Sufficient Number of Casements to fill the window frames of said meeting House and Have Expended for the purpose Two Hundred and Sixty-one pounds, Nine Shillings & Nine pence, and I have this Day settled with Wm. Briggs, Wm. Blanchard and Zaccheus Thayer, their Committee – and I have this Day and heretofore Recd the whole of the above said sum, the Receipt whereof I am fully satisfied, and I do Deliver up said meeting house to said Committee to finish and to improve as said Church and Society shall think proper, as Witness my hand

Signed By – Caleb Howard, Committee.

The meeting house which Caleb turned over to the Church and Society on April 6th, 1785 “to finish and to improve” had been built just over the town line in the South Parish of Braintree, now Randolph. It remained unfinished for a number of years. The Society voted in November, 1786 “that any person have Liberty to proceed in Building the Seats Below and in Lathing the meeting house provided they are willing to Reserve their pay in pews that shall hereafter be sold.” There is an earlier entry of February 23, 1785 in which they voted to draw a petition to Elder Stillman's Church, the First Baptist of Boston, “for to ask Some Assistance for ye finishing of our Meeting House.” This entry was ruled out, and apparently the members decided not to ask for help.

The Society voted on August 26, 1800 – fifteen years after Caleb Howard turned the meeting house over to the Committee to finish – “to finish the meeting house by subscription and voted that the Committee go on and finish it.” And on May 20, 1801 it was voted “to choose a Committee of two to settle with the Committee of three chosen to finish the meeting house.” Finally, in April, 1803, the Society accepted the favorable report of “the Committee Chosen to settle with the Committee Chosen to finish the Meeting House”

No sketches, drawings or plans of the first meeting house have been found. A clue to what it might have looked like can be found in the present-day Baptist Church in Marshfield. That building, dating from 1940, is itself a replica of their first meeting house built a few years after the church was organized in 1788. It has about the same outside dimensions as the house proposed in our minutes of January 7, 1784 and also the stairs leading to a “galery for the Singers” mentioned in our records. The fact that Rev. Joel Briggs served the Marshfield Church as an occasional supply preacher in the 1790's lends further support to a possible connection. The artist's sketch of our first meeting house which appeared in the 150th Anniversary Program, is probably a quite accurate representation. The artist was the late Delma Cannon Baker, then a high school student and daughter of Charles W. Cannon, our second oldest living member.