



REV. WILLIAM JACKSON, D. D.
Pastor from 1796--1842.

THE CHURCH AT DORSET
1784-1912
A HISTORICAL SKETCH

FOUNDING AND GROWTH

[The Historical Sketch was written and has been corrected by Dr. Gilbert.]

The circumstances of the organization of the church in Dorset are almost entirely unknown. The town had been settled for sixteen years and religious meetings .had been held for eleven years on Sept 29, 1784, at a meeting which may very probably have been held at the home of Cephas Kent, the Rev. Elijah Sill was chosen moderator of an ecclesiastical organization which was established at that time. According to Dr. Pratt,

there were probably eleven men who joined in this organization. Before the end of 1784 seventeen persons united with the young church and thirteen children were baptized. There were large accessions in 1803-4 and in 1816. In 1841 the resident membership numbered 152 and the total membership up to that time had been about 500.

As early as 1793 the church was designated as the "Church of the United Society of Dorset and Rupert," which indicates that the membership already included some people residing in Rupert. In 1854, perhaps earlier, the organization was officially described as the "church of Dorset and East Rupert," but this change did not indicate a change in the boundaries of the parish.

From Oct. 27, 1823, the business of the church on its financial side was in the hands of an organization of the society. This organization was incorporated December 1904. The Dorset Parsonage Association, established Jan. 1839, was at this time dissolved.

MINISTRY.

Rev. Elijah Sill, the first ordained minister who preached in Dorset, was a graduate of Yale in 1745. His ministry continued from 1784 until the spring of 1789, and between that date and 1795 he preached occasionally. Rev. Dan Kent, who was licensed in Dorset in 1790 — the first minister to be licensed here, Rev. Lemuel Haynes, the colored minister from West Rutland, and other clergymen from neighboring towns conducted worship until the coming of Seth Williston (Dartmouth, 1791), who preached from July 1795 to May 1796. On Sept. 27, 1796, Rev. William Jackson (Dartmouth, 1790) was duly installed as pastor of the church. He was assisted by Rev. Thomas Gordon from the autumn of 1837 to the spring of 1838, and from Sept. 1838 until his death, Oct. 15, 1842, he had as colleague Rev. Ezra Jones. Mr. Jackson received the degree of D. D. from Middlebury college.

The records do not give complete information in regard to the leadership in the church for the next few years. Rev. J. J. (?) Gilbert (Presbyterian) preached in 1843 and Rev. Moses C. Searle (Presbyterian) in 1846. In Oct. 1847 Rev. Cyrus Hudson (Ontario Presbytery) was installed. His pastorate continued seven or eight years. Dr. P. S. Pratt (Hamilton College 1842, Auburn Seminary 1846) was called to the pastorate Nov. 1 1855, began his ministry on Jan. 20 of the next year, was installed Dec. 25, 1860, and continued with the church as pastor until June 30, 1896, when he resigned. Rev. W. S. Walker succeeded him, beginning Aug. 9, 1896, a ministry which lasted four years. Rev. Charles L. Carhart (Union Seminary 1888) was then called to the pastorate and entered on his work Jan. 1, 1900. Mr. Carhart was dismissed by council Aug. 31, 1910, and entered the service of the Protestant College, Beyrut, Syria. Our present pastor, Rev. Eugene F. Hunt (Carleton 1881, Union Sem. 1884) succeeded Mr. Carhart, and entered into pastoral relation to the church April 1911.