



*South West Harbor. Artist and date unknown.*

# Godly Discipline and Charitable Walking

## The Congregational Church of the Town of Mount Desert – The First Fifty Years

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Samuel Lurvey of Southwest Harbor got up before his fellow members of the Congregational Church of the Town of Mount Desert and “manifested a very unchristian spirit” (38/64).<sup>1</sup> They wanted him to explain why he had missed Sabbath services and what he meant by criticizing the church’s creed and ministry. The place was the Freeman schoolhouse at Norwood’s Cove; the date, October 28, 1834.

A man of plain speech and positive convictions, Lurvey said “he was not under obligation to go to meeting unless he had a mind to go. Said likewise that he don[’]t love preaching enough to draw him there, & that nothing is preached but what is in the Bible, & he can read his Bible at home . . . .” He “concluded by saying he shall not make any restitution to the church” (38/64) – restitution, that is, in the form of apology.

The members took this defiance in stride. They even gave Brother Lurvey another chance by making a public confession of his sins a week later. The day came . . . but Lurvey did not. That was the last straw. “[A]s his guilt had before been proved, & as he absolutely refused to give satisfaction to the church we proceeded against him and voted: that Br. Samuel Lurvey be excommunicated from the church” (38/64-65).

We know of this episode because the church’s elected clerk or scribe – the minister or a layman – recorded the details in a large ledger book that one of the several successor churches has kept safe from harm. This manuscript traces the experience of a down-east congregation two centuries ago. It is a cherishable survivor: few like it remain.<sup>2</sup>

Then as now, churches ordered their lives and drew their lines by rituals of inclusion and exclusion. The former included baptism, admission, confession, forgiveness, and restoration; the latter,

**Churches had rituals of inclusion and exclusion, and of friendly persuasion.**

reprimand and warning, suspension, and – in worst cases such as Lurvey's – excommunication. Apart from these formal procedures and often invisible in

the written record were methods of friendly persuasion and conciliation. Church members were familiar with the details of this repertory; they had a great hand in enacting it.

Samuel Lurvey was born in 1794, the same year his father, Jacob, became the Mount Desert church's seventeenth member. He joined in his own right in 1816, soon after he came of age (23/39). (A revival swept the Maine coast that year: the harvest for the Mount Desert Congregationalists came to nearly thirty souls; the island's first Baptist church also got its start.) But something soon went sour between young Lurvey and the church. Whatever it was has fallen through a blank space in the record book from May 1817 to May 1820.<sup>3</sup> We know only that things were put to rights in 1821, when Samuel and his wife, Abigail Gilley Lurvey, were "restored" to the church's good graces (23/40).

But Lurvey's churchmanship remained unsteady. A dozen years later, with other members of his numerous and prominent family, he took up the gospel of Universalism, centering in the belief, which was then gaining converts in New England, that God does not limit the offer of salvation to elect souls (as declared by the Mount Desert church's creed) but extends it provisionally to all human beings. The church called Lurvey to account for his deviation from Calvinist orthodoxy, and the pastor evidently showed him his error. Samuel's younger brother Enoch had made the same mistake, and on October 15, 1833, the brothers admitted their guilt and are recorded as seeming sorry to have upset the church and "injured the cause of Christ" (32-33/53-54).

Under pressure, the Lurveys agreed to a joint confession that would be read the next Sabbath by the church's lay moderator, a divinity student named Micah W. Strickland. They also agreed to signify their assent by standing during the reading. They would

profess that they have never believed that doctrine although [they] have said many things in favour of it & have thereby greaved [sic] the chh. They now confess that they have done wrong in advocating or in appearing to advocate that doctrine[,] that they were actuated by a wrong spirit in appearing to do so[.] That they now feel heartily sorry for their conduct in this thing & that they feel firmly attached to the Congregational church & will rejoice to be engaged in its future welfare [sic]. They also desire the prayers of the chh[.] for their best good (33/54).

The equivocations of this strongly but carefully worded statement served everybody's purpose: the Lurveys saved face, and the church recovered its prodigals.

But not for long: reformation was short-lived. Both Lurveys got into trouble again the very next year, and this time the trouble was terminal. Not only was Samuel dismissed, as already noted; so was Enoch. He, too, had the Lurveys' gift of frankness. On November 4, 1834, he retracted his confession, telling the congregation face to face that "he wished to have nothing to do with the chh. – that he was a bloody fool for making confession to the chh. last fall, & that he will never do it again" (38/65). Something had happened during the year since "last fall": the church had got itself a new pastor.

He was the same man who, as moderator, had dictated the brothers' confession. He figures in the record as an active regulator of members' belief and behavior. New to ministry and to the island, facing the Lurveys, Micah Strickland must have thought he had tumbled into a hotbed of heretics. From this exposure to lay recalcitrance he perhaps learned arguments for strong corrective measures.

Though the record book reveals nothing about Strickland's motives, it bears graphic witness to his zeal and tenacity. It also exposes his thin-skinned sensitivity to insult, the thing that, in the end, undid his ministry on Mount Desert.

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Before that end came, Strickland would not only prove himself an unbending disciplinarian but one whose personality flaws had a way of making bad matters worse. He was a man in whom the quality of mercy was distinctly strained.

The Lurveys' story might have ended with their excommunication, but severance was not necessarily final. Sometime later (probably after Strickland departed), Samuel returned to the church. The record does not say when or how, but this conscientious and cantankerous man must have been back in the fold – though still very much his old self – when in January 1848 he acknowledged what the clerk called “uncharitable walk” (51/91). Enoch also came back; we know this because in February 1853 the church charged him with getting drunk the previous Christmas and called on him to take the pledge – to what effect we are not told (54/95).

This result was not atypical. The record of the church's first fifty years contains some fifty instances of what was then called discipline. Some cases started strong but led to no known final decision, perhaps because the object of interest left the island and never came back. Sometimes the charges were investigated and found to be mistaken. Where closure is visible, forgiveness and reconciliation (even if temporary) were a little more frequent than excommunication. Excommunication, after all, was serious and stressful business, not to be performed lightly by a small, struggling church. Purity was always an object, but so, too, was community. The purpose of discipline, it appears, was not so much to kick an erring member out – though that could be the end-result – as to keep him, or her, in.

Excommunications, then, were a last resort. When they loom large in the record, one reason is that the church took a lot of trouble

over them; another is that the clerk chose to set down colorful details. The members placed much emphasis on due process and fair treatment. Rarely was there a rush to judgment; procedural forms seem for the most part to have been faithfully observed; a vindictive spirit is not usually apparent. The explanation is that, overall, the church's policing of morality and piety aimed primarily to rectify behavior and resolve conflict. Dismissal of members, though necessary in extreme cases, represented a kind of failure on the church's part; that was why, too, it was not always final.

This was the norm in purpose and practice, but it did not always prevail. Great exceptions occurred during the late 1830s and early 1840s when the church, led by pastor Strickland, took special care to cleanse its roll. Strenuous efforts at correction trumped the milder measures of conciliation. The number of disciplinary actions rose steeply, and excommunications multiplied.



The “Church of Christ in the Town of Mountdesert” – so inscribed by James Richardson at the head of the record – was created by eight women and seven men on October 17, 1792. After taking “instruction” from a visiting clergyman, adopting a short profession of faith that he provided, and spending a day in fasting and prayer, these people declared themselves a church and assumed responsibility for their new creation. They did this “as persons professing godliness” by joining in covenant

to renounce the vanities of this present evil world, and to shun the appearance of evil[,] to love one another as brethren in charity, . . . to diligently perform all the offices of brotherly love and kindness, . . . [to] be subject to the rules of that godly discipline which Christ hath ordained . . . [and to] be ste[a]dfast in walking together in obedience to all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord . . . (2/3-4).

This lay-led, do-it-ourselves way of making a church followed in the long path of New England church foundings on which the Pilgrims at Plymouth in 1620 and the Puritans of Massachusetts Bay in the 1630s had first set foot.

The fifteen founders had come to Mount Desert as adults and had assuredly been communicants in the place or places they came from. They were familiar with the standard operating procedures of congregational governance. Although the assisting minister furnished texts of covenant and creed, he would have had no need to teach them how to manage a church. They already knew the three essential marks of a true religious community. One was the evangelical and instructive preaching of God's word. Another was the correct administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. "Godly discipline" was the third. This trinity undergirded the practical part of the confession of faith and conduct that the church adopted in November 1794 (3-5/8-16).

For two years after the founding, the record is blank. When it picks up again in the fall of 1794, we find the church adding three members and adopting an elaborate confession and an extended covenant. The confession holds that Adam and Eve's fall from grace plunged all humanity by birth into a total state of sin – "dead in trespasses, disposed to moral evil"(4/6). Release comes only by God's choice and act; the church's role is to discover and implement His determinations. These Calvinist convictions produced a system of discipline, without which, says the covenant, neither Christian nor civil society "can subsist in good order . . ." (8/13-14). The church pledged itself to a procedural regimen that involved hearing of complaints and adjudicating of charges in open forum by discussion of the whole. Wherever possible, problems were to be treated privately, before they could erupt into public scandals. The understanding that all human beings were more or less sinners – the judges as well as the judged – meant that issues were to be handled with a firm and tender touch.

That sense of the personal dimension gave rise to a remarkable feature of the Mount Desert confession, which quoted it verbatim

from Christ's mouth in Matthew 18:15-17:

if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. [B]ut if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established. [A]nd if he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but, if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

Desiring to walk in Christ's steps with "brotherly love and tenderness," the members promised

to charitably watch over each the other[']s conduct, and reprove, admonish, counsel, or exhort, with Christian affection, . . . [to] endeavor a charitable walk towards each other, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love, that we may keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

Recognizing their own liability to sin, they prayed to God for his gifts of ability and mercy (8/14-15).



The church grew swiftly in the early years, and brotherly or sisterly love seems to have generally prevailed. The principles of the confession were supplemented in this regard by the practice – long standard in New England Congregationalism – of requiring applicants for membership to show their qualifications by relating their religious experience and confessing their sins. Sins thus exposed were psychologically less likely to recur and more readily monitored if they did.<sup>4</sup> The great point of this initial soul-baring was not to keep would-be members out but to bring them in with cleansed hands and purified hearts.

The first recorded instances occurred in 1798, when Comfort Tarr, Esther Tarr, and Peggy Rich confessed and were accepted.<sup>5</sup> The



latter two pled guilty to absenting themselves from Sabbath services. The next fall, two men who had joined the previous year, Silas Parker and Daniel Tarr, “came fourth [sic] and confessed there [sic] being overtaken with strong drink, and was [sic] forgiven” (14/25). Excessive drinking (for men) and neglect of the Sabbath (for both sexes) head the list of misdemeanors for the church’s first fifty years. They were among the most conspicuous of sins – easy enough both to commit and to detect.

One of these early cases merits a closer look. Comfort Tarr “confessed her sin of adult[e]ry, and was baptised and admit[t]ed into the church” (14/25). This appearance of adultery is almost unique in the record; here it sits upon the page unadorned and unexplained. The circumstances of the young woman’s folly are a blank; the name of the co-respondent is absent; remarkably, it would seem, no hint of permanent disgrace is implied. Perhaps the act had occurred elsewhere, before Comfort came to Mount Desert, and so was old news to her circle of acquaintance. Possibly, too, the partners in sin had already agreed

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to marry; perhaps Comfort was already showing. Historical studies have found that a great many New England marriages of that period took place after sexual relations – and pregnancy – had begun. However all this may be, the church’s behavior was exemplary: it condemned the sin and recovered the sinner through a simple but patterned and powerful ritual of confession and forgiveness.

Such was the tenor of proceedings during the first few years: members plainly felt a strong desire to walk in charity with one another. Much depended, of course, on sinners doing their best to keep in step. Richard Heath in 1802 “beg[g]ed forgiveness” for drinking to excess and received it (17/30). Polly Richardson in 1805 acknowledged that she had “spoken rashly and had been angray [sic]” but said “she was very sorry and beg[g]ed forgivenes[s]”; she, too, was forgiven (13/20).<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, when Hannah Bunker was convicted of angry speak-

ing in 1802 and “did not give the satisfaction the church expected,” she was “dismissed from our communion.” At the same meeting, Priscilla Noble presented herself, “se[e]med to be very humble, and was rec[ei]ved in charity.” She had been charged with being drunk and disorderly along with Aaron and Hannah Bunker and Silas Parker, the last of whom “did not appear, he being gone to the westward” (16/29).<sup>6</sup> Such cases and outcomes enacted the church’s pledge to be both watchful and forbearing.

The minister through most of the church’s first four decades was Ebenezer Eaton, a layman who did not become ordained to ministry until 1823. Eaton lived on Clark’s Point in Southwest Harbor, where he “allowed his parishioners to lay their dead to rest on his dry, sunny hillside in what was then his field.”<sup>7</sup> He appears in the record as a saintly human being who shepherded his flock with a gentle hand. Sometimes, it seems, a little too gentle: an entry for July 5, 1802, tells us that the congregation, “after consid[e]rable consultation,” found Eaton “guilty of a fault though not intentional[l]y, for not having de[a]lt with Polly Richardson so seasonably as he ought.” It was a slap on the wrist but a small one, for the church also found itself “g[u]ilty of similor [sic] misconduct.” At that same meeting the church made Eaton “a brother in this church” (17/30-31). It is only a guess, but a plausible one, that misdemeanors occurred during Eaton’s ministry that never got into the record because he dealt with them quietly out of church.<sup>8</sup>

The only striking exception to this early tranquillity occurred between 1799 and 1801. It involved Captain Davis Wasgatt (1751-1843), one of the island’s earliest settlers (on Beech Hill, near the cemetery where his bones lie), an original pillar of the church, and son-in-law of James Richardson, the church’s early leading layman. Wasgatt had taken the 1789 oath of allegiance to the new Commonwealth of Massachusetts; he went on to sit in the state legislature. What got him into trouble was nothing as prosaic as skipping a service or two or taking one sip too many. It was his own personal and passionate desire to be accounted, and to account himself, worthy of membership in the church.

On September 3, 1799, Wasgatt announced that he wanted to be re-baptized. He had belonged to a church, he said, for over twenty years and he had seen to it that all his children were properly baptized, but he had become dissatisfied with his own baptism in infancy. He appealed to the church's covenant for justification: the scripture passages it cited for baptizing infants proved the contrary to him: infant baptism "was wrong." When asked why, in that case, he did not go away and be a Baptist, he answered that he disapproved the Baptist practice of "closed communion" – that is, admitting only full church members to the sacrament (15/27). He might also have pointed out that there was then no organized Baptist congregation on the island. In any case, he did not want to leave the Congregational fold but simply to rectify an old and grievous mistake.

That was how matters stood for several months while the congregation tried to figure out why Wasgatt, who had been till then outspokenly anti-Baptist, had changed his mind and what to do about it. The next summer, 1800, he still wanted to be baptized and now claimed that "his parants [sic] could not tell him whether ever he was baptized or no." But when Thomas and Margaret Wasgatt (who are believed to have been living in Eden, now Bar Harbor) were asked about it, "they answard [sic] he was, and told who baptized him and how old he was, and where they dwelt." Thus checked, Wasgatt took thought until September 27, 1801, and then, "without any further kno[w]ledge of, or proce[e]ding with[,] the church," went suddenly "to Eden and was baptized by plunging" (15/27-28).<sup>9</sup>

That cut it. Wasgatt came to the next Sabbath service, October 4, bursting to explain himself. Knowing their man and wishing to avoid an unseemly to-do, several members tried to talk him into holding off till the following Tuesday, when the regular quarterly meeting for business would take place. They failed. Right after the sacrament Wasgatt stood up and "reflected on the church in general and on particular persons for his being set by that day, and made a great noise about it." Two days later, at the business meeting, the church gave him a choice: "if Mr. Wasgatt would say that if he had young children,

he would give them up to God in baptism, they would except [sic] him into full communion, but if not they would not consider him as one of our church, [though] they would commun[e] with him as one of another church" (15-16/27-28). Though Rachel Wasgatt had reached her late 40s, she had given birth to the latest of her ten children only two years before and appeared fit to keep going. But her husband was fed up.

Spurning the olive branch, Wasgatt "declared if he were to have nin[e]ty and nine children more he would not have one of them baptized." He went on to say that he "would not stand with us in that line, but looked on himself excumated [sic]." The recorder, Wasgatt's own father-in-law, added that "since that time he has said that he looked on himself like the blind man that was turned out of the synagogue" (16/28-29). Mount Desert's biblically savvy church folk would have recognized the story of the blind man in the gospel of John. When Jesus restored his sight, breaking the Sabbath to do so, the pharisees denounced the act, challenged the miracle, and cast out the man. Wasgatt was saying (John 9:25), "I was blind, now I see."

The captain was now on a kind of probation, but in June the next year, when charged with two times "being overtaken with drink," he did not dispute the church's jurisdiction over his behavior but pled guilty, asked forgiveness, "and was forgiven." When he also asked to be readmitted to full communion, the church moved, once again, to meet him part way. Though it highly disapproved his plunging, it hoped "it was only an earrer [sic] in judgment" and so thought proper to vote him in again, only as a "privet [sic] brother" (17/30).<sup>10</sup>

"Only an error in judgment"! This finessing of standards in order to regain a good man and an important member bears Ebenezer Eaton's moderate mark. All the way through, the church resisted dealing with Davis Wasgatt in either/or terms, even when he made it easy and tempting to do so, and the tactical waffling proved its merit for quite a while. A couple of years later, we find Wasgatt and Eaton working together to try to "settle present difficulties" between two

women of the church (17/32). In 1812 the Wasgatts are noted as renewing their covenants with the church (18/34). In May 1816, Davis joined with other church leaders in an exemplary “public confession of their coldness and backwardness in religion and of their backslidings” (20/36). The next month, the church elected him clerk (21/37). In October, it met at his house to vet candidates for membership (23/39).

**Church leaders made a  
“public confession . . . of  
their backslidings.”**

This last bit of information, if true, is very odd<sup>11</sup> because just three weeks earlier, on September 12, Wasgatt (we know from another source) had gone to Pretty Marsh and joined the Baptist Church of Mount Desert as a charter member.<sup>12</sup> The church he left did not record his leaving, but this emphatic, unpredictable man now ceased to enliven and perplex its affairs. The loss, though great, was mitigated by the fact that Davis Wasgatt, when he jumped the fence, seems to have jumped solo, taking no one with him, even, it appears, his wife. Congregational cohesion held.

Wasgatt’s case aside, the course of Eaton’s ministry ran smooth. From 1821, when Martha B. Atherton was reported to have written a “disagreeable letter” but “nothing” was “proved” (though Kendall Kittredge noted, as clerk, that the “members generally felt uncharitable towards her”) (23/40), to 1828, when the church voted to forgive Enoch Lurvey “for his many [unspecified] backslidings upon his confession” (28/48), the brothers and sisters acted conclusively on only two cases. Oliver Higgins (a future deacon) was “censured for not attending to the Sabbath better,” and James Brown was put on probation for one year, apparently for the same offense (18/33).<sup>13</sup> Bracketing the period is the case of Margaret (Peggy) Richardson, of Beech Hill, who in 1821 was “waited upon” for cause or causes undisclosed and in 1828 was given the chance to return to full fellowship “upon her confession” (24/40, 28/48).<sup>14</sup> It is a touching note that Mrs. Richardson’s nine-year-old son, Henry, had died in 1821 and that her sixteen-year-old son, John, Henry’s twin brother, died in 1828.

Sixteen days after second son's death, the church re-embraced the mother.<sup>15</sup>

The small amount of disciplinary action testifies, it would seem, to the salutary effect of Eatonish commitment to the private settling of grievances and the calm correcting of trespasses. Something too may be attributed to the scribal parsimony of Kittredge, the island's well-respected doctor, who kept track of the great bulk of the church's business from 1817 to 1834 and again after 1842. Kittredge's minutes are remarkable for "just the facts" brevity – at times no more than a string of entries stating the places and dates of service. It is possible, of course, that levels of wickedness were unexplainedly low during the 1820s. It seems more probable that the church, guided by a genial, sympathetic minister and calm, resolute lay leaders, brought to a kind of perfection the modes of charitable walking that the founders had envisioned three decades earlier.

Those leaders included the six men and five women who "came forward" in May and June 1816, and made the aforementioned "public confession of their coldness in religion and backsliding." Their names, led by Ebenezer Eaton's own, stand in the record like an honor role: Nathaniel Gott, Davis Wasgatt (still on board despite his inconveniences), Joseph Gott, James Somes, George Freeman, Nancy Atherton, Nancy Rafanel, Comfort Fernald (formerly Comfort Tarr), Margaret Bowdin, Eunice Gilley (20/36, 22/38). The volunteering of a generic confession by persons who (as far as the record shows) had nothing urgent or specific to confess was probably intended to display model deportment and encourage unity of spirit at a time when the church was suddenly taking in unprecedented numbers of new members. It was an act of power, to be sure, but it also expressed the church's pledged soul of "lowliness and meekness," of Christian forbearance and fortitude.

Such a demonstration carried weight: Eaton could have asked for no better vote of confidence. He certainly deserved it. Between the group confessions of the godly brothers and sisters comes the

following entry (in Wasgatt's flowing hand): "Brother Eaton made the following report viz[.] 'I have attended to the business appointed me to do[,] that is[,] to settle the difficulties between Brothers Hadlock and Manchester. I met with the two Brothers and settled the same in love and harmony'" (22/38). Mediating difficulties was Eaton's talent; promoting harmony, his gift. Beyond doubt, the congregation knew very well what kind of quiet services their pastor performed, generally approved his mild methods, and appreciated the peaceful result.



But this is not the whole story told by the record. Signs of hankering for greater firmity in the conduct of religious life begin to surface on its pages in the early 1830s when Eaton, now into his 70s and mourning his wife's recent death, had to cut back his work-load. He rode less often from his Southwest Harbor home to the villages or clusters of settlement the church served – to Beech Hill and Somesville, to Bass Harbor, Tremont, Seal Cove, and Pretty Marsh (all then in Mount Desert town). He was getting tired. His hand, always light, grew limp.

The transition of leadership was predictably difficult. The Reverend George Brown assumed a share of the labor, but by autumn 1831 the congregation clearly wanted more effective leadership. Eaton struggled on part-time into 1833, when at last he gave way to a successor who would prove to be a shepherd with a longer crook and a stronger hook.

Well-recorded cases of discipline during this troubled passage heightened a sense of things going awry. The Lurvey brothers, Samuel and Enoch, constituted a zone of disturbance. In addition, on October 4, 1833, the church added to its case-load (it was simultaneously dealing with the Lurvey brothers) by taking up an uncommon instance of a common sin. The protagonist was Tobias Fernald, who had come as a young man from Kittery years before and had married Andrew Tarr's daughter Comfort; it is sheer speculation

that the marriage may have been related to the adultery she confessed in 1798. Fernald farmed the Southwest Harbor point of land that now bears his family name. His record in the church was clean until the unhappy day when he was taken to task for “building a cow yard for Widow Petting[i]ll for which we think it a breach of the Sabbath day” (32/53).

**Tobias Fernald was taken to task for “building a cow yard for Widow Petting[i]ll . . . a breach of the Sabbath day.”**

The act that put Fernald crossways to the church had taken place in summer 1832 (33/54). One Sunday, he looked across the narrow entrance to Somes Sound and saw, over on Sandy Point, that Mrs. Pettingill’s cow had got into her vegetables. He rowed across in his skiff, caught the cow, and fixed the fence. Nothing seems to have been taken amiss at the time, but more than a year later the church called Fernald in, required him to confess, and gave him a form of words: “I have been guilty of a breach of the Christian sabbath . . . , & I am hearty [sic] sorry for the deed.” Fernald, who did not dispute the facts, at first agreed to comply but later changed his mind. The church then suspended and admonished him (32/53-33/54). Time passed; neither side budged. Another year later, in November 1834, Fernald was excommunicated (38/66).

Most cases of Sabbath-breaking were open and shut. This one certainly seemed so to the clerk, who called it “plain” (32/53). The clerk’s minutes give no sign that the defendant tried to explain his motive or justify his act. Had he done so, he might have pointed out that he had gone to the aid of a woman in need, had lent a helping hand, had been a Good Samaritan. He might have asked which of his brother members, in his place, would have stood by while the cow munched and the widow cried. He might in some such way have turned the episode into what the church’s Puritan forebears in New England called a case of conscience, seizing the spiritual high ground and putting his accusers on the moral spot.



But perhaps all that was irrelevant; perhaps the day the act was done was not what most concerned the church. Certainly, the weight of its concern and force of its judgment fall in the record less heavily on the original misstep than on Fernald's subsequent renegeing on his promise to confess and repent. It was his taciturn defiance of the church's authority that got him thrown out. The burden of the moral question moved from the individual commission of the act to the corporate right to penalize it.

High principles clashed. Fernald's impulse was presumably a simple helpfulness; he could have cited Jesus's example or drawn his defense from the Sermon on the Mount. The church, for its part, stood dedicated to one rule for all – surely a sensible position as well as a long-standing one. Fernald was at a disadvantage because, when he joined, he would have pledged himself to that same rule. He therefore had only himself to blame. And did he not commit a still worse error – far removed from the lowliness and meekness promised each to all by covenant – in opposing his sole judgment to that of church and minister?

That last question, especially the last word of that question, probably holds the key to the upshot of Brother Fernald's case. The minister who presided over the meeting that convicted him was not easy-going Ebenezer Eaton; had that dear man still held the reins, the matter might never have come before the meeting at all. But Eaton was going, and Micah W. Strickland was coming in. Strickland ran the fall meetings of 1833 as moderator; George Brown kept the minutes, but Strickland signed them as though to approve them – a most unusual act. He certainly saw Fernald's guilt as "plain," and it is easy to believe that as moderator he led the church in treating the matter as a test of its integrity and his authority. He took the same tack with Fernald as he did, in that critical month of October 1833, with the two Lurveys.

The church was evidently ready enough to go where Strickland led. It really had no arguable reason to resist. He was being groomed

for leadership; he would soon don the gown of ministry and stand by profession, training, and office as the head of religious authority and the font of righteousness. He was new, he was young, he was perhaps teachable. A change of direction may have been wanted; if so, he was ready to lead in taking it. Reading between the record's lines, one infers that the Mount Desert church, at this first major change of ministers in its history, desired a harder hand on the tiller – a hand other than its own – in dealing with the trials that the Lurveyes and, now, Tobias Fernald presented.

**The church desired a harder hand on the tiller.**

Strickland, with Brown, filled in for Eaton on a temporary basis in 1833. He was not yet the church's regular, full-time minister, but the day that the church elected him moderator of the meeting – September 26, 1833 – was the day he took charge. The next spring, when the church chose him its pastor, the choosers knew well what they were doing and getting. In this light, the proceedings against Fernald and the Lurvey men – with their terminal endings – can be viewed as test cases for the rigors of a new and militant churchmanship.

Micah W. Strickland was a Maine native, born in Gray on March 7, 1804. He received a good education at North Yarmouth and Gorham academies and at the Bangor Classical School. He graduated from Bangor Theological Seminary in May 1834, just days before the Mount Desert church called him to be its minister. His ordination took place in the Norwood's Cove schoolhouse on July 16, with four ministers officiating (three are identified as coming from Ellsworth, Castine, and Prospect). He was barely 30 years old.<sup>16</sup>

As soon as Strickland assumed his post, he received the clerk's pen from Kittredge and the church named him moderator. He would perform both offices throughout his tenure. This multitasking meant that he both made and wrote the record of the stricter discipline he instituted. The new helmsman's hand swiftly made itself felt. On the same day the church called him, it named him a committee of one to

have 300 copies of the 40-year-old articles of faith and covenant printed: no one henceforth could plausibly claim ignorance of the terms of membership (34/56). Still more to the point, the church's first act under his ministry was to set up, for the first time, a standing committee for discipline. Its seven members, all men, were instructed "to notice the walk of the brethren & sisters of the chh.[,] to strengthen & encourage them – & if there are any cases requiring discipline, . . . to see that they are brought regularly before the chh" (36/61).<sup>17</sup> This innovation tacitly reversed the informal methods of Eaton's time.

The committee was also directed "to attend to other things which the prosperity of the chh. & honor of God may require." As the first of those things, the church levied – and authorized the committee to collect – an annual maintenance charge of 12 1/2 cents for brothers and 6 1/4 cents for sisters. Strickland's posse was thus licensed to peer into members' household affairs. Furthermore, the church added one deacon, bringing the number to three (36/61). In a show of moral unity, it also voted to admit as members only persons who "pledge[d] themselves to abstain entirely from the use of ardent spirits as a drink" (37/62). (The

**Strickland's posse was licensed to peer into household affairs.**

temperance movement in the state and the nation was then in full swing.) The whole package bears young Strickland's stamp. He was now ready to look, in

historian Nellie Thornton's fine phrase, "minutely after the morals of his flock . . . ."<sup>18</sup>

It was in the context of this unaccustomed activism that the Lurvey and Fernald cases, which had originated before Strickland took charge, reached the point of decision. Moreover, the business of the Lurveys now expanded – a testimony in part, perhaps, to the diligence of the pastor and his seven-man surveillance team. To the original suspects, Samuel and Enoch, were added Samuel Hadlock and Hannah Lurvey Gilley. Hadlock was one of the church's most senior members, having joined in 1794, the eighteenth to sign the roll. As

we have seen, Hannah Gilley's father, Jacob, was the seventeenth (3/5). Like the Lurvey brothers, Samuel Hadlock and Hannah Gilley had both contracted the virus of Universalism.

Hadlock was charged with "neglecting the church" and maintaining a point of Universalist "heresy" relating to attendance at the Lord's Supper. When the watchdog committee called on Gilley, she told them frankly that she did not credit religious conversion: "she did not hold to a change of heart, & that if there were such a change she had never experienced it." She explained that she had "recently examined the various doctrines, & thought she chose Univers[a]lism in preference to any other." When the committee asked if she would come before the members and state her case, she only said "she wished the chh. to do what they saw fit with her." The committee also visited Mary Standley of Cranberry Isles to "see how her case stands with the church" (37/63-64).

Now it was Church vs. Lurvey Clan: Hannah Gilley, Samuel and Enoch Lurvey, and Mary Standley were siblings. Hannah was in some ways the most formidable of the four. The wife of William Gilley, lighthouse keeper of Baker's Island, she was then in robust middle age. As a younger woman, she used to row her children to church in summer at Southwest Harbor, some six miles away.<sup>19</sup> Later, when her husband moved out to Great Duck Island, she made her home on Great Cranberry. Samuel Hadlock lived nearby on Little Cranberry.

The Lurvey insurgency proved a godsend for Strickland. He could not have asked for plainer proof of the rightness of his argument and cause: the church was slack; the slackness was spreading. Lurveyish defiance played into his hand, and he must have taken a strategic as well as personal satisfaction in purging the church of these stubborn sinners. Strickland capped his triumph by having the excommunications of the Lurvey brothers and Tobias Fernald "declared in public at the meeting house on the Sabbath . . ." (38/66). Hannah Gilley and Mary Standley were excommunicated in their turn in October 1835, after Strickland

himself had called on them and – no surprise – found them adamant (40/70). Captain Hadlock had been terminated the previous month: at his last hearing, he denied the divinity of Christ (as Universalists did) and, in effect, told the church to butt out of his business. Another member, Hannah Robbins, who had been suspended for Universalism in 1833, was excommunicated that same day (39/67).

The first year of Strickland's ministry thus produced a record one-year total of six scalps. The book, kept by Strickland himself, affirms his command. He was now set to crush opposition by any who dared speak up for a return to Eatonian leniency. And there were some who did just that – Eaton's own relatives. On October 4, 1835, as the Lurvey cases were nearing closure, Strickland asked for, and the church sent, a partially reconstituted posse to look into "the difficulty between his family" and "the family of Mr. Joshua H. Eaton & Mr. Herrick Eaton" (39/68).

**Strickland was now set to crush opposition.**

Joshua (who died later that year) was Ebenezer Eaton's son; Herrick was Eaton's grandson. It is easy to imagine the nature of the "difficulty."

The committee's report, on October 15, cleared Strickland and his wife of blame. Thus fortified, the minister turned on Herrick Eaton and charged him with "meddling with affairs belonging not to him, in a manner suited to injure the church and society. Likewise for deceitful dealing & equivocation." The church voted to look into these allegations (40/69).

Two weeks later (just after excommunicating Gilley and Standley) the church put Eaton on the stand, rebuffed his plea of innocence, and found him guilty as complained and charged. Eaton then (in the spirit of his grandfather) capitulated: he "agreed to make satisfaction by confessing in public meeting at Between the Hills, Pretty Marsh, & S. W. Harbour." The church thereupon restored his membership but at the same time punished him by revoking the recommendation it had given him (now mentioned in the record for the first time) for training for the ministry (40/70).

Strickland presumably thought this penalty apt and just but may not have calculated Eaton's response. He and the church had taken a pound of flesh, virtually destroying the victim's hope of becoming a minister. Eaton now balked. After thinking things over, instead of confessing he went mute; he also left the island for a time for parts unknown (40/71). When he came back and the church summoned him, he kept apart. So it concluded, on May 6, 1837, that he "has neglected the church, and particularly to attend this meeting though notified of it" and closed the case by excommunicating him (41/73).

While Eaton's fate was hanging fire, a private family argument at Pretty Marsh came to the church's notice. This somewhat tangled and obscure affair would preoccupy the church on and off for the next two years. We may call it *Freeman v. Freeman*; at one point, it threatened to become *deacon v. deacon*. The pivotal figure was George Freeman, a deacon of the church then in his early 60s.

The case commenced in August 1836 when Benjamin S. Freeman, George's son and a member of the church, requested a committee to "settle difficulties" with his father. The committee was duly formed and met with both men but was unable to report progress at the church's October meeting. Discussion ensued, but the elder Freeman proved so "unreasonable and obstinate" that the matter had to be postponed (41/72). The next May, things went forward (Strickland wrote) "with more candor" but also became more complicated, for the church now brought charges against the disputants, five against Benjamin, three against George (42/73-74).

In earlier years, a family fight would quite probably have been settled by reasoning together in quiet quarters. But when this one got into the open, attitudes hardened, complaints and charges bloomed, and the church became involved as judge instead of mediator. All this played into Strickland's hands. He wrote in the minutes that "as we could not remove the cause of their difficulties, . . . therefore we must take hold of the effects" (42/73) – language that speaks volumes about his aggressive sense of pastoral duty.

The church charged each man with Sabbath-breaking. It further accused Benjamin of using “improper language” to his father, “neglecting the church,” “profanity,” and “neglecting family prayer.” It charged George with going back on his promise to the church to let the committee settle the quarrel. It also accused him of “accusing Benjamin of murdering his mother” – Benjamin’s mother, that is, not George’s (42/74).

The source and substance of that last remarkable charge are unstated. We find from tombstone evidence that Tamesin Freeman had died at age 64 the previous summer, but her name nowhere appears in the church book and her state of health and cause of death are unknown.<sup>20</sup> People must have had a good idea what George was talking

**The church deals  
with a family quarrel.**

about and what Benjamin may have done or failed to do; at this far distance we do not. In any case, the church dropped this charge as unproven (42/74).

“After investigation” the members found Benjamin guilty on all five counts. They told him to apologize to his father, offer confession the next Sabbath, and mend his irreligious ways. “This he promised to do with divine assistance.” As for George, they found him guilty of breaking his promise and of neglecting the Sabbath. He was required to confess his errors and to “fulfil his engagement from which he fell.” All this took time: the meeting ran long, the hour got late, and as “Deacon Freeman was not ready to comply with their request,” the members deferred his case to another day. Three weeks later, Benjamin is recorded as making his confession (the text is not preserved). The church accepted it and took him back (42/74-75).

At that very point, prickly Deacon Freeman got himself into a different fight. “Deacon Atherton was then charge[d] with having advised Sister Sophronia Freeman to leave her home before she should be sent away. Deac[.] Freeman felt himself ag[g]rieved by such advise [sic], & the charge was brought in consequence of his complaints and censure of Deac. Atherton.” Atherton was Benjamin Atherton Jr., of

Seal Cove, a man in his mid-40s. The details of Sophronia's situation are long lost, but the church knew them well enough that, after further inquiry, it cleared Atherton of blame (43/76). Given this face-off of deacon with deacon, it is not astonishing to learn that the members at their next regular meeting, a two-day affair, fasted and prayed for the "upbuilding of the church." "We hope," Strickland wrote, "the day was not spent in vain" (42-43/76).

In May, Deacon Freeman had engaged to abide by the committee's resolution of his quarrel with his son. In July, on the meeting's second day, he agreed again "to leave it to men whether he & Benj. had not settled for vessels & promised to settle provided they should bring in that it was not a settlement." (I leave it to readers to decipher this enigmatic sentence.) He also promised to confess to Sabbath-breaking. The "men" he spoke of were a committee comprising Deacon Atherton, Deacon Oliver Higgins, and John Somes Jr. ("or Jacob Somes, in case John should not attend to it") (43/76).

In August 1837, George Freeman finally made his confession and was restored to fellowship, but the "settlement" hung in the air until the following March. At that time the committee reported its judgment that "when Benjamin Freeman received the fifty dollars of his father by the hand of Charles Branscom . . . it was meant for a settlement as it regards the building [of] the schooner Antioch & the brig Splendid between the parties as well as with Capt. Branscom . . ." (43/77-78).

So Freeman v. Freeman turns out, materially, to have been about two boats and \$50 wages (quite a sum in those days). But it was more problematically about personalities, good faith, and the mutually aggrieved feelings of a widower-father and his grown but still living-at-home son. It concluded (as far as the church was concerned) with confessions by both parties, but while George resumed diaconal duty, Benjamin left the fold. He continued to keep the Sabbath at home, and when called to account (two years later) he explained



that “the church was so corrupt that he could not walk with them” (44/79). The church accordingly suspended him and launched further inquiry – and there the record goes blank. It had been an unfortunate episode – not at all the kind of thing a church was well equipped to handle.



Fittingly, our inquiry ends, as it began, with the Lurveys of Southwest Harbor – this time with Isaac, fourth grown child of Jacob and Hannah (sandwiched between Samuel and Enoch), who was turning 40 when he entered the record in 1835.<sup>21</sup> He appears as emissary from the church to his sisters Hannah and Mary, presumably to try to bring them round; but if that was the purpose, it failed (39/68). Two years later he got into a “pecuniary” dispute with another member, Asa Wasgatt, and somehow incurred the church’s disapproval. When Strickland told him what he had to do to make amends, he “refused to comply” (43/76,77).

There the case stuck for two years till November 1839, when Deacon Atherton went to reason with Isaac but found him uncooperative: “his only object appeared to be to justify himself and accuse others” (44/79). Among those others was Micah Strickland himself, and so Isaac Lurvey now found himself up against a more formidable foe – one who had already unchurched four of his family – and on the foe’s own turf.

As always with Strickland, we have only his side of the story. His minutes inform us that Atherton’s report “showed that Brother Lurvey, in order to justify himself[,] brought several hard charges against the pastor of the church, accusing him of injustice in his dealings together with some other charges.” Strickland then “made his defence,” and “after a full discussion” the church threw out Lurvey’s “hard charges” and held Strickland blameless (45/79-80). Isaac Lurvey was apparently not there; had he been in the room, he surely would have spoken; if he spoke, Strickland did not mention it.

Then, just as once before, the winner hit back. He “complained” against Lurvey for “bringing these false accusations,” for “injustice in their dealing generally & for spreading false reports among the people to his injury.” No details are given; at this point, the church hardly needed them, nor do we. Strickland wrote only that the “charges against Brother Lurvey were substantiated” and that the church then required him to confess his “wrong” not only toward Strickland but toward Asa Wasgatt as well (45/80).

No doubt there were overnight councils in the households of the Lurveys, who had been evicted from the church. The next day, December 1, 1839, Isaac came “before the public assembly & pretended to make confession but his confession was of such a nature” that the church did not accept it. At its next meeting, December 26, with Lurvey again being absent, the church suspended the fifth member of a family that had made its life interesting on and off for some seven years (45/80).

It is hard to know with this case where to place the emphasis – on the exacting of the penalty or on the limiting of it. The church, after all, might excusably have excommunicated Lurvey for the fraud and insult of his “pretended” confession, his absence, and his general ill will. It would not have been the first time. Instead, the church only suspended him and thus gave Strickland, in effect, a victory that was almost a defeat. Perhaps – just perhaps – the flock had now had one experience too many of the shepherd’s vindictiveness and was no longer ready to follow him so far. However that may be, the disciplining of Isaac Lurvey proved to be Strickland’s last hurrah.<sup>22</sup>

**The disciplining of  
Isaac Lurvey proved  
Strickland’s last hurrah.**

The record of this period and beyond, still being kept by Strickland, bears no hint of strain between himself and the church. Nothing therefore prepares the reader for the church’s vote, on May 22, 1841, “that, in consequence of our inability to pay our pastor,

Rev. M. W. Strickland[,] for his services among us, we dismiss him from his pastoral charge agreeable to his request, though not from our fellowship” (47/84). Could the silence mean that relations on the whole remained amiable? So it may seem from the fact that for nearly a year, while Strickland looked for another post, he went on serving the church not only as minister but also as moderator and clerk. But perhaps a more telling fact is that no disciplinary issues came before the church (none anyway are noted) during that whole time. Did the departing pastor back off? It is impossible to say, partly because there is no record at all from August 1841 to May 18, 1842, when the church of Mount Desert recommended Micah and Mary Ann Strickland to the church in Amherst as members (48/85-86).

It remains only to report that Strickland’s last entry in the record book (for August 8, 1841) concerns a request from the church of Cherryfield for “an account of the difficulties which the church & pastor have had with Herrick M. Eaton, & his present standing.” The members thought the request reasonable and asked Strickland himself to answer it (48/85). That was his last recorded service to the church; he had, and presumably enjoyed having, the last word; we can well believe that it did poor Eaton no great good.<sup>23</sup>

But it is also important, as well as fair, to observe that the church seems to have stood by its pastor to the very end. And when he was installed at Amherst and Aurora, it paid him the honor of sending leading members – George Freeman, Kendall Kittredge, Benjamin Atherton, and Joel Richardson – as Mount Desert’s delegates (48/86).

The new minister and moderator at Mount Desert was Charles M. Brown, “Uncle Charlie” as he came affectionately to be known.<sup>24</sup> Dr. Kittredge came back as clerk. The church named a new committee for discipline – three men only this time (Kittredge, George Freeman, and Jonathan Newman of Southwest Harbor). The wording of its commission – “to look up and take gospel steps to reclaim transgressors in the church” – harked back to Eaton and the commitments of the founding covenant (48/86).

Over the next seven years, disciplinary proceedings tailed off sharply. Kittredge recorded in his bare-bones manner only four. Two involved interpersonal complaints that were resolved by mediation. The other two were for adultery; both involved Southwest Harbor matrons. As in the case of Comfort Tarr years earlier, only the women are named; the men were either unknown, which seems unlikely, or were dealt with in civil court, or enjoyed the benefit of the era's sexual bias. Confessions are not often spelled out in the church record; the identical ones given by Ann Louisa P. Holmes, née Atherton, and Esther Wincey are unusually long and appropriately humble (48-51/86-90). Both women were forgiven.



The nineteenth-century clergyman and historian George E. Street, who knew as well as any man the stories of Mount Desert Island's churches, wrote that the works of discipline loom so large in the old records as to seem "sometimes the most important element in the religious life of the time." Street saw in them much more evidence of punitive discipline than of charitable walking and didn't like what he saw. The covenanted duties of watch-and-ward were performed, he thought, as much in "inquisition" as in "sympathy." He envisioned neighbors spying on neighbors and self-righteous people metaphorically "throwing stones at sinners." He thought many of the offenses merely "petty." At the same time, perhaps with less than perfect logic, Street approved the moral power of godly oversight in keeping "the life of the people comparatively pure," and he declared Mount Desert, town and island, "peculiarly fortunate" in that regard.<sup>25</sup>

The present inquiry challenges these assessments in two ways. First, the machinery of discipline does not bulk so very large in the Congregational Church's minutes as Street's sweeping generalities might lead one to expect. The ledger's pages mostly track the steady pulse of the ordinary events of the institution's common life – holding services, receiving the sacrament of communion, admitting members by baptism or confession, renewing covenants, losing members to death.<sup>26</sup>

The recorded round of church life was punctuated but normally not dominated by disciplinary matters.

Second, the enforcement of godly discipline by Strickland and his lay associates was uncharacteristic of the church's overall practice. Forgiveness, keyed to confession, was more frequent than excommunication, and in Ebenezer Eaton's time, as also in Charles Brown's, the incidence of disciplinary cases and the modes of resolution were such as to leave a fairly light mark in the clerk's book. The major cases (Davis Wasgatt's excepted) fall within the eight years of Strickland's regime. The pages that Kittredge or other scribes wrote for the years before and after Strickland dwell much less upon the prosecution of sins and sinners; when these cases occur, the endings are more often happy. The church through the larger part of its first half-century does not appear to have been obsessed with bad deeds and doers.

**Strickland's godly discipline was uncharacteristic of overall practice.**

and reprove sins privately, so, too, he kept them off the record and the church indulged his reticence. It is conceivable that the town of Mount Desert was wicked in ways that religious folk simply chose to ignore. They were not responsible, after all, for the mischief done by non-members, and the church's covenant did not demand that the bad things members did must always be brought to light. The major purpose of "gospel steps" was to limit disruption by resolving "difficulties" at the personal level before they went public.

This assessment is admittedly in part an inference from silence and is therefore objectively suspect. Possibly, just as Eaton preferred to lubricate frictions

That was what young Micah Strickland did not know or seem to care to learn. In Eaton's moderation, he saw laxity. Where Eaton favored persuasion, he cracked down. Eaton used soap; Strickland applied caustic detergent with a rough brush. The record exposes these contrasting pastoral styles in vivid conflict. Readers with close experience of churches may find each style familiar and can assess their virtues and defects. My own sense is that the first two generations of members of the

Congregational Church of the Town of Mount Desert on the whole did pretty well in keeping their promises of charitable walking, watching, and warding. Overall, what the old ledger tells us is, I think, that discipline works best when tempered by the kind of “brotherly love and kindness” that the fifteen founders in 1792, and those who afterward joined the church they made, promised by covenant to one another.

*The author is a retired historian living in Williamsburg, Virginia, who has spent part or all of almost every summer of his life at Pretty Marsh. He asks readers who have family records or handed-down stories concerning the persons and events discussed in this article to contact him through The Mount Desert Island Historical Society.*



## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Numerals before the slash refer to the typescript of the church record that serves as this article's main source. Those after the slash refer to the handwritten original. Thus the reference here is to p. 38 of the typescript and p. 64 of the document and photocopy.

<sup>2</sup> The book is kept by the Congregational Church of Southwest Harbor. I have gratefully used a modernized transcription by Paul Dickson and a photocopy of the document provided by Dori Williams, the church's office manager. Additions and alterations are bracketed. Quotations reflect the sometimes unsteady spelling and punctuation of the several clerks; hence the liberal use of “[sic],” meaning that what you see is what the clerk wrote. Early 19th-century writers were fairly free with capital letters. I have reduced some in-sentence capitals to lower case.

<sup>3</sup> The hiatus appears on 23/40. The only other gap of more than a year is for October 1831–November 1832.

<sup>4</sup> The record refers to this narration as “sum [sic] account of the striving of God[']s Spirit with them” (9/16) and “a relation of what God had done for there soules [sic]” (24/42), referring both to conversion and to the course of religious life.

<sup>5</sup> The entries here are out of chronological order.

<sup>6</sup> Parker was charged with drunkenness in 1799, 1802, and 1803. The church gave up and excommunicated him in absentia in 1804 (17/31). Hannah Bunker was readmitted during the revival of 1816 (22/28). Aaron Bunker was barred from the church pending repentance (16/29); beyond that, his case hangs open-ended.

<sup>7</sup> Mrs. Seth S. Thornton, *Traditions and Records of Southwest Harbor and Somesville, Mount Desert Island, Maine* (n.p., 1938), 209.

<sup>8</sup> On Eaton's life and ministry see George E. Street, *Mount Desert: A History*, ed. Samuel A. Eliot (Boston, 1905), 233-234.

<sup>9</sup> Street states (*Mount Desert*, 243) that Wasgatt asked the Congregationalists to baptize him by immersion, but the record contains no such request. Congregational practice made room for adult baptisms, but these were reserved for new converts, which Wasgatt was not. The contest, from the church's perspective, was over the validity of infant baptism in principle; from Wasgatt's, its validity in fact.

<sup>10</sup> I am unfamiliar with the idea of "private" membership but suppose it to mean a status less than full communion.

<sup>11</sup> The record is hard to read here. Wasgatt's name is followed by a baffling little squiggle that looks something like "degr." It is possible that the "house of Davis Wasgatt," where the church met, belonged to Davis Wasgatt Jr., our man's first-born child and eldest son, then aged 25. But Davis Jr. is not recorded as belonging to the church.

<sup>12</sup> Thornton, *Traditions and Records*, 59; Street, *Mount Desert*, 244, notes that the island's Baptist and Congregational bodies co-existed on friendly terms.

<sup>13</sup> The entry on Higgins and Brown is out of chronological order in the record book. The typescript misreads "censured" as "dismissed."

<sup>14</sup> No confession is recorded, and Mrs. Richardson is not listed among the church's dead.

<sup>15</sup> Mrs. Richardson died in 1862. The boys and their parents rest in the Richardson Burying Ground; see Thomas F. Vining, *Cemeteries of Cranberry Isles and the Towns of Mount Desert Island* (Bar Harbor, Maine, 2000), 270. I am indebted to Mr. Vining's excellent record for this and other useful information about the dates and deaths of Mount Desert's early Congregationalists.

<sup>16</sup> Strickland subsequently pastored at Amherst and Aurora, Maine, where he also taught school, and after 1843 in several rural communities in Pennsylvania and New York. He died in Pennsylvania in 1884. I thank Laurie McQuarrie of Bangor Theological Seminary for this biographical information. Strickland's call and ordination are detailed in the church record (34-36/57-61).

<sup>17</sup> The members were Oliver Higgins, Benjamin Atherton, John Rich, Isaac Gott, David King, Joseph Gilley, and Henry Leland.

<sup>18</sup> Thornton, *Traditions and Records*, 52-53. In addition, on September 6 the church admitted Strickland to membership (37/62), and eleven days after that he married Kendall Kittredge's daughter, Mary Ann. The latter was a politic as well, no doubt, as an affectionate move.

<sup>19</sup> Charles W. Eliot, *John Gilley: Maine Farmer and Fisherman* (Boston, 1904), 23-24. My thanks to Ralph Stanley for the mileage estimate.

<sup>20</sup> Vining, *Cemeteries*, 235. Street, *Mount Desert*, 145n., identifies her as "Tamson," daughter of James and Rachel Richardson.

<sup>21</sup> Thornton, *Traditions and Records*, recalls that Lurvey "for many years was able to point out the tree behind which he stood" as a teen-aged combattant in a successful skirmish with British troops in 1814.

<sup>22</sup> Eight years later, Lurvey's case still lacked closure. On January 22, 1848, a committee was detailed to "deal" with him about "former difficulties" (51/91). Its report, if it ever made one, is off the record.

<sup>23</sup> When this article was already in press, I learned that Ralph W. Stanley, who had been doing genealogical research in the Henry D. Moore Library in Steuben, Maine, had come across records of marriages at which Herrick Eaton officiated. So it turns out that he became a minister after all.



<sup>24</sup> Thornton, *Traditions and Records*, 53.

<sup>25</sup> Street, *Mount Desert*, 249-251.

<sup>26</sup> The record does not track weddings or funerals; these were civil ceremonies. Moreover, though worship centered significantly in preaching, the record preserves the title or subject of not one sermon. It is only Street's guess that Mount Desert sermons of that period were "almost altogether practical" – that is, moral or pious with a disciplinary edge – and that the theology that underwrote the practice was "harsh and unlovely" (*Mount Desert*, 251-252).