The Pulpit Harbor Church

The Building

The Baptist Church was established in the Fox Islands in 1804 and a first meeting house was constructed in 1808-09 during the ministry of Elder John Haines. The church, in essentially the form we know it today, was constructed in 1867:

It contains 48 pews and seats about 300 people. It is finished... in the most workman like manner.

At this time the First Baptist Society was established, and careful records began to be kept. The 1867 church had a high steeple and two front doors, according to photographs and records of the Baptist Church at that time. Pews were sold to members who frequently passed them down from generation to generation. Some pews were sold a number of times. Each pew owner was a "Proprietor" of the Church and participated in its governance of the church. In essence a pew holder held a legal share in the Church and had voting rights in important matters.

Ministers usually stayed only one or two years and there were times when there was no resident minister for several years in a row. Itinerant or "supply" ministers and lay preachers filled in the gaps.

In 1889, a stable was built on the site of the current Memorial Garden. It housed the minister's horses and served as a place for churchgoers to leave their horses on a Sunday morning. Many other worshippers arrived by rowing onto small beaches behind the Church. In 1896, the old high steeple was torn down and a new belfry was constructed. A beautiful bell was given by Alvin Beverage. The church bell arrived on the steamer TREMONT and was placed in position in November, 1896. The inscription, no longer legible, reads:

Presented to the Baptist Church of North Haven, October, 1896, by Alvin Beverage in Memory of Mrs. Orinda Beverage.

Other alterations took place at this time: two doors were replaced by one center door, a vestibule, utility room, and cloakroom were constructed and the box pews were replaced by bench pews. A bookcase at the back of the church (featuring religious and moral texts) became one of the first town libraries.

In 1901, the parsonage (current Cheston home) was built. The Church remains today, almost exactly as it was nearly 150 years ago.

A new Church was built in the Thoroughfare Village in 1923 and the old Church was abandoned for a number of years. In 1930 the Church was repaired and has been used for summer services, weddings and memorial services since that time. Over the years, the generosity of North Haven's summer community has helped maintain and repair both the in town Church and the Old Pulpit Harbor Church.
The Congregation

Originally, the organization of the church involved only a Pastor, a Clerk and one or more Deacons. The positions of Treasurer, Clerk, and Financial Secretary were later added by vote of the membership.

Eventually various committees also became part of the Church organization. A Music Committee, an Advisory Committee and an Auditing Committee have existed from time to time.

Early Church records suggest that time was taken up mostly by concern for the discipline of its members and with baptizing and accepting new Church members. Discipline was strong and sometimes harsh enough that it led to the formal "Exclusion" or "Excommunication" of members. The Church used its authority to settle disputes between neighbors, to rebuke members for "rudeness", "unchristian conduct", and for "joining the Mormon Church".

Women's organizations, including especially The Unity Guild, and Sunday School played a vital part in the life of the Church.

Today, the small congregation is working with the minister Dave Macy to repair and stabilize the Old Church.

Mormon Missionary Episode

James Thomas, who served from 1830 until 1853, is the first recorded Clerk for the Pulpit Harbor Baptist Church. It is he who signed the order of Exclusion for his brother Nathaniel after Nathaniel was baptized into the Mormon Church. And, therein lies a powerful story:

In the 1830's a young Mormon missionary named Wilford Woodruff came to the Fox Islands, preaching both on Vinalhaven and at the Pulpit Harbor Church. In his journals, Woodruff, who went on to become a President of the Mormon Church, notes that the inhabitants of the islands were "intelligent, industrious and hospitable to strangers". He records North Haven as having a population of 800 which seems accurate and supported by other sources.

The "hospitable" minister of the Pulpit Harbor Church, Mr. Newton, gave Woodruff permission to preach at his Church. The schools also issued invitations to Woodruff. In all, he preached 17 times, quite successfully! Minister Newton then quickly changed his opinion about Woodruff, but the Mormon missionary continued to baptize many new "Saints" (members) into his Church. Preaching and baptizing continued amidst belligerence, persecution and the firing of guns and cannons, according to Woodruffs journal.
Eventually a number of island families, converted and re-baptized, decided to leave North Haven and trek west with Woodruff. Nathaniel Thomas, son of Samuel Thomas of the Thomas/Turner Farm raised $1,000 to help with the trip. He and his wife Susannah Luce and Susannah's parents were among many prominent families who left North Haven permanently. On the trip west, Susannah and Nathaniel's children died, as eventually, did Nathaniel himself. Susannah, widowed and pregnant with their last child, successfully completed the trek. Her baby was named Moroni James Thomas; Moroni after the Mormon angel and James after Nathaniel's brother who had, as a Clerk of the Baptists Church, written the exclusion order for Nathaniel.

According to Mormon records members of the following families left North Haven with the missionaries:

Carver, Thomas, Luce, McComber, Sterett, McMullen, Eames and Crockett.

For a number of years afterwards, there was a serious drop in the Baptist Church membership from 134 members to 54 members. Families, like that of Nathaniel Thomas, were split and disagreement and disorganization were a problem for some years to come.

Today, members of the Church of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) come to North Haven visiting places where Woodruff preached, converted and baptized new members. Scholars, descendants of Woodruff, and Mormon families looking for the island from which their ancestors came, come regularly, some by car or on foot. The Annis cemetery on the North Shore, once on the property of the Luce family, is also known as the "Mormon" Cemetery. The second name arises, because most of the Luce family went west with Woodruff in 1838.
A list of persons names belonging to the Pulpit Harbor Baptist Church in North Haven 1835-1837
Thomas Young’s Chapel, Vinalhaven Maine.
Considered a branch of the Pulpit Harbor Church.
Church parsonage—first occupied in 1904 by Pastor Maurice Dunbar
Above: Pulpit Harbor Church, 1867

Right: Pulpit Harbor Church, 1896

Notice the changes to the steeple, front windows, and entrance.
Mrs. Watt’s Sunday School Class, circa 1912
Left to Right: Elsie Brown, Jennie Beverage, Nettie Crockett, Addie Carver, Etta Beverage, Mrs. Watts, Olive Gregory
Christy Monson came with a large group of Woodruff descendants in 2003.

Members of the Church of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) come from as far away as Colorado and Utah to search for their North Haven ancestors.

Kathy Luke researches her Luce family.
A map of the Old North Shore, showing the Annis (Mormon) Cemetery and surrounding family properties.
NORTH HAVEN
BAPTIST CHURCH
EST. 1804
SUNDAY SERVICES
10 A.M.
JULY & AUGUST
"EVERYONE WELCOME"
On July 18th, 1835, Nathaniel Thomas sells his pew in the Baptist Church to Ezra Ames for the sum of $40.

Three years later Nathaniel and his family, having joined the Mormons, were “excluded” from the church by his brother, James Thomas.
Oct. 22. Mary J. Newton, Sally Thomas
and Mary Lindsey were baptized and joined
Church.

Nov. 4. Abram Brown and Robert Ames met
with the church and related their experience
and were received as candidates for baptism.

James Thomas

the ordinance of baptism and joined the
Church.

James Thomas

Dec. 10. Eliza Brown related
her experience and was received as a candidate for
baptism.

James Thomas

Jan. 19, 1838

Eliza Brown was baptized and joined
the Church.

(Mormon)

At church meeting, excluded Nathaniel
Thomas and his wife and Ruth Luce from
the church, having joined the mormons.

James Thomas
Church Clerk
Above:
The Pulpit Harbor Church housed one of the first island libraries. It contained adult and juvenile sections and was largely made up of devotional texts, though *Black Beauty* and *Ben Hur* eventually made it onto the list.

Left:
Elder Wilford Woodruff, Missionary and afterwards, President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.