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1834--1898 —



HISTORY

OF THE  
GILFORD VILLAGE,  
N. H.,  
F. W. BAPTIST  
CHURCH.



By ELLEN M. HUNT.

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## History of the Gilford Village (N. H.) F. W. Baptist Church.

BY ELLEN M. HUNT.

THERE is always a peculiar interest in examining the beginnings of an enterprise which has resulted in success. It cannot fail to be of peculiar interest to us to consider the early history of our church, and the events which led to its organization.

Moses must have deemed it profitable to consider the past, for he thus admonishes the children of Israel: "Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations; ask thy fathers, and they will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee."

Having asked the fathers and the elders, and consulted the records, we learn that in the year 1798, Elder Richard Martin, who frequently held services in the old Gunstock meeting house, organized an independent church in Gilford—100 years ago this present autumn. In 1799 they sought admission to the New Durham Quarterly Meeting; were received in 1800, and formally joined the Free Will Baptists with 141 members.

The years immediately preceeding the advent of the new century were years of deep religious awakening. This church soon held a monthly meeting in each of towns of Gilford, and what is now Laconia, Gilmanton, Sanbornton and Andover, with a leader in each branch. The church continued to grow till its members numbered about 300. On the territory over which they were scattered are now six Free Will Baptist churches.

About the year 1828 there were a body of Christians, termed the Intervale church, holding monthly meetings at the house of John P. Smith; this was under the charge of Elder Abel Glidden; another on what is now Liberty Hill was under the care of Elder John D. Knowles.

During the next few years the growing need of a house of worship, and regular preaching, agitated the minds of the Christian people and others interested in the welfare of the community. A meeting was called, and a committee consisting of Messrs. Barnard Morrill, John P. Smith and Benjamin Rowe were chosen to consider the matter of building a house of worship. This committee, after visiting several churches and consulting together, drew a plan of the house and then proceeded to build, having first sold the pews to defray the expense of building, which was \$1,100.

In June, 1833, the New Hampshire Yearly Meeting was held in the old Gunstock meeting house, there being a very large attendance. July, 1834, this building was raised, and on the first day of January, 1835, was dedicated as a house of worship. The sermon on this occasion was preached by Rev. John D. Knowles; Elder Abel Glidden and Rev. John L. Sinclair were present.

Mr. Sinclair, who was teaching at Gilford, was invited to become pastor of this new church; he accepted, and was ordained the following June and remained one year. The number in the church was forty, twenty-seven uniting by baptism.

Rev. John Pinkham was next pastor, remaining nearly eight years, and during his ministry 221 united with the church, 115 by baptism.

July 23rd, 1836, Ebenezer S. Hunt was chosen church clerk, and served in that capacity seven years. In 1837 John P. Smith and Matthias Weeks were elected deacons, serving about ten years. May, 1839, the church voted to use no wine containing alcohol for communion. The same date first mention is made of a Sabbath-school and money voted to enlarge the library.

Following Mr. Pinkham came Rev. T. C. Partridge, one year, Rev. Seth Perkins, two years, from 1846 to 1848.

In 1847 the Belknap Quarterly Meeting was formed from the Northwestern churches of the New Durham Quarterly Meeting, having at its organization 1280 members, 20 ministers and 12 churches, Gilford being one. Rev. D. S. Frost was pastor two years, Rev. M. W. Burlingame six months, Rev. D. S. Frost again three years, Rev. Joseph Wentworth supplied for a time, and others. During these short pastorates the church seemed to be running down; no conversions, and nearly every monthly meeting records some case of discipline and members dismissed. Still there were some faithful ones striving to bring the church up to higher ground, for under date of Dec. 1851 we read from the records: "Resolved, That we, as a professedly Christian church, are not exerting that influence in the community that it is our privilege and duty to exert." In spite of all efforts to the contrary the church continued to decline, until June, 1855, a committee of three from the Quarterly Meeting met in conference with the church. After a strict inquiry into the affairs, and prayerful thought, with the one desire of promoting the best interests of all concerned, they advised if the church could not be disciplined that it be dissolved and a new one organized. By the records we find the church took no action at this time.

In Oct., 1847, Asa Weeks was chosen deacon, serving five years. Morrill Thing was chosen church clerk in 1843, serving three years, Simon Rowe serving nine years.

In May, 1856, another committee was sent from the Quarterly Meeting to see what could be done for this church. A new church covenant was presented for their consideration, which at a subsequent meeting was adopted by unanimous vote as the covenant of the Free Will Baptist Church at Gilford Village. After a faithful and critical examination of those brothers and sisters who signified a wish to unite in church capacity, such examination being satisfactory, the right hand of fellowship was given them by Rev. Silas Curtis, and they were pronounced a church, regularly organized by the usages of the Free Will Baptist denomination; concluding prayer by the Rev. Oliver Butler.

Rev. Ezekiel True, having resided and preached in the village some months, was invited to become pastor of this new church, which position he held about five years. During his pastorate thirty persons united with the church, fourteen by baptism. He was a financial as well as a spiritual help; extensive repairs were made; the pews were modernized, the church painted inside and out, a new carpet bought, the belfry repaired and a bell hung therein. The money to purchase the bell (over \$600) was raised by subscription among the citizens. The late Hon. John J. Morrill was very active in this matter, himself paying \$50. May, 1857, Simon Rowe was chosen church clerk, serving in this capacity ten years. The same year, 1857, Gilford Village church was added to the Belknap Quarterly Meeting. In 1861 Noah Weeks was chosen deacon; John P. Smith continuing in office from 1826.

Mr. True was succeeded by Rev. Gilman Sanborn, who remained five years; a good man who loved the Lord's work, and was faithful in it; he baptised thirteen, and fourteen were added to the church.

April, 1867, Rev. G. M. Park was called, and the May monthly meeting records "a precious revival in progress; wanderers reclaimed and a large number converted." As a result of his labors spiritually forty-four were baptised and sixty added to the church. Mr. Park was an energetic business man and labored efficiently. The church was thoroughly repaired and newly carpeted and a new organ purchased. Simon Rowe and David Y. Smith were chosen assistant deacons in 1867, and John G. Munsey church clerk.

In 1871 Rev. S. C. Kimball settled as pastor, remaining four years, teaching a considerable part of the time. A good man and highly esteemed; as a teacher he excelled; as a preacher he was clear, earnest and devout. Fifty members were added during his ministry, thirty-nine by baptism, consisting largely of young people.

Rev. John N. Rich succeeded Mr. Kimball. The church prospered during his con-

nection with it, and in the five years twenty-one were added to the church, nearly all by baptism.

In May, 1880, a call was extended to Rev. F. L. Wiley, which he accepted, remaining two years. The church was blessed by his labors, and while there were no additions the work of the church became more systematic, and new zeal was manifest in Sunday-school work.

Rev. Charles M. Emery became pastor in November, 1882; removed by death January, 1885. Quite a number were added to the church, and his pastorate was characterized by earnestness, fidelity and self-sacrifice. It may truly be said of him, he laid up knowledge as a precious store:—

Not as a miser hoards his gold—to count,  
To call his own, adoring the amount.  
His time, his talents, learning, all were given  
To Truth, the cause of Jesus, and to Heaven.

May 1, 1883, Heman Hunter was chosen deacon, David Y. Smith being removed by death. In April, 1889, Mr. Hunter having served over twenty years as church clerk resigned, and G. Park Munsey was chosen to fill the vacancy. He served two years, and was succeeded by Ansel B. Sawyer, who is clerk at the present time.

Rev. Isaac Hyatt moved to Gilford in 1885, remaining till 1891; he was successful as a pastor and enjoyed some revivals; thirty-three were added.

Rev. Jeremiah Phillips settled with us in 1891, but remained only one year; he was in entire sympathy with all the work of the denomination and earnest in advancing the great truths of the gospel; his ministry was helpful.

Rev. J. Q. Adams, after four years' ministry with this people, passed from labor to reward April, 1897. His hopeful spirit, his active humor and his unwavering faith, made his presence ever grateful and welcome; several were added by baptism. During his pastorate the church received a legacy of \$1000, and the Sabbath-school \$100 by the will of the late Julia A. Ladd, of Shirley, Mass., an early resident of this town.

Our present pastor, Rev. John G. Munsey, settled with us the following summer. This was the early home of Brother Munsey; he was converted during the ministry of Rev. G. M. Park, uniting with this church in June, 1867. He was licensed to preach in May, 1868, and ordained February 23, 1870, at Lower Gilmanton, by Rev. A. D. Smith and others. He is a modest, unassuming preacher, firm and unwavering in his faith, earnest in his appeals, a man of great candor, and of a thoroughly Christian spirit.

Somewhat more than a year ago our church bell was found to be cracked. Not being of the mind of the editor of the *Methodist Protestant*, who says "these messengers of the upper have come to be nothing less than a nuisance," we were not a little grieved that our sweet-toned bell had lost its music, and no longer called us to worship. It was becoming a momentous question how we were to procure another bell, when Mr. Herman S. Hoyt, late of Cleveland, Ohio, but now of Boston, (having a fund in his hands by the will of the late Julia A. Ladd, of Shirley, Mass., to be given by him as he considered best) offered to pay the expense of purchasing and hanging a new bell. This offer was joyfully received and gratefully accepted. Mr. Hoyt was several years ago a regular attendant of this church and Sabbath-school, and feeling some degree of interest in its prosperity also signified a wish to donate a sum of money to be used in repairing the church, sending a check for \$512 for the purpose from the fund before mentioned. A vestry was finished in what was formerly the singers' gallery, the church painted inside and finished in ash, a new carpet bought, also pews, and cushions for the same, a pulpit suit and chairs for singers' gallery. Bro. Charles Burt Hoyt was chosen to select and purchase a new organ. His selection proving highly satisfactory to all concerned. It is an Estey organ of powerful tone, yet sweet, in quartered oak case, and has nineteen stops. By going to the manufactory at Brattleboro, Vt., Mr. Hoyt was able to procure it at quite a reduction, the original price being \$875. The chair for the organist's use was presented by Mr. John B. Morrill. Hymnals were furnished for the choir and one for each slip.

Knowing we should need our church well lighted, Mr. Herman S. Hoyt again comes to our assistance and presents the chandelier and eight side lamps, a student lamp for the pulpit, also a clock with oak case, two offertory pouches, silver communion service, and a check for about \$135, from the fund already mentioned.

Our pastor has been deeply interested in all these changes, and has been very efficient in helping on the work; he has secured by solicitation and voluntary contribution \$300, nearly half of this from outside parties, Mr. Fred A. Weeks of Providence, R. I., sending a check for \$67, Mr. Enoch Sanborn of Gilford, \$25, Mr. Edwin Morrison of Tilton, \$20, Mrs. Mary Morrison of Tilton, \$20, and others in the church contributing something.

We as a church feel deeply grateful to all who have assisted in making these improvements in our house of worship. I trust we shall so honor and glorify God that he can bless us in the future as he has in the past.

Many devoted Christian men and women have gone from this church to work for the Master in the different walks of life. We would not forget those whom he has called to the ministry: Rev. John P. Watson, who was called up higher some years ago, was by faith a Presbyterian, a Godly man, distinguished by great devotion and stainless living; a thorough scholar and an instructive speaker. Rev. Charles C. Watson, brother of the above, a Congregationalist, a very scholarly man and eminent in his profession, now resides in Lynn, Mass. Rev. John G. Munsey, who will I doubt not have many stars in the crown of his rejoicing. Rev. George B. Blaisdell, whose parents, Jacob M. and Ann Munsey Blaisdell, still reside in Gilford. He has enjoyed extensive revivals in his different pastorates and is now in the lecture field. Rev. William S. Frye of the Methodist conference; as a young man he was earnest and devoted and trust he is doing good work wherever the Lord has called him. Rev. Stephen Weeks, Free Will Baptist, was at one time teacher of elocution at New Hampton. Rev. Elbridge Knowles, Free Will Baptist.

The cause of missions has always had its friends and supporters in this church. In a session of the New Hampshire yearly meeting in the old Gunstock meeting house June, 1833, Rev. Ames Sutton, then a missionary of the English General Baptists, addressed about three thousand people, all being deeply moved by his fervent plea. A collection was taken amounting to \$100, probably the first one of any note ever given by Free Will Baptists for foreign missions. From that time until the present the subject of missions has been faithfully presented from the desk. During Mr. Wiley's pastorate he introduced, with good results, a system of giving. I think the interest has strengthened from year to year. We have a monthly missionary meeting. I hope it may yet become a power for good.

We are glad to read from our windows the names of a few faithful ones; some have gone home, others are "only waiting." There are other names we would be glad to see here had we the windows, but we can never forget any of them; their fervent prayers and words of exhortation, and hymns of praise, those grand sweet hymns, the Christian's consolation:

Some that can stir the heart like songs of triumph,  
Or loud-toned trumpets call,  
Bidding the people "prostrate fall before Him,"  
"And crown Him Lord of all."

And tender notes, filled with melodious rapture  
That leaned upon his word,  
Rose in those strains of solemn, deep affection,  
"I love thy kingdom, Lord."

"There is a fountain,"—how the tones triumphant  
Rose in victorious strains!  
Filled with that precious blood, for all the ransomed,  
"Drawn from Immanuel's veins."

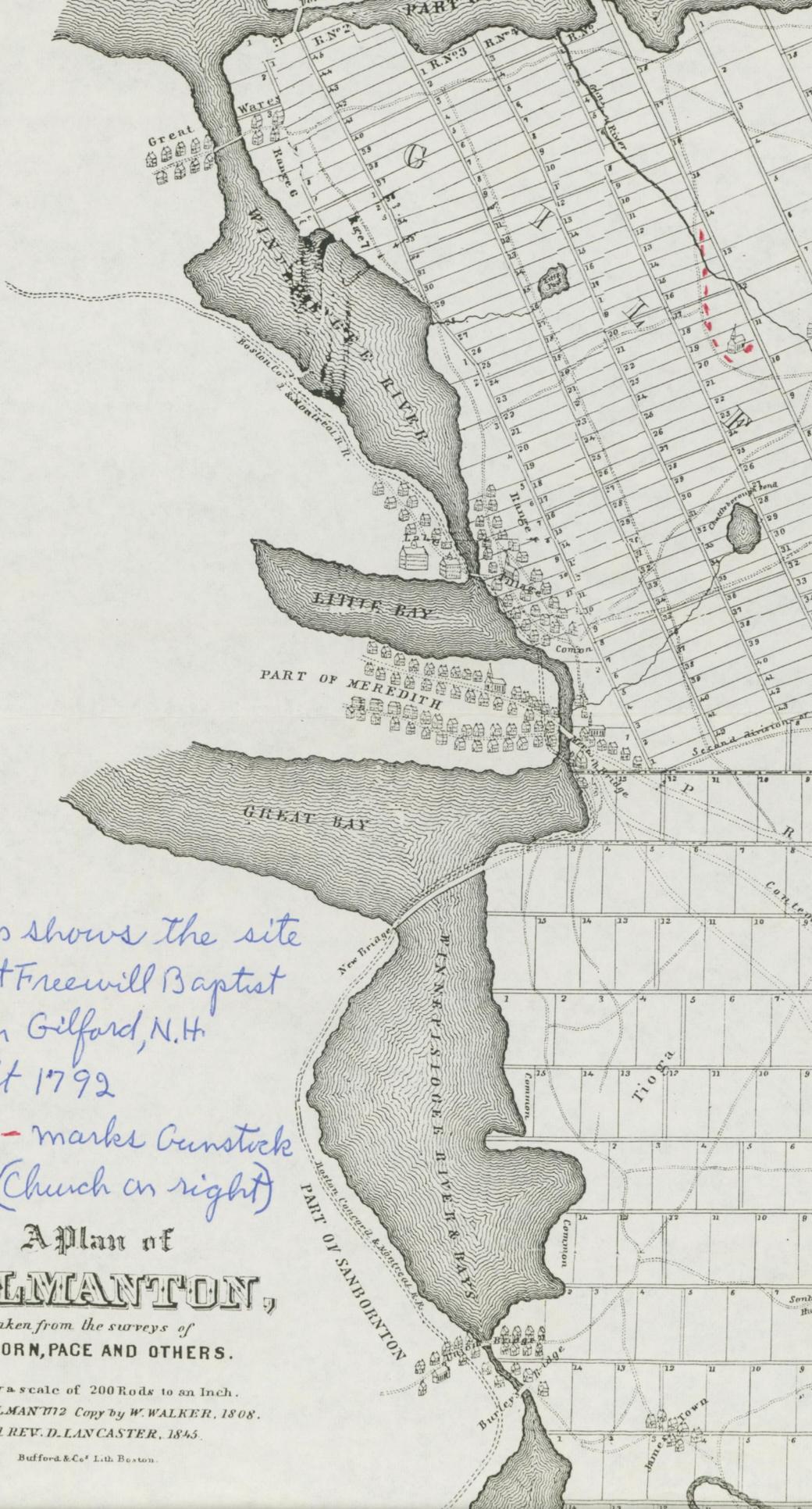
Their earthly song is ended; safe in the heavenly mansions, with the bright choirs above, they are singing the new song.

The Belknap Association met with this church September 27-29; it was a very interesting and profitable session. Sermon Tuesday evening by Rev. M. P. Toby; Wednesday forenoon Rev. Mr. Harrington of the New Durham Quarterly Meeting preached from Acts 1:8; in the afternoon Rev. G. O. Wiggin preached from Mark 1:35; the evening was devoted to missions. Thursday forenoon Rev. Charles C. Watson preached from John 4:36; the afternoon was given to dedication of the house; the exercises were as follows:

VOLUNTARY,—“Let the Words of my Mouth, etc.,”	-	-	-	CHOIR.
READING OF SCRIPTURE, Haggai 2,	-	-	-	REV. G. T. GRIFFIN.
SINGING,—“Holy, Holy, etc.,”	-	-	-	CONGREGATION AND CHOIR.
HISTORICAL SKETCH OF CHURCH,	-	-	-	ELLEN M. HUNT.
SINGING,—“How Lovely are Thy Dwellings,”	-	-	-	CHOIR.
SERMON, from Haggai 2:9,	-	-	-	REV. J. B. JORDAN.
DEDICATORY PRAYER,	-	-	-	REV. G. O. WIGGIN.
SELECTION,	-	-	-	CHOIR.

BENEDICTION.





This map shows the site  
of the First Free Will Baptist  
Church in Gilford, N.H.  
Built 1792

----- marks Gunstock  
Hill Rd. (Church on right)

A Plan of  
**GILMANTON,**

Taken from the surveys of  
**SANBORN, PAGE AND OTHERS.**

Drawn by a scale of 200 Rods to an Inch.  
By **JOSIAH GILMAN** 1712 Copy by **W. WALKER**, 1808.  
and **REV. D. LANCASTER**, 1845.



*This map shows the site  
of the First Free Will Baptist  
Church in Gofford, N.H.  
Built 1792  
--- marks Cemetery  
Hill Rd. Church on right*

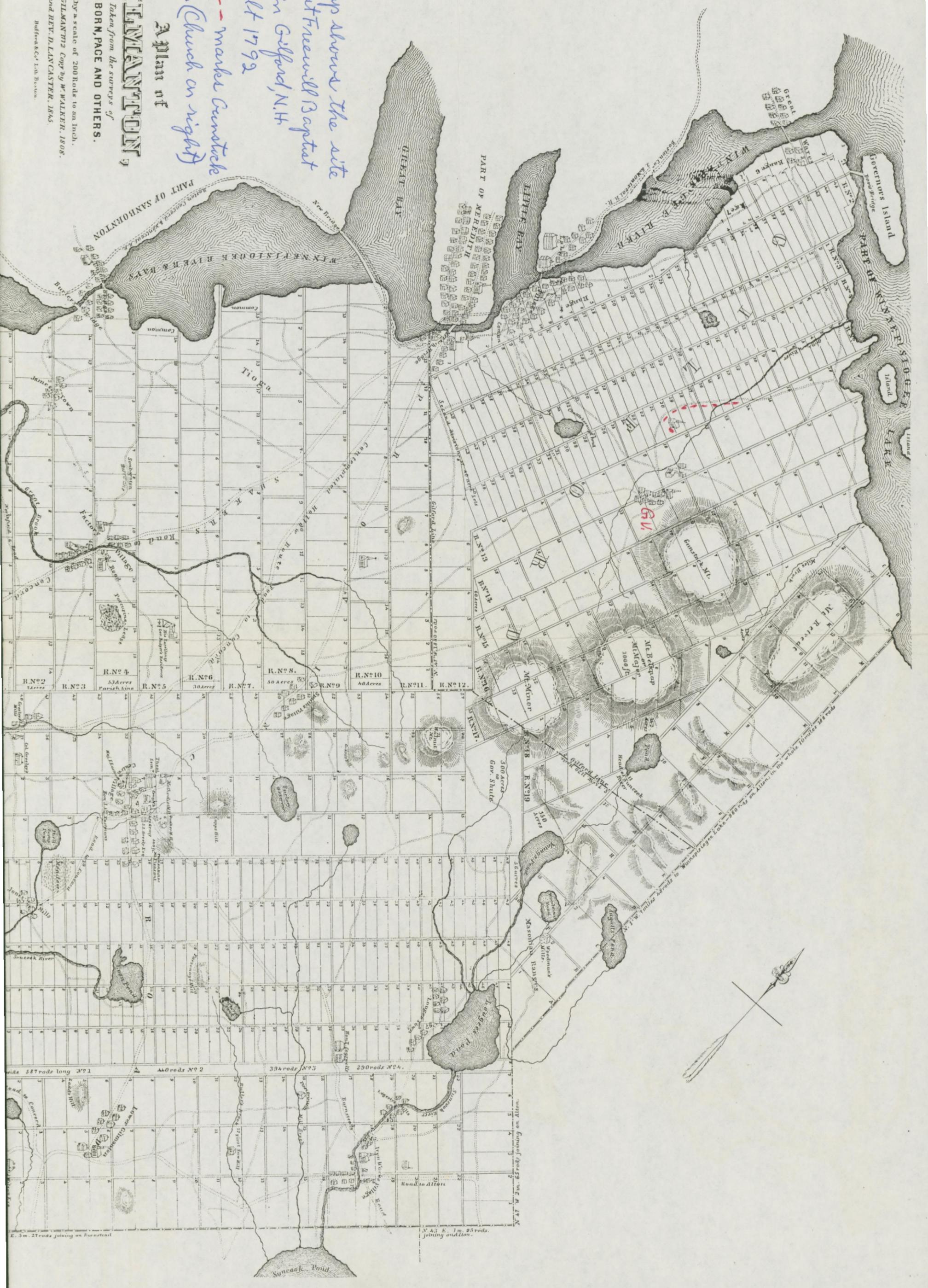
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Bufford & Co's Lith. Boston.



E. 5m. 27 rods joining on East street

N. 4. E. 1m. 25 rods. joining on Allen.