

## LINING OUT, MUSICAL ILLITERACY, TEXTUAL LITERACY (L)

n.d.: "A psalm was now 'lined' out, either by the parson, or a deacon..."  
[CT/Cheshire; Beach 1912, p. 118]

n.d.: "Farewell, Litchfield and Goshen, a country of storm and winter and frightful cold and snow, and of hardy, active, reading, thinking, intelligent men, who may probably be set forth as the finest commonality upon earth. [new paragraph] ...Until I left Connecticut I had never seen a person, male or female, of competent age to read and write, who could not do both." [CT/Litchfield, Goshen; Anderson 1896, vol. I, p. 545]

n.d.: "On the Sabbath, the deacon, or some one of the church appointed in his place, lined the psalm, and the congregation sung in their seats, except a few leaders that stepped out in front of the pulpit and faced the audience." [CT/Norwich; Caulkins 1866, p. 340]

n.d.: "The singing [in the meetinghouse] would seem remarkable to modern ears. The hymns were mainly 'deaconed off,' two lines at a time—only a few in the congregation having hymn-books of their own. The choir was divided into four parts, being ranged on three sides of the gallery. The key-note was given by striking the tuning-fork on the choir rail or by a pitch-pipe." [CT/Waterbury; Anderson 1896, vol. I, p. 545]

n.d.: "From the want of books, it was customary to sing from dictation; **the deacon reading one, and after a few years two lines**, which were sung; and then followed a suspense, until another line or two was 'deaconed out' and the tune resumed."  
[MA/Leicester; Washburn 1860, p. 107]

n.d.: "It took thirty or forty years to introduce this custom of 'lining off' [in New England]. It continued in some places for nearly one hundred and fifty years, and was the occasion of great controversy in its removal. Most of the ministry with any musical taste favored its removal; though some, like Father [Samuel] Niles, of Braintree [see RS/OW 1723 + 1724], were immoderately persistent for its continuance. It was never adopted by some churches. But it is not strange, to those who will think it all through, that multitudes should be very loth to give up a form of service which had been associated with all their religious life—family life, social life, as well as Sabbath-day life; and, moreover, **if well done (as in some places it doubtless was), it had [p. 90] a certain dignity about it, and responsive sociality, securing general active participation in the act of worship, which hardly any other method has so fully secured. I have heard this method where a whole stanza was read at a time, which was so impressive that I shall never forget it. It is the practice of some Canadian churches at the present day, and would be a pleasing variety in any church on any Sabbath. But the giving up of reading by lines involved the giving up of most of these impressive points. Voices that had been vocal for fifty or seventy years were told by implication that the comfort of the congregation would be**

promoted and the worship of God improved by their silence. No wonder their self-respect—not to say their vanity—felt a little stunned at the news, and might not reach a swift acceptance of the truthfulness of such an announcement.”

[MA/Randolph; Randolph 1881, pp. 89-90 (from “History of the Psalms and Hymns and Music of the First Church of Randolph” by Rev. Asa Mann)]

n.d.: “The earliest singing consisted of versions of the Psalms set to extremely simple tunes. The people had no books, and so the lines had to be ‘deaconed out’. These lines the congregation repeated, being led by at least one voice.” [ME/Portland; Small n. d., p. 2]

n.d.: “The singing was congregational. The minister read the Psalm, and repeated the first two lines, which the chorister took up and sang. A deacon in a pew directly in front of the pulpit then read a line, in which the whole congregation joined in singing; then another line was read and sung, and so on, through the Psalm. As the reading was done by a deacon, it was sometimes called *deaconing the Psalm*. [very specific—but not entirely convincing in its details] [NH/Chester; Chase 1869, p. 322]

n.d.: “Owing to the want of psalm or hymn-books, it was the practice, in the early days of Dublin church, as in other churches, for the minister to read the whole hymn; and, after that, one of the deacons read one line, which the choir sang, and then he read another, which was also sung; and so on, reading and singing alternating till the hymn was finished. Even after the choir were supplied with books, the practice was not wholly discontinued. The deacon, however, in such a case, would read two lines or a stanza, which the choir sang after him, using their books at the same time. When the practice was changed in Dublin is not known; but it has been said, that one of the deacons was disturbed by the change, and expressed much dissatisfaction.” [NH/Dublin; Dublin 1855, p. 196]

n.d.: “Another duty of one of the deacons most proficient in music was to stand before the pulpit and set the tunes and beat the time so that all could reasonably sing together. The words of the hymn were lined out. The deacon read the first line and pitched the tune, and the whole congregation joined in singing of the line. Another line was read and the melody was again taken up by the people, and so to the end of the hymn or psalm. This was called ‘deaconing the hymn.’ It was anything but melodious, and instances are on record which seemed to infer that the congregation was impatient to close, and one vote was ‘that the deacon refrain from reading the lines of the last stanza.’” [NH/Goffstown; Hadley 1922, vol. I, p. 397]

n.d.: “The psalm was first named and read by the minister, as at the present day. The first line was then read again, usually by one of the deacons, and immediately after sung by the person who was accustomed to ‘tune the psalm,’ that is, to pitch the tune and sing the first strain,—usually alone [how many lines of text in “the first strain”?—entire first stanza, i.e., once through the whole tune?]. Then all the congregation who could sing, catching the tune, accompanied the leader through the

rest of the psalm, as it was read, line by line. The reading of the psalm was often performed by *two* of the deacons, who read the lines alternately. This was called 'lining the psalm,' and not infrequently, '*deaconing*' it." [NH/Hampton; Dow 1893, vol. I, p. 412]

n.d.: "The small number of hymn-books to be found in the congregations had led to the practice of 'lining,' or 'deaconing,' the hymns. The hymn was first read throughout by the minister; then some person, generally one of the deacons—hence the term of 'deaconing the hymn,'—would read one line, and those in the congregation who could sing, and many who thought they could, would render that line with much animation, and with such taste and precision as they were able. Another line was read and then sung, and the process repeated until the last line had been rendered. In this manner one hymn-book would answer for an entire congregation." [NH/Rindge; Stearns 1875, p. 265]

n.d. "till the Revolution": "It was customary with our early ancestors to appoint an individual from the church to read the psalm, two lines at a time; after which reading, the whole congregation sang the two lines. The reading was so commonly done by a deacon, that this mode of announcing the psalm was called 'deacon- [p. 260] ing' it. The scarcity of psalm-books was the origin of this custom; and, when they became so common as to be left in the meeting-house through the week, the proposition to discontinue the 'deaconing' of the psalm was made, and it met with quick opposition from the deacons and readers. The habit continued till the Revolution. It is related of the earliest days among us, that one line only was read at a time, but that this custom gave place to the reading of two lines from the following fact. In the psalm, which the clergyman had selected to be 'deaconed' and sung, occurred these two lines: -- [indented, smaller type:] 'The Lord will come; and he will not / Keep silence, but speak out.' [regular type:] By making a full stop at the end of the first line, very queer work was made with the sense of the poem. Affirmation and contradiction came solemnly into the same breath; but even this bewilderment was deepened by reading the second line: 'Keep silence, but speak out.'" [MA/Medford; Brooks 1855, pp. 259-260] [This anecdote, with this particular text, appears in quite a few town histories.]

n.d. (probably 17<sup>th</sup> c.-1790) + 1790 + ca. 1793: "While Ruling Elders were continued, one of them read a single line, and such of the congregation as could sing, arose in different parts of the meeting-house, and sung it; and then another line, till the Psalm was through. In the later societies, where no such officers were chosen, a Deacon performed the same duty. ... [p. 213] ... [new paragraph] 1790. Deacon Perkins informed the First Church [probably at a parish meeting], that at the request of the singers, he had read a whole verse at once for them in the Psalms. About 1793, the Psalms and Hymns began to be read wholly at once by the ministers, as at present." [MA/Ipswich; Felt 1834, p. 212]

n.d. (from 1620) + n.d. (from 1640) + 1681: "'The [text] version first used by N. E. churches was Ainsworth's after which they used one called the New England Psalm

Book. It was common for ministers to expound a little on the psalms before singing. Some congregations sang the psalms in course. **The practice of reading the line was not introduced until many years after the first settlement,--in Plymouth not until 1681.** –THOMAS ROBBINS, D.D. *A View of the First Planters of New England*. Hartford, 1843.” [MA/Plymouth; Rochester 1907, p. 197n]

n.d. (ca. 1635-1774): “The psalms were traditionally sung in two places during the service, according to the Rev. John Cotton. The following was the usual order of worship in New England churches of the time: [indented, smaller type:] Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession / Scripture Lesson / Exposition of Scripture Lesson / Psalm / Sermon / [Psalm] / Concluding Prayer, ending with Benediction / [not indented, regular type:] The congregation remained seated to sing, and the singing was led by the deacons, who sat in seats in front of and attached to the pulpit, facing the congregation and a step above it. A separate book for each person was out of the question, so the practice of ‘lining out’ was adopted. This could be done in various ways, but most commonly the deacon with the loudest voice would sing, for instance, ‘All creatures that on earth do dwell,’ upon which all the folks out there in the pews would sing back, ‘All creatures that on earth do dwell.’ Then our stalwart Deacon Wheeler, or Fenn, or Needham, or whoever, would sing the next line, which would be echoed back. ... The deacons are advised in the 1698 edition of the *Bay Psalm Book* thus: [indented, smaller type:] Place your first note so...that the rest may be sung in the compass of your and the people’s voices, without squeaking above, or grumbling below. [not indented, regular type:] The psalms were sung this way in Concord for 140 years [i.e., from the town’s founding in 1635 to 1774; see 1774, 5 December in SL].” [MA/Concord; Billings 1985, p. 173]

n.d. (from 1640) – see n.d. (from 1620)

n.d. (after 1672-1785) + 1724: “[in the meeting house finished in 1673] Four persons occupied the Deacon’s seat, there being so many then [late 1600s? early 1700s?] in office. ... The Psalm from the Old New England Version was sung after the manner of the day, one of the Deacon’s [sic] leading. ... [p. 63] ... At this time [1760s, and presumably earlier] it was customary for one of the deacons to read the Psalm piecemeal, as it was sung, a custom which continued till 1785, when it was abolished by vote of the Parish. In 1724, at the commencement of Mr. Dexter’s ministry, Deacon Wight both read and ‘tuned’ the Psalm, as it was called, but the latter service, I suppose, did not necessarily devolve on him in virtue of his office.” [MA/Dedham; Lamson 1839, pp. 58, 63]

1676 (imagined date): “One of the deacons, or some devout man of sufficient musical gift, arises and reads, in a sonorous voice, the first line of the psalm— / ‘The man is blest that hath not bent,’ / and, sounding the first note as near D as his skill admits, launches out bravely in the old choral [sic]. One by one the assembly joint [sic] their voices until the line is finished, when the leader reads again the second line— / ‘To wicked reade his eare,’ / and the whole congregation having now caught the melody, join in the tune, only resting their voices for a mightier shout, while the

deacon reads the third line— / ‘Nor led his life as sinners do;’ / and so alternately reading and making the forest echo with their song, they conclude with— / ‘And eke the way of wicked men / Shall quite be overthrown;’ / and sitting down, with their souls, if not their voices, attuned to the praise of God, await the discourse of the beloved [Rev. Samuel] Hooker...” [CT/Farmington; Gay 1891, p. 13]

1680: “The practice of ‘lining’ the hymn was introduced subsequently to 1680.” [CT/Windsor; Stiles 1891, vol. I, p. 100]

1680, 20 June (imagined date): [what follows is an imagined scenario, with the author, Samuel Sewall, visiting Woburn’s second church in 1680:] “Deacon [John] Wright arose to announce singing; and, holding in his hand the Collection, entitled the ‘New England Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs,’ that now forgotten, but once favorite version of our fathers, both in their private and public devotions, he read five stanzas of the 5th Psalm, as follows: [3 stanzas of indented text; p. 96, 2 more stanzas of indented text; new paragraph:] When he had finished reading, I was right glad to hear him give out Windsor, as the tune to be sung; for that is a tune, which, like others of the same class, such as plaintive Canterbury and Little Marlborough, and mournful Bangor and Isle of Wight, and stately Rochester and Wells, grave Colchester and Wantage, sweet-toned Barby and Mear, cheerful York and St. Martin’s, and majestic Winchester and Old Hundredth, I am always delighted to hear sung on suitable occasions; but which, from the general change of the public taste in Sacred Music, I am seldom or never likely to hear again. The deacon, having announced the tune, read the first line again, and then, with a tremulous voice commenced singing, in which he was instantly joined by almost the whole of the congregation, sitting, both by old and young, males and females. These, as he read severally a line of the portion he had given out, would catch the words from his lips, and fall in with him in singing it. And never, thought I, had I heard singing, that was on the whole quite equal to this. There was no exact harmony in it, no perfect keeping of time, and much otherwise, at which a critical ear might justly take offence. And yet there was in it that, which to me was exceedingly interesting and impressive. The sound coming from such a multitude of voices, seemed as the roar of thunder and the voice of many waters. And then, there was such a seriousness in the appearance and manner of the great majority, such an evident engagedness in this act of praise to the Most High, as caused a deep solemnity to pervade the whole congregation, and in my humble opinion much more than compensated for all the musical faults and deficiencies of the performance. Here, thought I, if anywhere, is a specimen of singing to the Lord [p. 97] with the Spirit and with the understanding also, of that melody of the heart which makes even the meanest attempts at melody with the voice an acceptable offering to God through Jesus Christ, and insures his favorable presence in the assemblies of his saints.” [MA/Woburn; Sewall 1868, pp. 95-97]

1681 – see n.d. (from 1620)

1699, 20 December: "Voted Unanimously that y<sup>e</sup> psalms in our public Worship be sung without Reading line by line." [MA/Boston; Brattle Square Church 1902, p. 5]

n.d. (ca. 1700): "MUSIC / This feature of Puritan worship was of the most primitive character and at first consisted of singing Psalms which were 'lined or deaconed,' that is, a line was read by the deacon and then sung by the congregation. It was a sort of free-for-all in pitch, tune and time. But few tunes were in general use: St. David, Hackney, Litchfield, Martyrs and Oxford being those in use about 1700. Sometimes pitch pipes were used to set the key." [ME/York; Banks 1935, vol. II, p. 182]

n.d. (between 1701 and 1745): "In Mr. Swift's day [John Swift, first minister, 1701-1745], few, except the pastor and deacons, had psalm-books; and it was customary for the minister to read the psalm in full, when the senior deacon would rise, face the audience, and repeat the first line, which would be sung by the congregation; and so on to the end of the six or eight stanzas." [MA/Framingham; Temple 1887, p. 337]

n.d. (between 1708 and 1725): "I should be considered guilty of an important omission did I not give some account of singing as it has been performed in our churches. A special attention to this lovely part of public worship was excited by the younger Symmes [Thomas Symmes, minister at Bradford 1708-1725]. Till his time the practice was to read one or two lines and then to sing them. A practice which prevailed universally in the early settlement of this country. He prevailed with the people to alter their practice in this respect, and was so happy by his exertions as to excite an attention, indeed to create a taste for this part of worship, which has in a degree continued to the present time." [MA/Bradford; Perry 1821, p. 50]

1724 – see n.d. (after 1672-1785)

1724, 24 October: "A record of Mr. Dexter's [Samuel Dexter, minister in Dedham from 1724 to 1755], denotes that until the commencement of his ministry, the deacons read the psalm and tuned it. October 24, 1724. Voted that Mr. Jabez Pond shall for the future read the psalm, and tune it, deacon Wight not being able." [MA/Dedham; Worthington 1827, p. 107]

1726, March + 1769, May + 1770, March + 1773 + 1779, 5 August: "A singular controversy in relation to the form of conducting the musical portion of public worship in our churches, growing out of attachment to ancient customs and resistance of innovations, arose at an early period. In its progress, it converted the harmony of christians in the house of prayer into discord, and though trifling in its origin, became of so much importance, as to require the frequent directory interference of town meetings, and only arrived at its conclusion when the great revolutionary struggle swallowed up all minor objects. [new paragraph] Anciently, those who joined in singing the devotional poetry of religious exercises, were dispersed through the congregation, having no place assigned them as a distinct

body, and no privileges separate from their fellow worshippers. After the clergyman had read the whole psalm, he repeated the first line, which was sung by those who were able to aid in the pious melody: the eldest deacon then pronounced the next line, which was sung in similar manner, and [p. 178] the exercises of singing and reading went on alternately. When the advantages of education were less generally diffused than at present, the custom was established, to avoid the embarrassment resulting from the ignorance of those who were more skilful in giving sound to notes than deciphering letters. The barbarous effect produced by each individual repeating the words to such tune as was agreeable to his own taste, became apparent. The first attempt at the reformation of this 'usual way,' as it was termed, was made March, 1726, when a meeting of the inhabitants was called, for the purpose of considering 'in which way the congregation shall sing in future, in public, whether in the ruleable way, or in the usual way,' and the former was adopted, though not without strong opposition at the time and great discontent after. [footnote: "Its execution was defeated by the resistance of the deacons, who, on the ensuing Lord's day, read line by line as usual, without regard to the vote. Respectful regard to the feelings of these venerable men prevented the contemplated change."] Ineffectual application having been made to the selectmen, to convene the people, for the purpose of again discussing the subject, a warrant was procured from John Minzies, Esq. of Leicester, calling a meeting, 'to see if the town will reconsider their vote concerning singing, it being of an ecclesiastic nature, which ought not to stand on our town records:' but the article was dismissed. [new paragraph] The next step was, the attempt to procure the aid of some suitable person to lead and direct in the performances. It was voted, May, 1769, 'that the elder's seat be used for some persons to lead the congregation in singing.' The adherents of old usage possessed sufficient influence to negative a proposition for raising a committee to invite a qualified individual to perform this office. In March, 1770, 'it was voted, that Messrs. James McFarland, Jonathan Stone [Joseph Stone's father, 44 in March 1770?], and Ebenezer Flagg, sit in the elder's seat to lead, and on a motion made and seconded, voted unanimously, that Mr. William Swan [Timothy Swan's father, 54 in March 1770?] sit in the same seat, to assist the aforesaid gentlemen in singing.' It remained, to gather the musicians to one choir, where their talents in psalmody could be better exerted than in their dispersion, and in 1773, 'the two hind body seats, on the men's side, on the lower floor of the meeting house,' were assigned to those who sat together and conducted singing on the Lord's day. [new paragraph] The final blow was struck on the old system, by the resolution of the town, Aug[.] 5, 1779. 'Voted, That the singers sit in the front seats in the front gallery, and those gentlemen who have heretofore sat in the front seats in said gallery, have a right to sit in the front [p. 179] seat and second seat below, and that said singers have said seats appropriated to said use. Voted, That said singers be requested to take said seats and carry on singing in public worship. Voted, That the mode of singing in the congregation here, be without reading the psalms, line by line, to be sung.' [new paragraph] The sabbath succeeding the adoption of these votes, after the hymn had been read by the minister, the aged and venerable Deacon [Jacob] Chamberlain, unwilling to desert the custom of his fathers, rose, and read the first line according to his usual practice. The singers, prepared to carry the

alteration into effect, proceeded, without pausing at its conclusion: the white haired officer of the church, with the full power of his voice, read on, until the louder notes of the collected body overpowered the attempt to resist the progress of improvement, and the deacon, deeply mortified at the triumph of musical reformation, seized his hat, and retired from the meeting house, in tears. His conduct was censured by the church, and he was, for a time, deprived of its communion, for absenting himself from the public services of the sabbath. [new paragraph] The mode of reading prevailed in Boston, and throughout New England, until a few years prior to the last mentioned date [i.e., into the mid-1770s], and in some places beyond it. A relic of the old custom probably still survives, in the repetition of the first line of the hymn by clergymen of the present day.” [MA/Worcester; Lincoln 1837, pp. 177-179]

ca. 1727: “The psalm books in use then in this country [around 1727, when Rev. Timothy Woodbridge gave a singing lecture in East Hartford] had no tunes in them and the tunes themselves had been forgotten. The psalm was lined out and the singing conducted by a leader. Many congregations used only four or five tunes, and often tunes called by the same name were wholly dissimilar in congregations but a few miles apart, which is not strange when it is considered that no notes had been used for nearly a century and the tunes were such as the leader’s memory of tradition or inventive skill could furnish. The singing was slow and unmelodious and the Woodbridges [Timothy and his nephew Samuel, minister at the East Hartford First Congregational Church] were very anxious for a return to musical service. The proposed change was fiercely resisted everywhere. Churches were almost rent asunder by the attempt.” [CT/East Hartford; East Hartford 1902, p. 42]

1729 + 1758, October + 1771: “At a Meeting of the Brethren of the South Church and Congregation Octr. 9. 1758. [new paragraph] Voted, 1. That the Revisal and Improvement of the New England Version of the Psalms by our Pastor the Rev’d Mr. Prince; together with the Hymns annexed be used in this church and Congregation as our Psalm-Book. [new paragraph] 2. That these Psalms be sung without reading line by line, as has been usual; except on evening Lectures, and on extraordinary occasions when the Assembly can’t be generally furnished with Books.” [footnote, square brackets original: “[Dr. Ware says that the reading of the psalms, line by line, was dropped at the New Brick Church in 1729, the year after the ordination of Mr. Welsted. At the Old North this custom continued until 1771.]”] [MA/Boston; Hill 1890, vol. II, p. 39]

n.d. (before 1730) + 1730, 16 April + 1731, 28 October: “The musical exercises in public worship were conducted in a manner similar to the practice of the first church, already described [see below: n.d. (before 1764) + 1764 + 1774 + 1780 + soon after 1780]. The deacon ‘lined’ the psalm, and ‘set the tune,’ in which the congregation joined. The first attempt to improve this method was by the introduction of music-books, and probably the formation of a choir. This movement produced a strong sensation. The deacon felt that his prerogative was usurped, the congregation were disturbed by the introduction of tunes with which they were



unacquainted, and by many worthy people it was viewed as a dangerous innovation. The uneasiness thus created, led to a church meeting in 1730, to devise a plan for the restoration of harmony. The importance the subject assumed may be best estimated by the following record of proceedings. [new paragraph] ‘Whereas there has been some difference of opinion in some of the members of this church, relating to the way or method of our psalmody, some thinking that the way or method of singing the psalm tunes which has heretofore been in common use among us, should still be retained by us; but others, that the way or method of singing the tunes by note, as has been of late years introduced into many other churches and congregations in the land, should be promoted and established in this society: for the accommodation of which affair the church is now met. And having first considered, that it is our indispensable duty to harmonize in the way or method of our singing the praises of God, and to use our utmost endeavors to prevent all manner of discord therein, so that we may not only with one mind, but also with [p. 265] one mouth, glorify God according to that precept, Rom. xv. 6. It was then voted, that considering our present circumstances, the church does judge it to be most conducive to the peace of this people to sing the psalm tunes in the way and method which has heretofore been in common use among us, and accordingly does determine yet to sing them in that way and method.’ [new paragraph] At a subsequent meeting this vote was reconsidered, and ‘the church having first considered several inconveniences which had arisen from said vote of April 16<sup>th</sup>, 1730, which were likely to continue and increase, if the said vote should be strictly adhered to for the future, then agreed and voted, That this church does determine to sing the psalm tunes regularly by note, once upon every Lord’s day, and once upon fast days, viz. at the first time of singing in the afternoon, and once upon every thanksgiving day also. Voted likewise at the same meeting, That Mr. Joseph Cresey be desired to set the tune, or lead the song, at all such times as the church has agreed to sing regularly by note. Moreover, seeing that an inconvenience and disorder hath happened by the introduction of a psalm tune which the people of this church and congregation are mostly unacquainted with: wherefore it was agreed and voted, that no psalm tune which has not been in common use among us, shall be speedily introduced, set or sung in this congregation, excepting the tune called St. Marie’s or Hackney, and the tune called Commandment tune.’ This course of compromise was continued little more than a year, until Oct. 28, 1731, when at a church meeting it was ‘voted that they would for the future time, sing (at all times of [p. 266] singing in the public worship) the psalm tunes by rule, according to the notes pricked in our psalm books.’ A relative of Mr. Cresey above mentioned, was for many years an efficient leader of the choir.” [MA/Beverly (2<sup>nd</sup> Parish); Stone 1843, pp. 264-266]

n.d. (likely the 1730s, 1740s, or early 1750s): “It was at this period [the ministry at the “New Brick Church” of William Welsted, 1728-1753 + the concurrent ministry of Ellis Gray, 1738-1753] that...the old custom was dropped of singing by the separate reading of each line.” [MA/Boston; Robbins 1852, p. 184]

1730, 16 April – see n.d. (before 1730)

1731, 28 October – see n.d. (before 1730)

n.d. (ca. 1732-“before the days of the Revolution”): “The singing of the psalms was without instrumental accompaniment, and books being few, one of the deacons or a chorister pitched the tune and read the hymn, line by line, before singing. ... As neither deacon nor congregation knew any other tunes, York, Hackney, Windsor and St. Mary’s did duty in regular rotation. ... Lining or ‘deaconing’ the hymns was very generally discontinued before the days of the Revolution, though in spite of strenuous opposition, and a chorister with a long, wooden pitch-pipe became the official ‘psalm-setter.’” [MA/Harvard; Nourse 1894, p. 107]

1732 (see quote immediately above; the following quote is continued from SINGING SCHOOLS, SINGING MASTERS): “Having learned to sing, the singers naturally wished to give the congregation the benefit of their new acquisitions. This disturbed some old habits, and a town meeting was convened to hear the complaints of those who could not endure ‘the singing in the new [p. 404] way,’ as they termed it. The matter could not be settled; dispute arose, and the meeting adjourned. Another meeting was called, and after much debate the matter was compromised by voting, ‘That this Society Desire and agree to Sing in y<sup>e</sup> public assembly on y<sup>e</sup> Saboth half y<sup>e</sup> time in y<sup>e</sup> new and half in y<sup>e</sup> old way for six Saboths; and after that wholly in y<sup>e</sup> new way.’” [CT/Wallingford; Davis 1870, pp. 403-404]

1732, 8 February: “The records of Wallingford, Conn., have preserved certain proceedings by ‘y<sup>e</sup> east wd [←Wallingford?] Society’ in regard to singing.... [new paragraph] Feb. 8, 1732.—‘Voted by the Society that they are willing to comply with what the church did voat concerning singing the new way as it is called.’ But the clerk entered the names of fourteen ‘decentors.’ Under the same date—‘Voated that this society Desirs & agreas to sing in y<sup>e</sup> publick assembly on y<sup>e</sup> Sabath, half y<sup>e</sup> time in y<sup>e</sup> new & half in y<sup>e</sup> old way, for six Sabbath[s]; & after that wholly in y<sup>e</sup> new way.’ [new paragraph] What transition is here referred to? In Dr. Linsley’s discourse on the one hundred and fifth anniversary of the Second Congregational Church in Greenwich, Conn., there is dated a noteworthy revolution in the mode of singing in that church, viz., November, 1764: ‘Voted to sing in the congregation without reading line by line.’” [CT/Wallingford; Singing/NEHGR 1888, p. 199]

1734: “In these early days prevailed a custom, which has long since become obsolete in the Congregational churches, though it is still practiced in the congregations of some bodies of professing Christians at the present day. The custom alluded to is the mode of singing, which was done in this manner. A person was appointed to act as chorister, or ‘to set the psalm,’ who selected and ‘pitched’ the tunes; then a line or two was read off, when the whole congregation joined in singing them, and thus proceeding alternately to read and sing the lines, in this manner, till the whole psalm had been sung. It seems, that soon after the formation of this society, it had been discussed whether the church would adopt the new mode of having the singing conducted by a choir for that purpose, or carry it on by the congregation as before.

The action taken by the society on this occasion is somewhat interesting, and is here introduced: [new paragraph, smaller type:] 'At a gen<sup>l</sup> Church meeting December 19<sup>th</sup> 1734, appointed in order to agree upon the mode of Singing the praises of God in publick—and y<sup>e</sup> appointment of a Chorister, Voted and agreed, that we will continue to Sing the praises of God in the public worship on the Sabbath, in the common way wherein we have hitherto gone on, Leaving every one to their liberty of learning or not learning to Sing the Regular way, and that when persons have generally Learned to sing by Rule, yet that way of Singing shall not be introduced into the Congregation here, but upon farther agreement and in an orderly way. [p. 227] [new paragraph] '2 Voted and agreed that Capt<sup>n</sup> Andrew Hinman (If he will accept it) be the person to set the psalm, and Lead us in the publick praises of God, and that, if Capt<sup>n</sup> Hinman do not accept, then Joseph Hinman shall be the man. [new paragraph] '3 Voted and agreed that he who Setts the psalm shall be at his Liberty what tunes to Sing on Lecture days.'" [CT/Woodbury; Cothren 1854, pp. 226-227]

1735-probably 1760s at the earliest: "Singing. – There is no evidence, from the Records that a choir was in existence at this date [1750]. Indeed, the custom of the time and the prevalent Presbyterian idea of this part of public worship, would exclude such an aid to devotion. The appointment in 1735, of 'a Precentor or clerk of the Congregation,' carries the conclusion that the singing was Congregational, i.e., the psalm was 'lined off' (or Deaconed; as it was called in Congregational Churches) by the Precentor, and sung, line by line by the assembly. Probably a choir, to sit by themselves in the gallery, was not formed until Mr. Baldwin's day [Moses Baldwin was Presbyterian minister in Palmer 1761-1811]." [MA/Palmer; Temple 1889, p. 98]

1738, 9 February: "N.B. Confusion in the Singing by the young man's reading the Longer meeter in Standish Tune [a C. M. tune], throughout the Singing." [MA/Westborough; Parkman/Walett 1974, p. 44]

n.d. (1739-1805): "The singing was congregational, the minister reading the whole hymn, and then reading two lines for the congregation to sing, and so on through the hymn. The minister or some one of the congregation acted as chorister, to pitch the tune and lead in the singing." [this is during the period between the completion of the old meetinghouse in 1739 + the building of the next meetinghouse in 1805] [RI/Barrington; Bicknell 1898, p. 436]

n.d. (probably 1740s and 1750s and later, well into 19<sup>th</sup> c.): "The music in the Sunday services at the meeting-house in the early part of Mr. Wilkins's ministry [Daniel Wilkins was pastor 1741-1784] was doubtless of the most primitive kind. After the announcement of [p. 315] the hymn, one of the deacons would read a line or two, and the congregation would respond by singing it, the reading and singing being continued alternately through the hymn. As the gift of music seems to have been hereditary in the Shepard family, we may suppose that Col. John Shepard [ca. 1706-1785; lived in Souhegan West/Amherst from ca. 1741 on] and his son, Col. John, jr. [1732-1802], each in their time took a leading part in these services. After

the arrival of the Seatons [surely including John Seaton, Jr. (1756-1836) + eventually Ambrose Seaton (b. ca. 1805)], they probably assisted, or led, in the singing.” [NH/Amherst; Secomb 1883, pp. 314-315]

“1742, May 7. ‘The church took a vote to see if the Society would sing in the *new way*, and it passed in the affirmative, *nem. con.* Then being desired to bring in their votes for a TUNER, Mr. Ezekiel TURNER was chosen by a considerable majority.’ Previous to this, singing, in most, if not all the New England churches, had been strictly *congregational*, the lines of the hymns being read off by the *Deacon*, who usually pitched the tune, and all, who could [p. 62] sing, joined in the performance.” [MA/Hanover; Barry 1853, pp. 61-62]

n.d. (between late 1740s and 1772): “After practising several years in this way [lining out, one line at a time], [Rev.] Mr. [Joshua] Eaton [Spencer church’s first minister, ordained 1744; served until his death in 1772] recommended, that instead on one line only, a whole verse should be read by the deacons. Complaints were immediately made, by those who had no books, against this, as an innovation from the ancient and sacred manner of performing that part of public worship. But the perseverance of the minister overcame all opposition and remonstrance, and the new method was continued, for many years. At length, it was found expedient for the congregation to supply themselves with books, and to dispense altogether [p. 100] with the services of the deacon in reading the psalm, and this practice continues to be in favor to the present time.” [MA/Spencer; Draper 1841, pp. 99-100]

n.d. (ca. 1748): “The order of service adopted by the church at its organization commenced with singing one of the Psalms of David, which was first read by the pastor; then the tune was set by some one chosen for the purpose, after which one of the deacons, standing on the floor in front of the pulpit, proceeded to ‘line off’ the psalm for the congregation to sing.” [MA/Lincoln; Lincoln 1899, p. 25]

n.d. (ca. 1752): “In the days of the organization of the church in Hampstead [church organized 3 June 1752].... The words of the hymns were lined out in couplets. The deacons read the first line and pitched the tune, using a sort of whistle, which was ‘homemade’ and could be lengthened or shortened to give lower or sharper sounds, the whole congregation joining in the singing of the line. Another line was read, and again the melody was taken up by the people, and so on to the end of the psalm. This was called ‘deaconing the hymn.’” [NH/Hampstead; Noyes 1903, p. 167]

1758, October – see 1729

n.d. (ca. 1759-1789) + 1788 + 1789: “Although led by a choir, for many years the singing was mainly congregational, and on account of the small number of books in the possession of the worshippers the practice of reading or lining the hymns was continued about thirty years. After the hymn had been read by the minister one of the deacons would read one or two lines. When that passage had been sung in the

animated manner of the time [←sarcasm here?], and while the singers were regaining breath, the deacon read another line or couplet and by this alternating process the longest hymns were fully rendered. In 1788 the church voted that no hymn should be sung without reading if any deacon was present to read it, except the last hymn in the service, but the following year at the request of the town the practice was discontinued altogether." [MA/Ashburnham; Stearns 1887, p. 327]

n.d. (1760s?): "Hymn-books, in those days, were a scarce commodity, and it was the duty of the deacon to 'line,'\* or retail out the hymn, as it was [p. 115] then called; which was, to read and sing a line alternately." [bottom of p. 114, footnote:] "\*This was congregational singing, for all joined in that part of the worship whether singers or not. There is a story of a deacon (not a good scholar, and probably hungry) who made a ludicrous mistake. The concluding line being [indented, smaller type:] 'The Eastern Sages shall come in, with messages of grace;' [end of indentation; regular type:] he read it thus: [indented, smaller type:] 'The Eastern *stages* shall come in, with *sassingers* and *grease*!'" [ME/York; Emery 1894, pp. 114-115; see also Sylvester 1909, p. 123, which includes the comment that lining out "must have had something of a lugubrious effect, especially if the tune happened to be good old 'Windham' [by Daniel Read]."]

n.d. (before 1764) + 1764 + 1774 + 1780 + soon after 1780: "The musical exercises of the sanctuary, according to the custom of the times, were conducted by one of the deacons, who officiated as chorister to the congregation. He read the hymn line by line and 'set the tune,' in which each member joined 'by rote,' in key and measure not always the most exact or harmonious. Probably, as musical taste improved, this desultory practice fell into disrepute; as, by a vote in 1764, the deacons were authorized to select singers, and seats were appropriated to their use, 'that the spirit of singing psalms might be revived, and that part of worship conducted with more regularity.' This arrangement continued until 1774, when a choir was regularly installed in 'the front seats of the south gallery,' and authorized, by vote of the parish, to pitch the tune and take the lead in singing.' ... In the course of the succeeding fourteen years [after 1766] several ineffectual attempts were made to abolish the practice of 'deaconing' the psalm; but in 1780, the spirit of compromise led to the vote 'that the psalms be sung in the congregation in the forenoon, by reading line by line, and in the afternoon without such reading.' This compromise was of short duration. The friends of the ancient order, in yielding a part, paved the way for the loss of the whole, and, sustained by the current opinion, the entire service soon devolved on the choir, as now constituted." [MA/Beverly (1<sup>st</sup> Parish); Stone 1843, p. 255]

1764 – see n.d. (before 1764)

1764, 23 February: "Joseph Fletcher was chosen a deacon of the church, Feb. 23, 1764, and at the same meeting it was voted that 'Brother Abraham Kendall, Brother Josiah Blodgett and Brother Sam<sup>l</sup> Cumings be Queresters in y<sup>e</sup> Congregation.' These men probably were expected 'to set the tunes,'—for assistance in which a queer sort

of a wooden instrument, called a pitch-pipe, was used,—and also to lead the voices of the people in the singing. The ‘lining out of the psalm’ was generally done by the pastor or one of the deacons.” [MA/Dunstable; Nason 1877, p. 103]

1764, November: “SINGING, THE NEW WAY AND THE OLD WAY. ... In Dr. Linsley’s discourse on the one hundred and fifth anniversary of the Second Congregational Church in Greenwich, Conn. [Joel H. Linsley, *A Commemorative Discourse, delivered on the occasion of meeting for the last time in the old house of worship of the Second Congregational Church in Greenwich, December 5th, 1858* (New York: John A. Gray, 1860)], there is dated a noteworthy revolution in the mode of singing in that church, viz., November, 1764: ‘Voted to sing in the congregation without reading line by line.’” [CT/Greenwich; Singing/NEHGR 1888, p. 199]

n.d. + 1764-1789: “One of the deacons’ functions was to line out the psalm, or hymn, at a time when singing in the church was unaccompanied. ‘One of them read a single line, and such of the congregation as could sing, arose in different parts of the meetinghouse, and sung it [the rest of the congregation remaining seated?]; and then another line, till the Psalm was through.’ [footnote ascribing this quote to Joseph B. Felt’s *History of Ipswich, Essex, and Hamilton* (1834) + adding “When Nathaniel Whipple [deacon from 1764 to 1809] and John Patch [deacon from 1758 to 1789] served together [1764 to 1789], Deacon Whipple, remembered for his wig, set the hymn, and Deacon Patch lined it out.”] The Psalms were set to such simple hymn tunes as Oxford, Low Dutch, York, Windsor, Cambridge, and Martyrs.” [MA/The Hamlet→Hamilton; Pulsifer/Essex Institute 1976, p. 107]

1765, 10 November: “Was the first that we sang tate & brady’s spalms [*sic*] in Dorchester meeting. Som[e] people much offended at the same. [square brackets following are original, enclosing commentary on this diary entry] [What volumes are contained in the last line of the above extract, ‘Some people much offended at the same.’ A large part of the real improvements and advances of every age have passed through the same ordeal, whether in religion, law, social life or the mechanical arts; and the progress that is really made, is effected after encountering strong opposition. When the custom was changed from deaconing out the hymn, [p. 361] as it was called, in public worship, that is, reading line by line before singing, some of the worshippers in different parts of the country were so offended that they left their meetings, never to return, apparently unconscious that the custom was originally adopted because it was difficult to obtain books for all.]” [MA/Dorchester; Pierce/Dorchester 1859, p. 360]

“prior to” 1766 + ca. 1774: “The version of Psalms and Hymns, by Sternhold and Hopkins, was used in the church prior to 1766, each line of which was read separately by the deacons when sung. ... Singers were first seated about 1774, when the custom of giving out the line by the deacons was discontinued; and the church then voted, that Deacon Wheeler should lead in singing one half of the time, and the singers in the congregation the other half.” [MA/Concord; Shattuck 1835, p. 192]

1766 + 1781, November: "...Mr. [Rev. Jonas] Clarke...entered in his diary—'October 19, 1766, began to sing the new version of psalms, and Dr. Watts's hymns.' But the introduction of singing by the choir [*recte* the introduction of a chorister to lead the congregational singing? –see pp. 331, 332], and singing from the new psalm book, did not do away [with] the practice of lining the psalm. This continued some fifteen years longer. [new paragraph] In November, 1781, the church voted to dispense with reading the hymns by line in public worship, and chose Captain Daniel Harrington to lead the singing." [MA/Lexington; Hudson 1868, p. 333]

n.d. (between 1766 and 1782): "After Mr. John Kimball [1739-1817], subsequently deacon, came into town [which was probably in late 1765 or 1766; see Morrison + Sharples, Kimball genealogy, 1897, p. 159], some innovations were introduced. Being one of the singers, Mr. Kimball proposed to Rev. Mr. Walker [Timothy Walker, pastor of the Concord church from 1730 to his death in 1782] to dispense with the *lining* of the hymns, as it was called, on the Sabbath; but as Mr. Walker thought it not prudent to attempt it first on the Sabbath, it was arranged between them to make the change on Thanksgiving day. Accordingly, after a hymn had been given out, the leader, as usual, read two lines; the singers struck in, but, instead of stopping at the end of the two lines, kept on, drowning the voice of the leader, who persisted in his vocation of *lining* the hymn! This was the *first* change." [NH/Concord; Bouton 1856, p. 531]

n.d. (late 18<sup>th</sup> c.): "[description of lining out; then:] In this manner one hymn-book would answer for an entire congregation. Near the close of the past century the better verse of Dr. Watts was introduced, and the number of books is said to have been much increased and the constant repetition of St. Martin's, Mear, York, St. Ann's, Windham [←!], and a few other tunes, which gave little choice between the bold and cheerful major and the mournful and pathetic minor, was relieved by the introduction of many new musical compositions. [new paragraph] The introduction of this new music, more than any other cause, brought the practice of lining the hymns into disuse. Many of the new selections were more intricate in structure, and among them was a class of tunes, difficult of description, called fugues. ..." [NH/Rindge; Stearns 1875, p. 265]

1768 + 1774 + 1785 + "not long after" 1785: "1785. The singers begin to sit in the gallery facing the minister. Until 1768 'congregational singing' was the usage—one of the deacons 'lining the hymn.' From that date the singers sat together in pews assigned them on the floor of the house, the congregation still uniting with them in the service, and the deacons continuing to line the hymn. In 1774 the church voted 'to choose some of the brethren skilled in singing, to lead the church and congregation in the service of singing praise to God.' The first choristers chosen were Joseph Perkins, John Choate and Abraham Perkins. When the singers took their seats in the gallery this year, Watts'[s] Psalms and Hymns were introduced as a substitute for Prince's Bay Psalm-Book which had been in use before. Not long after [p. 235] this, Daniel Sanford taught a singing-school, and at the close of it,

introduced his pupils to the singers' seats. They were so numerous that they filled all the seats of the front gallery." [MA/Essex; Crowell 1868, pp. 234-235]

1769, May – see 1726, March

n.d. (probably before 1770): "In the year 1770, Watts's version of the Psalms, 'together with his Scripture hymns in the first and third books,' came into use as a collection of hymns for public worship. Previous to this the New England version had been in use, and the change to a new book was here, as generally elsewhere, attended with no little difficulty and opposition. The hymns were read, line by line, by one of the deacons; another set the tune, and the whole congregation joined. The same mode of singing was practised in most of our towns; and in them a like revolution took place about the same time." [MA/Grafton; Pierce 1879, p. 184]

n.d. (probably before 1770): "One reason [p. 531] urged by those who opposed the innovation [of regular singing] was, that many of the people had no psalm-books, and could not know what the choir was singing, unless it was read by the deacon. ... Dea. Ebenezer Pomeroy was an excellent reader, celebrated for the manner in which he 'Deaconed the Psalm,' line by line." [MA/Northampton; Trumbull 1902, pp. 530-531]

n.d. (probably 1770s): "At the east meeting-house [in Harpswell], Deacon Snow [Isaac Snow chosen deacon of Harpswell church at meeting of 2 August 1770 (p. 438)], who wore a white wig, sat under or in front of the pulpit, and 'lined out' the hymn, so that every man present might have an opportunity to sing. This was the common practice." [ME/Harpswell; Wheeler 1878, p. 213]

n.d. (probably 1770s): "The change [from the "old way" to choir-led regular singing] was not always made so easily as with us [in Farmington, Conn.]. In some churches the deacons persisted in lining out the psalm; but the new singers having once got well under way with the first line, kept straight on with the rest of the psalm, carrying everything before them like a whirlwind and leaving the deacon in hopeless despair. But not always. We read of one deacon who sat down in grim silence, biding his time, and when the young people had finished their musical antics, arose, and with trumpet tones which rang through the house, announced 'Now let the people of the Lord sing.' And they did it, though for the last [p. 22] time, in the good old way." [CT/Farmington, though barely; Gay 1891, pp. 21-22]

n.d. (apparently 1770s or 1780s): "At what time a change was made from singing by the congregation to a choir in Oxford does not appear, but previously some one had been chosen to line the hymn when it was sung. [new paragraph] Before the Revolution the hymns were 'lined,' the clerk of the church standing in front of the pulpit reading a line and the congregation singing it, and then reading another, and so on through the hymn." [MA/Oxford; Freeland 1894, p. 300]



n.d. + 1770 + 1780: "The customs in singing prevailing in other parts of New England were observed in the [Connecticut River] Valley. The psalms and hymns were lined or deaconed. The minister read the psalm or hymn to be sung, then the deacon or leader named the tune, gave the pitch and read [or sang?] line by line for the congregation to sing after him. The advent of the singing school, which developed the choir, and the multiplication of music and hymn books were the chief causes for the passing of this unmusical practice. It must also be acknowledged that 'the repeating tunes,' as the fugues [fuging tunes] were sometimes called, aided this reform. When the choir was struggling with the entangled measures of 'a repeating tune,' the reading but added another voice to the confusion. The good deacon would have been required to practise vocal jugglery and speak parts of two or three lines at the same time. There is record at Northfield [MA], in 1770, that 'hereafter the singers shall sing altogether without the deacon's reading the psalm line by line, except at the Lord's table.' Ten years later Brimfield [MA] omitted the reading at one of the two Sunday services. This [p. 27] custom lingered in some churches longer than in others, as musical development was unequal then as now." [MA/Northfield + Brimfield; Burnham 1901, pp. 26-27]

1770, 11 January, 4 March: "Jan[.] 11, 1770, The town voted, 'That hereafter the singers shall sing altogether without the deacon's reading the psalm line by line, except at the Lord's table, when the deacon is to read, and at no other time; this to begin the first Sabbath in March next.' [new paragraph] At the same meeting it was voted [likely not coincidentally] to choose a committee to make the hind seats in the front gallery into four pews for the convenient seating of the singers." [MA/Northfield; Temple & Sheldon 1875, p. 318]

1770, March – see 1726, March

"At the March meeting in 1770 Lemuel Richards, Joseph Fisher, and Asa Richards were chosen to tune the psalms for the year ensuing. A little later the singers were seated in the front gallery in the meeting-house, and only one person was appointed to tune the psalms. We can easily imagine Joseph Fisher standing, perhaps on the pulpit stairs, with a pitch-pipe in hand, 'tuning the psalms.' He reads two lines, adjusts his voice, and then the congregation 'joins in the arduous pursuit.' In this way the whole psalm is sung." [MA/Dover; Smith 1897, p. 180]

1770, 21 June: "'At a church meeting held in Hardwick at the meeting-house, June 21, 1770, voted, with respect to the present method of singing in public worship, that one half of the portion that shall be sung shall be read, line by line, as has been the former practice in this Congregation, sung in some old tune; that [p. 186] the other half shall be sung without being thus read in some new tune; that the psalm or hymn that shall be appointed to be sung at the Communion Table shall be read, line by line, and sung in some old tune, so called.' The change, thus partially made, became entire at a later period; but it was exceedingly disagreeable to many, and of some it is said they would leave the meeting-house while psalms or hymns were

sung without having been read, line by line, and return after this offensive exercise was concluded.” [MA/Hardwick; Paige 1883, pp. 185-186]

1771: “During the stillness [after the opening prayer] [Rev.] Mr. [Rowland] Thacher [1710-1775] appears again [in the pulpit] and announces a psalm to be sung. There are not many psalm books in the house, there is no choir and but little knowledge of music. But there is Deacon William Blackmer [1708-1791], of Blackmer’s Pond, who has a strong voice, and for that reason has been appointed to read and tune the psalms in meeting. He stands on the pulpit stairs with a pine pitch-pipe in hand. He blows the key-note, recites two lines of the psalm, adjusts his voice, which is somewhat raspy by reason of too many shoutings to his oxen yesterday, and then he starts away. The congregation joins in an arduous pursuit. It lags behind, its tones are dreadfully discordant. Some dogs sitting in the alleys utter cries of distress, and Mr. Thacher’s collie, lying at the pulpit door, howls patheti- [p. 132] cally at the music. But Deacon Blackmer, as in duty bound, keeps on his winding way, by turns reciting and starting, until all the psalm is worked off; and the congregation then relapses into quiet.” [note: this is an imagining, albeit supported with historical detail] [MA/Wareham; Bliss 1889, pp. 131-132]

1771 + 1789: “In the early days, when printed books were scarce, it was the custom, after the minister gave out the hymn, for him—or for the precentor, as he was designated in the Church of England hierarchy, here called chorister—to read the psalm line by line to the congregation, which then sang it. In Lincoln this practice was discontinued in 1789; but, eighteen years earlier, in 1771, forty-two persons ‘who had attained a good understanding in the rules of singing’ were, by vote of the town, seated together as a choir on the lower floor.” [note: Lincoln town meeting records, 4 March 1771, name 25 men + 16 women—a total of 41 persons, not 42—as being allowed to sit in the singers’ seats in the gallery—not on the lower floor; this info. from my own notes, taken in consultation of Lincoln town meeting + church records] [MA/Lincoln; Lincoln 1905, p. 51]

1771 – see 1729

1771, 27 June + 1778: “On the 27th of June [a few months after voting to use Brady + Tate, with Watts supplement] the church, ‘that we might have peace and harmony, . . . condescended that the Congregation, males of ye age of 21 years [+ older, surely], might have liberty’ to vote [likely along with the Church] in the choice of [singing] leaders; and accordingly they proceeded to the radical step of electing four leaders to conduct the singing. [new paragraph] This is the second step, and an important one, in the history of the musical contest. The first was taken forty years before, and has been already mentioned [Rev. Parkman vs. Thomas Forbush + much of the town, 1730-31; see RS/OW 1730, 7 September + 1731, February]. That was the adoption of the use of a greater variety of tunes, and of written music; since that time the psalm had been read, or ‘lined out,’ one line at a time, and the people had sung as best they could, but without much regard to time or melody. The present change was the entering wedge of the much greater innovation which in due time

introduced the choir. The adoption of the Tate and Brady version of the psalms...was an improvement in the quality of the psalmody; and the introduction of some of Watts's hymns was a much greater step in advance. But the most radical innovation of all was the appointment of four 'leaders.' It led in time to the disuse of the old custom of lining out, dear to the soul of many a deacon and clerk, and gallantly fought for in many a meeting-house in those days. The same step had been taken in Worcester the year before, and was part of a very general movement growing out of the increasing instruction and intelligence on the subject. [p. 157] These four men were to sit together and lead off in the singing. It was not long before they and some others grew extremely tired of waiting after the singing of every line for the clerk to read the next; so it came to pass that the next thing desired by the party of progress was the dispensing with the function of reader. It was achieved, however, as so many things are, by indirection. It was seven years afterward that the first choir appeared in the Westborough meeting-house..." [MA/Westborough; Deforest 1891, pp. 156-157]

1772: "The early practice was for the leader to read a line of the psalm, which was taken up by the choir and sung. This finished, he read another line, and again the sacred tune took up its sonorous burden, and so on through the composition. It was not until the year 1772 that the society voted 'that the singing in public on the Sabbath in the afternoon be without reading line by line.' Several other votes about this time were for the purpose of 'encouraging psalmody among us.'" [CT/East Hartford; Goodwin 1879, p. 132]

"In 1772, it was voted that the singing in public on the Sabbath afternoon be without reading line by line. It seems probable that this was the first serious attempt to improve the singing." [CT/East Hartford; East Hartford 1902, p. 45]

1772-1773: "[after evident congregational displeasure about singing "by rule":] There were doubtless wise men among them [the members of the society of the North (Scantic) Parish in Windsor], who, as soon as they perceived what testy folks singers were, resolved to let them have their own way, either to sing in unison, or each one 'on their own hook,'—merely insisting upon the following regulation, which should be in force for one year: [new paragraph, smaller type:] '*Voted*, To sing in the congregation without reading line by line, a part of the time, not exceeding one-half, until the next annual meeting of the society.' [new paragraph, regular type:] At the next annual meeting it was [new paragraph, smaller type:] '*Voted*, To continue the singing in the congregation, as agreed upon at the last meeting.'" [CT/Windsor; Stiles 1891, vol. I, p. 605]

1773 – see 1726, March

ca. 1774: "The singers were first 'seated' about 1774, when the custom of lining ceased and the church voted that Deacon Wheeler should lead the singing one half the time and the singers in the gallery the other." [MA/Concord; Hudson 1904, vol. I, p. 250]

ca. 1774 – see “prior to” 1766

1774 – see n.d. (before 1764)

1774 – see 1768

1774 and later: “This method [of lining out by a deacon] appears to have been in use until 1774, when we find the choristers were annually appointed in regular town meetings.” [CT/Norfolk; Roys 1847, p. 31]

1774 or later: “The custom of ‘lining out’ or reading each line of the psalm before it was sung was followed until 1774 if not later. It was abolished in the White Haven church in that year.” [CT/New Haven; Blake 1898, p. 109]

n.d. (probably 1774 through end of 18<sup>th</sup> c.): “The people in general were not furnished with hymn books, in those days. The hymns were ‘deaconed out,’ that is, after the minister read the hymn, one of the deacons repeated the first two lines; the choir, or the whole congregation sung them; in the same way, the next two lines were repeated and sung, and so on through the hymn.” [First Church of Christ in Hubbardston organized 1770; meetinghouse built 1773-1774; worship services in meetinghouse probably as early as August 1774] [MA/Hubbardston; Stowe 1881, p. 83]

n.d. (before Revolutionary War): “...the deacons’ seats were slightly elevated. These men of distinction sat facing the people, and apart from their families. This custom originated from their duties of ‘Deaconing’ off the hymns, and lasted long after that service was abandoned.” [MA/Bedford; Brown 1891, p. 54]

1775: “The Rev. Mr. [Amos] Adams was the pastor then. Deacon Crafts, grandfather of Mr. E. Crafts of Roxbury, used to read aloud one verse at a time of the psalm or hymn, which the choir would sing, and then wait till he had read another. **[note: lining out + choir singing combined]** [new paragraph] Hymn-books were not in general use; they were, some time after, in the pews of the wealthy part of the congregation.” [MA/Roxbury; [Fox] 1838, p. 19]

1775: “Ebenezer Fox [1763-1843], a Roxbury lad, has furnished this reminiscence of the music of this old meeting house [Roxbury’s First Church] in 1775. ‘Deacon Crafts used to read aloud one verse at a time of the psalm or hymn, which the choir would sing, and then wait till he had read another. Hymn books were not in general use; they were, some time after, in the pews of the wealthy.’” [MA/Roxbury; Thwing 1908, p. 339] [Fox’s original account (*The Revolutionary Adventures of Ebenezer Fox, of Roxbury, Massachusetts* [Boston: Munroe and Francis, 1838], p. 19n) begins “The Rev. Mr. Adams was the pastor then,” and Amos Adams left the ministry in Roxbury in 1775]

1775, 22 March + n.d. (probably mid- and late 1780s): ““1775, March 22. The parish voted to sing Watts’s Psalms and Hymns for the future.” I shall never forget, when a child, the solemn tone of the Rev. (then a Deacon of my father’s church,) Jacob Emerson, with his large white wig, who read the hymn, line by line; for although “the Parish voted,” it would appear that the singers, with Mr. Brown, who officiated as Chorister some forty years, I believe, had no copies.[’]” [John Prentiss, b. 1778, quoting from the diary of his father Rev. Caleb Prentiss (minister at Reading 1769-1803), then commenting further] [MA/Reading; Reading 1844, p. 120]

n.d. (probably mid- and late 1780s) – see 1775, 22 March

1776, March + “long after 1776”: “Lining out the psalm.—South Hadley voted, March, 1776, that singing should be carried on in the afternoon of the Sabbath, without reading; that is, without reading the psalm line by line. The old way was not then changed in the forenoon, and it was continued when the sacrament was administered long after 1776. In many places, the practice of doling out the psalm a line or two at a time, was not given up, without much heat and contention.” [footnote from the end of this passage about John Stickney coming to the area “as a teacher of music” ca. 1765] [MA/Hadley; Judd 1863, p. 409]

“4 June, 1776. Then Voted that the Last Singing on each Sabbath may be performed without the Psalm being re[a]d line by line until the Next Anuel Society Meeting.” [CT/Harwinton; Ecclesiastical Society Records, Book I, quoted in Chipman 1860, p. 112]

n.d. (after 1776): “1726. The Ratio Disciplinæ [*Ratio Disciplinæ Fratrum Nov-Anglorum. A Faithful Account of the Discipline Professed and Practised; in the Churches of New-England*, 1726] says, ‘Ordinarily, the psalm is read line after line, by him whom the pastor desires to do that service, and the people generally sing in such grave tunes, as are most usual in the church of our nation.’ This mode of reading each line, continued over a half century afterwards.” [MA/Salem; Felt 1849, p. 623]

“long after 1776” – see 1776, March

1778 – see 1771, 27 June

1779, 5 August – see 1726, March

1780: “...a far more violent and determined resistance [than to the seating together of the singers] was offered to the more serious innovation of singing without ‘lining.’ [new paragraph] This took place in 1780. The singers had applied for permission to occupy the front seat in the gallery; with a view, doubtless, of performing the service of singing as a choir, as a substitute for the general and promiscuous singing by the congregation. The permission was granted: and the choir, not stopping for the deacon to read the line, drowned his voice when he attempted it; greatly

scandalizing him in his sacred office, and giving mortal offence to many by such an unholy usurpation. Many persons left the meeting-house in disgust: good Mr. K. and his wife were among the number; and they consoled themselves in the assurance, which they pretty audibly expressed in the hearing of the congregation, that, 'when Col. W. got home from the General Court, he would put a stop to such scandalous doings.' Unfortunately for them, the gentleman referred to had become familiar with the change in Boston, and approved it; and it was found that revolutions in psalm-singing, any more than in more worldly affairs, never go backwards."  
[MA/Leicester; Washburn 1860, p. 109]

1780: "The Puritan mode of singing hymns line by line as called out by the pastor or deacon was replaced by singing in unison [?] by a vote of the town in 1780...."  
[NH/Keene; Proper 1973, p. 41]

1780 – see n.d. (before 1764)

1780 – see n.d. + 1770

"between 1780 and 1790" + 1781: "The custom of 'lining off' continued here till between 1780 and 1790.... It went silently out when *Watts's Psalms and Hymns* came in. In 1781 the parish voted, "The singers shall sing half the time by reading one line, and half the time by reading two lines." [MA/Randolph; Randolph 1881, p. 93 (from "History of the Psalms and Hymns and Music of the First Church of Randolph" by Rev. Asa Mann)]

"On March 7, 1780, the town voted 'that the singing in public worship be performed without reading line by line as they sing.'" [NH/Keene; Keene 1968, p. 614]

"April 4, 1780. The Chh. being convened at my house pass<sup>d</sup> the following votes viz: ... [p. 719] 6 that we will sing half y<sup>e</sup> tune [*recte* time?] with reading."  
[MA/Greenfield; Thompson 1904, vol. II, pp. 718-719; quoted from Rev. Roger Newton's diary]

1780, 8 August and "a few sabbaths past": [Ezra Barker to Solomon Warriner, 8 August 1780:] "Sir - / A few sabbaths past I was very early at the Meeting House. Soon after I arrived, one Informed me that it was proposed to spend part of the Intermission Season at noon in the exercise of singing of Psalms. My heart rejoiced at the tidings, provided it might be performed with a Religious design, and in a decent manner. I was in hopes it might serve greatly to prevent a great deal of needless, (and I may venture to say wicked) conversation on Sabbath-day noons, which is too much the practice in this degenerate day, Alas!—I waited awhile after the forenoon exercise was over, and seeing no motion made toward the proposed singing, I did not know but the report I received in the morning was a mistake. But just before the time of the afternoon exercise as I sat on my seat abroad at the east side of the Meeting House, I heard the sounding of Notes within the House. I suddenly arose meaning to join in that desirable exercise of singing of Praise to our

Maker and Redeemer. But as I was almost stepping into the House, my Heart sunk within me finding myself disappointed, for I soon perceived that I could have no part or lot in the matter, unless it were to be amused only with sounds of some new adopted Tune, at the same time my Understanding remained unfruitfull for want of knowing the matter sung. I soon returned to the seat from whence I arose, thinking it more my duty to Meditate upon the sermon delivered in the forenoon, than to attend upon such a method of carrying an end on the Holy Sabbath day—But to my grief I speak it, Just so of late in the Time of our Social Worship, I, and more than three quarters of a large congregation are deprived of bearing a part in that solemn Worship viz.—that part of singing Gods praise, and all for want of having the Psalm read line by line. Perhaps the reply may be, They do so in other places, and people should bring books. Answer—We may not follow a multitude to do evil, and it is impossible for all to get Books; and if all had Books, they could not all be benefitted by them, some being old and dim-sighted, others young and not versed enough in reading to keep pace while singing, yet each and all of so competent an understanding as to be edified if they would be faithfull to attend, and could be favoured with having each line read. It is true some have not voices to sing, but it is our duty to sing in Heart with the Understanding as well as with our voices if we would find acceptance with our God. I think each one of the Assembly ought to have the Priviledge of joining in such manner as they are capable. This I presume no serious person will deny. Upon the whole, the way and manner of singing in our Assembly of late, is highly inconsistant with social worship, nor do I think it agreeable to the Institution, or acceptable in the sight of God. Besides, some of the Tunes made use of are so airy and lite that one at a distance would be apt to imagine that a merry company had got together for singing and Dancing, they being in no way adapted to the gravity of the verse. This was a thing which much grieved good Dea[con Nathaniel] Warriner [who had died on 10 January of that year] and caused him to take his hat and go out several times. But to return to singing without reading, when I consider how many are deprived of bearing their part, I cannot but be of Opinion (and I am not alone in the Opinion) that it would in some good measure be as justifiable for our ministers to set up Preaching & Praying in the Latin or some unknown tongue, as to sing without reading. In that case we might be entertained with a smooth voice, but our understanding remain barren & unfruitful—Upon the whole the Practice is not Right let who will recommend it, or encourage it. We have been wont to cry out against Separates, but this I think is a new way of separating. And [p. 2] I could wish it may not too much resemble an abomination which will bring on a Desolation—And were it not that I am so exceedingly pleased and entertained with the performances from the pulpit each sabbath [sarcasm here?], I should be almost tempted to tarry at home, and read my Bible. [new paragraph] As to singing at noon betwix[t] meetings I would not be understood to disapprove of it entirely, but should be glad to have it performed differently viz—to being a little sooner and let the Psalm be read line by line while singing. If a little christian conversation were added, doubtless it might be profitable, the whole performed with seriousness, having a single eye to the glory of God, & mutual edification, the whole completed and finished before the minister comes in for the afternoon exercise. But how grating think ye it must be to a serious mind, to observe a long

Intermission spent away in conversation about the world & anything that comes uppermost (and upon Gods Holy Sabbath day too) and just before afternoon service slip into God's House and go to singing and continue some time after the Minister is come; at the same time the big[g]er part only amused with a noise—I dont say what this resembles. But this I will venture to say; that I wish that we all could avoid worldly conversation more than is practiced at this day— [new paragraph] But before I close, I cannot but make some remarks upon what I and some others have observed for several years past. To pass over many things which ought to be lamented, such as sabbath-breaking, extortion, profane speaking, &c &c &c The following hath been taken notice of viz—A running into new modes & novels not only in Dress, but in the performance of Divine Worship; such as singers sitting together out of their proper place according to decency—often shifting of Tunes, throwing by good old grave & solid Tunes, for new and more airy & light merry Tunes, &c. So that by little & little that part of worship is performed but by a few. These things have been remarked as a sure sign that religion was going to decay. While these things have increased, Pure Gospel Religion hath abundantly decreased. It not only happens in this town, but in towns all around us, and unless a speedy and universal Reformation takes place, we may not expect that Gods Publick Judgments will be taken away[.] If war should cease, God hath other Judgments in store to punish a wicked & backsliding people. According to what we read we have great reason to fear that unless we are Reformed we shall be destroyed. [new paragraph] The reason of my directing this to you S[i]r, is because I understand you at present give the lead to the singing—and as I think I sincerely desire that our Publick Worship might be performed to the Honour and Glory of God, and our mutual edification, so I hope you will accept it as wrote with that design. You are at Liberty in a prudent way to communicate it to any whom it may more immediately concern. Perhaps some may make lite of it, and misimprove it; they must answer for that and not I. [new paragraph] Inasmuch as I have for a number of years had the care of youth & children under my instruction I write the more freely. And yourself being one of the number, you may remember as well as all others whom I have instructed can testify, that I have not only industriously endeavoured to learn you the art of Reading, but also have endeavoured to instil[l] good Principles as your abilities would admit, and to teach each one his duty both toward God & man. And I cannot but have a peculiar regard for every one I have had the charge of. And I think my heart would rejoice to have a general Reformation take place in this Town and especially among our young men and women and children. If we could be bles[s]ed with the outpourings of God's Spirit [p. 3] in such abundance as I have been [*recte* seen?] evidence to in some Towns since my remembrance, I say if this could be our happy case, the cry among us would not be, how did you like the new tune to-day, but the cry would be, Men & Brethren, what must I do to be saved. [new paragraph] My Friend, What if you should endeavour to promote & set up a meeting for Prayer among those of your age about once a week or once a Fortnight—Who knows but God might hear & pour out of his Spirit and cause a stirring among the dry bones. I am persuaded that we should in that case be less carried away with modes & outward ceremonies in Worship, and be more concerned to be Born again, to become new creatures, to get our peace made with God, to get an Interest in the



merits of Jesus Christ, to be made holy & heart & life, and be made meet for an inheritance with the saints in light, where we may ever sing praise to Him who sitteth on the Throne, and shall stand in no need of these modes & ceremonies for our assistance, and where Jargon & Discord will never be permitted to enter—Amen. I have run out to a greater length than I designed when I began—if it shall prove beneficial I shall not repent—this I must leave to Him who alonce [*sic*] can give a blessing.—I subscribe your real Friend / Ezra Barker / Wilbraham, Aug<sup>t</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> 1780 / Religion governed by fashion, is not true Religion. / When the Tune chiefly is aimed at, and the matter sung disregarded, we become guilty of Idolatry. / In Prov. 24, 21 I read, My son fear thou the Lord and meddle not with them that are given to change.” [MA/Wilbraham; Barker 1780, entire]

soon after 1780 – see n.d. (before 1764)

1781 – see “between 1780 and 1790”

1781, 19 October + 1786 + 1789, 19 October: “The common method of conducting the service of song was congregational, until 1786. One of the deacons read a line at a time. Lining a hymn, or deaconing it, was the common name given to this fashion. 1781, October 19, the church voted that an advisory address be presented to the singers, the purport of which is ‘that the Psalm to be sung be read, line by line, in the forenoon, but not in the afternoon.... [new paragraph] ... The town went beyond the church, voting, 1789, October 19, that the singers, for the future, shall sing without reading.” [MA/Brimfield; Hyde 1879, p. 128]

1781, November – see 1766

“beyond 1781”: “The custom of lining off held its way in this Church, as in Braintree, till beyond 1781.” [MA/Randolph + Braintree; Randolph 1881, p. 90 (from “History of the Psalms and Hymns and Music of the First Church of Randolph” by Rev. Asa Mann)]

1782, 13 May: “...also voted That those that Lead in Singing in Said Society Sit in y<sup>e</sup> meeting house where They think most Convenient to Sing[;] also voted that y<sup>e</sup> Choeristers Set Such tunes as they think Proper according to y<sup>e</sup> meetors Propounded[;] also voted not to Read y<sup>e</sup> Psalm Line by Line[;] also voted to finish y<sup>e</sup> front Seat in y<sup>e</sup> Gallery[;] also voted a farthing on y<sup>e</sup> Pound to Defray y<sup>e</sup> Charges[;] also voted to Chuse m<sup>r</sup> Isaac Owen J<sup>r</sup> Sam<sup>l</sup> [*sic*] Forward Thomas Stevens J<sup>r</sup> Roswel Skinner and Jesse Forward To be Choiristers...” [CT/East Granby; quoted in Turkey Hills 1901, p. 48]

ca. 1783-1784: “At about this time it was [new paragraph, smaller type:] [‘]Voted that Capt. Daniel Chute and Capt. Joseph Poor be desired to read the Psalm or Hymn which may be sung on Lord’s Day or on other Days except on the last time singing on said Days, when Dea. [p. 160] Searl is absent also that they be desired to set in the Pew by the Pulpit.[’] [regular type:] We may suppose that hymn-books were not

generally owned, and that the custom of deaconing the hymns, that is, giving them out by the deacons line by line still continued, and that good Deacon Searle could not always be at 'meeting' because of the infirmities of age, and so these two worthy Captains were requested when he was absent to sit in the deacons' pew and officiate in his place, one probably in the morning and the other in the afternoon."  
[MA/Byfield (Byfield Parish of Newbury); Ewell 1904, pp. 159-160]

n.d. (probably early 1783) + 1783, 18 March + 1789, March + n.d. ("not long afterward," i.e., after 1789, March): "...these innovations [new text version, new tunes, new tuners of psalm] were followed by another, that met with open opposition. A town meeting was held, March 18, 1783, to see if the town would pass a vote to sing a new tune the last time on every Sunday, without reading line by line, as recommended by the late Dr. Watts: But this was voted in the negative. About this time, however, the experiment was actually made. The exact date is not known—whether it was after this town meeting and in disregard of the vote passed, or, which is more probable, before the meeting, and that called in consequence. [new paragraph] During the Sabbath on which the innovation was attempted, the exercises in the house of worship appear to have been performed as usual, till the last psalm or hymn was read by the pastor. Then, instead of waiting for the deacons to read it again, line by line, the leader named the tune and the singing was immediately commenced. This was too much to be borne with patience. One venerable man, who had several years before passed the age of three score and ten, and who had for many years been a consistent member of the church, rose from his seat and turning towards the minister, said, 'Reverend sir, [p. 414] do you allow of all this?' Another man, a few years younger, with less reverence, called out to the singers: 'You make a worse noise than the wolves did forty years ago.' A third speaker, also aged, in grief at what he regarded as a desecration of the place, gave vent to his feelings thus: 'I deont wait to hear sich a neoise in the heouse of Gad.' A fourth man was affected still more unpleasantly. He had before this sometimes shown signs of partial derangement. Excitement on this occasion produced such a state, that he called out with earnestness: 'Toll the bell, ye devils! *toll the bell!*' The experiment in singing failed, and the meeting closed in disorder. The most aged of the men mentioned, on reflection, regretted the part he had acted, and the next day, went voluntarily to a magistrate and complained of himself for breaking the peace. [new paragraph] The old order of things was continued a few years longer; but a change was again proposed in March, 1789, when it was voted 'to have some new tune sung in the Meeting-house in time of publick worship, once every Sabbath, without reading line by line.' The change was then made without producing any disturbance in the community. Not long afterward, the lining of the psalm ceased entirely, and it is now known only as a relic of the past." [NH/Hampton; Dow 1893, vol. I, pp. 413-414]

1783, 18 March – see n.d. (probably early 1783)

"April 22:<sup>d</sup> 1784 A Church-Meeting being called To know what Measures the Church will pursue, to render the Music performed as part of divine Worship as

agre[e]able and edifying as may be ----- Voted. That the Reading of the Psalm in the Meeting-House, in the time of public Worship, by the Deacons be omitted for the first time of singing in the forenoon, and the last time in the afternoon, till further Order from the Church..." [MA/Lincoln; church records, transcription by NC, probably 1992]

ca. 1785: "The custom of 'lining the psalm' continued for a long time after the organization of a choir; but it was very annoying to them. It ceased about 1785, and on [*sic*] this wise: Old Deacon Brown, who as senior deacon had the right to perform the service, was rather slow in his movements, and had the habit of adjusting his glasses and clearing his throat before beginning to read. At the date in question, [p. 338] Col. David Brewer was chosen chorister. Taking advantage of the Deacon's well known habit, on the first Sabbath of his leadership, the Colonel (acting no doubt on a previous understanding with his choir) struck in singing so quick after [Rev.] Mr. [David] Kellogg had finished reading, that the Deacon had no chance to begin his work. He looked up in amazement—and so did a great many others in the congregation. After that, there was no more attempt to 'deacon the hymn.'" [MA/Framingham; Temple 1887, pp. 337-338]

1785 + ca. 1790: "1785. The parish desire the singers, both male and female, to sit in the gallery, and will allow them to sing once, upon each Lord's day, without reading by the deacon. [p. 93, new paragraph] About 1790, the *lining* out the psalm or hymn, by the deacons, was wholly discontinued." [This is the Second Church in Rowley.] [MA/Rowley; Gage 1840, pp. 93-94]

1785 – see 1768

1785, 24 August + 1786, 12 March, 4 September + 1787, 17 October + 1788, 25 September: "One difficult matter, which required all the abundant tact of Mr. [Rev. Joseph] Avery to manage, was the change which came in the latter part of the eighteenth century in respect to church music, and other elements of public worship. To place the following records in order will show with sufficient distinctness the gradual modification of sentiment. [indented] '1785 Aug<sup>st</sup> 24<sup>th</sup> At a Chh meeting appointed to consult what is proper to be done relative to singing in the publick worship of God— Voted 1 / that Dea. Haven set such tunes as he shall think fit & proper—omitting for the present those tunes which are found particularly disagreeable to a number of the Chh—& to sing by reading of two Lines of y<sup>e</sup> psalm. 2 / The Question was put whether the reading of the psalm be omitted at the last time of singing on every Sabbath 11 Votes for & 11 against it.—' '1786 March 12. Voted that the Singers be desired to sing such tunes as may be sung with reading two Lines only, at those times of singing which immediately precede the sermons & the Chh will acquiesce in their singing without reading at the beginning of the exercises, & the last time in the afternoon—& further that this be continued till tis otherwise signified to them by the Chh. or Town, or each of them.' [p. 95] '1786 Sept.<sup>r</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> at a Chh. meeting—Voted 1 / to signify to the Singers that the Chh desire that all such of them, as are able to lead in the Singing, would do it as occasion

may require— 2 / that 'tis the earnest request of the Chh that the Singers would omit the singing of Milford & Hart[ford] [←square brackets in source] & in Tunes that are repeated, that, if it may be, they would omit the Repeats till the last time of going over the tune.' '1787 Oct.<sup>r</sup> 17. The Chh met. 1 / put to vote whether the Chh will make any alterations as to the present mode of singing. [new line] eight votes for, & eight against it—' '1788 Sept.<sup>r</sup> 25 at a Chh meeting Voted 1 / that the Chh acquiesce in having the Singing carried on in the publick worship, without having the psalm read by the Deacons any part of the day.— 2 / that if a bible, with explanations of the scriptures, shall be procur'd,—that a portion out of the same may be read in lieu of the singing at the beginning of the exercises that part of the year when 'tis usual to sing five times in a day.—' [MA/Holden; Estes 1894, pp. 94-95] [These church votes should be considered in tandem with Rev. Avery's later correspondence with parishioners Rice + Smith; see RS/OW 1791 + 1794; also note that on 13 October 1787, four days before one of these votes, Rev. Avery wrote to Rice asking him to attend the next Church meeting, "that they may hear from you the reasons of your absenting yourself from special ordinances" (photocopy of this letter with copies of later letters).]

"not long after" 1785 – see 1768

"'1786 To see if the town will choose one or more persons to assist Capt. Russell in pitching the tune. Also to see if the town will vote that singing shall be performed a part or all of the time without reading the psalm. Voted that Capt. Stephen Russell be assisted by Joseph B. Varnum, Moses Nowel and Joshua Bradley in setting the psalm. Also that singing be performed in the afternoon without reading the psalm.'" [MA/Dracut; Coburn 1922, p. 192]

1786 – see 1781, 19 October

1786, 25 January: "The Second Parish...'voted & chose Mr. John Chaney Jun<sup>r</sup> to lead in Singing in Publick Worship.' [new paragraph] This is the only reference to music on the records of the Second Parish; but it would seem from those of the church, that the practice of 'lining out' the hymns had not yet been abandoned." [MA/Dunstable; Nason 1877, p. 145]

1786, 12 March – see 1785, 24 August

1786, 17 April, 5 July: "At a meeting held April 17, ...the church [of the First Parish, Brunswick]...considered in regard to the new mode of singing adopted at the east end of the town, and it was voted that the psalms and hymns should be read by the deacons, *i.e.*, line by line, until all had had time to furnish themselves with books. Charles Thomas was chosen chorister at the east end, and John Dunning at the west end of the town, with liberty to appoint their own assistants. [new paragraph] At a meeting held July 5, there was a pretty warm discussion in regard to the mode of singing. After a while the discussion turned upon the question whether the church

was Congregational or Presbyterian. The meeting closed without settling the point.” [ME/Brunswick; Wheeler 1878, p. 370]

1787: “For many years one of the deacons, who sat in the chairs on either side of the communion table, would rise and read a line of the hymn to be sung; then the singers would chant it. The deacon would then read a second line again followed by the chant, and so on to the end of the hymn. In 1787, however, perhaps due to the influence of singing schools which were beginning to appear, the proposal was advanced that the hymns be sung verse by verse without reading. Now religion has always been the most conservative of institutions, and any innovation, however sensible, meets with resistance. So in the matter of singing. But it was finally agreed that singing in the morning should continue line by line, and in the afternoon verse by verse. Eventually the verse system won out as being the more sensible and pleasing and in line with custom everywhere.” [ME/Kennebunk; Freeman 1952, p. 32]

“In 1787 the manner of singing was changed. ... The town at that time ... [new paragraph, smaller type:] Voted to sing a Verse at a time, once in the forenoon and once in the afternoon after exercises.” [NH/Jaffrey; Cutter 1881, p. 154]

1787: “*Sunday, July 8.* Attended public worship this morning at the new brick Presbyterian Church [in New York City, where Cutler was visiting]. ... I was particularly pleased with the singing. Around the large pillar which supports the pulpit is a very large circular pew, appropriated to the Wardens of the church and the Chorister. In the front of this pew is a little desk, considerably elevated. When the Psalm is read, the Chorister steps up into this desk and sings the first line. He is then joined in the second line by the whole congregation—men, women, and children seemed all to sing, almost [p. 233] without exception. The airs of the tunes were sprightly, though not very quick; the singing, notwithstanding it was performed by such a mixed multitude, was soft, musical, and solemn, and the time well preserved. There is an Orchestra, but no Organ. The public service was introduced by a short prayer, reading the Scriptures, and then singing; but instead of singing before sermon, they sing in the morning, as well as afternoon, after the last prayer.” [NY/New York City; Cutler 1888, vol. I, pp. 232-233]

1787, 17 October – see 1785, 24 August

n.d. + 1787, 22 November: “The mode of singing in all the churches of New England, previously to the present century, was very uniform. The custom had been for one of the deacons to read a line, which would be sung; then another, which would be sung, and so on to the end of the hymn. Such was the usage in both the churches of Wells, all the congregation uniting. But in 1787, the people of the Second Parish presented a petition to the Society, that some new action might be taken in regard to the singing; that they would determine whether they would have the psalm read, or whether it should be sung without reading. On this petition it was ‘voted Act Quias [acquiesce?] with the vote in the church the 22d of Nov. instant; that is, to sing the

Fore Noon with Reading Line by Line. The Afternoon Vears [verse] by Vears.”  
[ME/Wells; Bourne 1875, p. 625]

1788 – see n.d. (ca. 1759-1789)

1788, 25 September – see 1785, 24 August

“From between 1788 and 1792 the congregational singing of the Psalms led by a precentor was changed and at Town Meeting it was voted to introduce Watts’s hymns. Then a choir of the young people were given seats in the gallery of the church. This innovation, a great offense to the conservatives, was the beginning of a division in the established church of Peterborough.” [NH/Peterborough; Morison 1954, p. 160]

1789 – see n.d. (ca. 1759-1789)

1789 – see 1771

1789, March – see n.d. (probably early 1783)

n.d. (“not long afterward,” i.e., after 1789, March) – see n.d. (probably early 1783)

1789, 6 May: “There seems to have been a compromise between the progressives and the conservatives about deaconing the Psalm; for at a meeting May 6, 1789; there was a committee chosen, consisting of Capt. [Amos] Emerson [who served as chorister for awhile], Capt. Towle, Lieut. John Dearborn, Maj. Dearborn and Stephen Morse, to consult with the singers and report. The result was, that in the forenoon the Psalm was to be sung without reading; twice in the afternoon to be read two lines at a time, and once sung without reading. Dea. John Webster and Dea. Joseph Dearborn were chosen to read the Psalm. [new paragraph] ‘Voted, That the Singers Shall Lead the Singing, and other people Join with them as they think fit; and that the Singers shall appoint a man to pitch the tune among themselves.’” [NH/Chester; Chase 1869, p. 324]

1789, 19 October – see 1781, 19 October

1789, 22 October: “At a meeting of the church on the 22d of October, Elijah Robbins and Zebedee Kendall were chosen deacons. It was then voted that ‘Brother Zebedee Kendall shall Read the Psalm—a Vars at a time,’ also that he, together with Abraham and Jacob Kendall, ‘be a Committee[e] to acquaint the Singers of their Desire in regard to Singing.’ The hymn-book now in use was the Psalms and Hymns of Dr. Watts, and it appears that the custom of ‘deaconing out’ the lines was still in vogue.” [MA/Dunstable; Nason 1877, p. 153]

ca. 1790: “Dea. James Wallace, up to about 1790, *Deaconed* or *lined* the Psalm and set the tune, the congregation joining in the exercise. About 1790, the singers took

their station in the gallery, and the Deacon's services were dispensed with in that part of the exercise." [NH/Bedford; Bedford 1851, p. 200]

ca. 1790 – see 1785

1790 – see n.d. (probably 17<sup>th</sup> c.-1790)

1791, 2, 11, 15 January + 1794, 3 November: "Holden Jan<sup>y</sup> 2.<sup>d</sup> 1790 [*recte* 1791] / Dear Sirs [i.e., Jonathan Rice + \_\_\_\_\_ Smith] ... True it is, that they [the Holden Church] have voted one thing as to the mode of Singing in the Congregation at one time, & Something different at another.... ... Let us suppose then now for [a] moment, that in the true Spirit of Candor you were return'd , & statedly & cheerfully attended [public worship] with us that when the mere musick [next p.] of the voice was not So pleasing as you could wish, that then your minds were deeply fix'd on the great, & interesting truths contain'd in the Sacred psalm, or hymn, & your Souls were rising in Secret harmony to God on the wings of faith, & love. Would you not reflect on Such opportunities afterwards with the Sincerest pleasure, & regard them as far from being lost? ... [Rev. Joseph Avery]" [new letter:] "Holden Jan<sup>y</sup> 11:<sup>th</sup> 1791 / Rev.<sup>d</sup> Sir [i.e., Joseph Avery] ... ...the mode of Singing which is So much offensive to me that I Cannot Glorify God nor Edifye myself: & further the Church have Gon Conterary to the Covenant owned be [*recte* by] Every Brother of the Church: in the Covenant are these words ["promising Carefully to avoid all Sinful Stumbleing Blocks & Contentions"] to me[n]tion no more: [written above this line at this point: "on the covenant"] the mere musick as you Call it Is the block in my way as your Self & the Church are Sensable of: this mere Musick has No melody at all in it....

[Jonathan Rice]" [new letter:] "Holden Jan.<sup>y</sup> 15.1791 / Dear Sir [i.e., Jonathan Rice] ... Supposing the greater part of the Church had thought with you as to the Singing, chosen the tunes that you like best, & to have the psalm read as is most agreeable to you, that some of the Church had complain'd & Said that they [c?]ould not be edify'd by Such Singing, & that it was laying a Stumbling block before them to Sing after that sort; would you believe it was, & in order to please them would you be willing to lay aside the Singing that was agreeable to you. I presume that you would not; & still that you would think that they ought not, on this account to forsake the communion of the Church. If the musick was as disagreeable to me as to you, I persuade myself that I could, notwithstanding, find edification in the house of God. I could resolve to have my mind raised above the mere Sound of the voice, & let the great truths of the psalm or hymn engross my attention. ["&"?] If the musick is ever So agreeable to my ear, yet if I pay no regard to the truths that are Sung, I am not edify'd as I ought. The main thing is to have the heart in tune, rightly impressed & influenc'd. why Should we let the mere voice, if not agreeable, destroy our devotion, & prevent our edification. ... I am with all Sincerity, & friendship / Yours &c / Joseph Avery" [new letter:] "Holden Nov.<sup>r</sup> 3. 1794 / Dear Sir [i.e., \_\_\_\_\_ Smith, with P. S. requesting Smith to show the letter to Jonathan Rice] ... But shall it be here Said that the Church did vote that the Singing Should be carried on without reading, tho' they knew this would be grievous to you. The Church I believe tho't at that time [1786] that if they did not do this there would take place that which would be a general grief to them, &

that all things consider'd, it was wisdom so to do. Not that they were indifferent to your happiness, but this they apprehended was on the whole expedient, & most for the edification for the body of the Church, & people. & tho' their Judgment, in this instance, differ'd from yours, why should we divide in affections? The Church no doubt hoped that by the help of your psalm book you might be improv'd, & [next p.] edified tho' the Several lines of the psalm were not repeated by the Deacons. Can you not then find it in your heart to meet with those who if they have done wrong in your judgment, have done that which they themselves believ'd to be wisest, & best upon the whole? ... I add no more but that I am your Sincere Friend & well-wisher / Joseph Avery" [MA/Holden; Avery/Holden MSS. 1791, 1794]

ca. 1793 – see n.d. (probably 17<sup>th</sup> c.-1790)

1793, 4 March + n.d.: "In the warrant, calling the annual meeting for 1793, there was the following article; [new paragraph] '6thly, To see what method the town will take to provide singing the present year.' [new paragraph] At the meeting March, 4, upon this article it was [new paragraph] 'Voted, That Capt. Perham set the Psalm.' [new paragraph] 'Voted, That John Goffe [at one point, Town Clerk of Derryfield/Manchester], read the Psalm.' [new paragraph] These votes were that Capt. Perham, should name the tune in which the psalm was to be sung, or that he should act as chorister, while John Goffe was to read or line the psalm, as it was called." [new paragraph] This was done generally by one of the deacons, hence lining the psalm, became to be called oftentimes 'deaconing it.' Lining or deaconing the psalm, was done in this manner. The minister named and read the psalm or hymn, the chorister named the tune in which it was to be sung, and the deacon in a loud, sonorous voice, read the two first lines of the psalm or hymn, to the congregation. The chorister then commenced singing the lines read, and all the congregation joined in singing them. The first lines disposed of, the deacon read the next two lines, and they were sung, and so on through the hymn. This lining the psalm grew out of the necessity of the case. All in the congregation, who could, were expected to sing. Very few of them had books; in fact, the psalm books were often confined to the minister and deacon. Hence the necessity of lining, as an attentive congregation could repeat one or two lines after the deacon, very readily, and thus were able to join in the singing. Singing by choirs was a great innovation, and was not brought about without much opposition. In some instances the deacons objected to the innovation, and left the churches upon its introduction, and in others the ministers were opposed to it, and would not read psalms when on exchange, where the practice of lining had been done away." [all punctuation here *sic*] [NH/Manchester; Potter 1856, p. 523]

1794, 21 April + shortly before: "'The common method of reading the Psalm line by line' at the communion, was 'dropped' April 21, 1794. It went out of use in the congregation a short time before this." [MA/Andover; Andover 1859, p. 56]

1794, 3 November – see 1791, 2, 11, 15 January



n.d. (probably late 1790s, early 1800s): "You have heard of the Deaconing of the hymn for singing: this was done when books were scarce. There was a choir of singers in the gallery at my earliest recollection [Samuel Preston, whose "recollections" this is taken from, starts by writing "I was born late in 1792...and I clearly remember much which transpired before 1800"], and the whole hymn was read before singing, but I have been several times present as a spectator in the gallery, while the communion service was being administered, when the feat of deaconing was performed. The senior deacon rising and naming a tune, read the first two lines of the hymn, then those who could sing or thought they could, tried to sing as far as he had read. Two more lines were then read and sung in the same manner, and so on to the end. It was anything but edifying to the spectator, and is well outgrown. There was a boy in our neighborhood who was taken from the Marblehead poor house, perhaps a dozen or more years old, and extremely ignorant, and one of whom the older boys made all manner of fun. He was fixed up by his master and sent to church with the other boys, and with them took his seat in the gallery during communion service. The next day the boys began to question him as to what he saw and heard, and he said, 'One man get up and say, [indented:] 'Buck a massa, buck a boo, / Buck a massa, buck a boo!' [end of indentation] imitating the rhyme of the hymn, and then he imitated the music, which it is impossible for me to describe.'" [MA/Danvers; Preston/Danvers 1919, p. 128]

ca. 1795-1796: "It was during Mr. [Ebenezer] Bradford's [p. 28] ministry, in 1795 and 1796, that considerable repairs were made upon the meeting-house, and a porch built at the south end of it, through which were stairs leading to the gallery. About the same time it was, that the old practice of repeating the reading of the psalm, or hymn, line by line by the deacon, previous to singing, after a severe struggle between the adherents of the ancient and modern mode, was entirely abandoned." [footnote: "*This practice of lining the psalm, or hymn, was not had amongst our earlier forefathers; it was introduced into the worshipping assemblies many years after the first settlement of the country. Among those of the Plymouth colony it came first into use about 1681, more than sixty years after their settlement.*"] [This is the First Church in Rowley.] [MA/Rowley; Gage 1840, pp. 27-28]

n.d. (probably between ca. 1795 and ca. 1810): "In November, 1789, a Baptist church was organized at the house of Agabus Bishop,...with twenty-five members, whose names are as follows: [indented 2-column list, smaller type:] ...Eleazor Mason. [p. 141] ... Timothy Godding. ... [new paragraph, regular type:] ... For some time the church was the owner of but one hymn book. Deacon [Eleazor] Mason read the hymns; reading two lines, and then they sang them, and then he would read two more lines, and so on. And when a sufficient supply [of hymn books] was purchased, it is said that he remarked that he 'was sorry, as he was deprived of a great privilege.' ... [p. 145] ... [new paragraph] The following persons have served as deacons: [indented 2-column list, smaller type:] Eleazor Mason. ... T. Godding. ... [new paragraph, regular type:] Mr. Godding was elected in 1818...." [no deacon's name other than Eleazor Mason + T[imothy] Godding appears on list of original 25

members in 1789, + Godding was not elected deacon until 1818; so Eleazor Mason was likely the church's first deacon, starting in 1789, which helps speculatively date this anecdote] [NH/Troy; Stone 1897, pp. 140-141, 145]

n.d.: "Until 1814, when the local Congregational church acquired its first hymnals, worshippers chanted verses from memory. The result was often an unpleasant drone. Records show that parishioners had been aware of the problem and were progressive, but cautious, in their attempt to solve it." [CT/East Granby; Springman 1983, p. 101]

n.d. (late 1820s?) + 1826, 20 April: "In the days before the parish possessed hymn books it was the custom of the pastor to read the words of the hymn by couplets, the congregation singing each couplet as soon as it had been read and then waiting for the next. This practice continued in the church for many years, and tradition has preserved a humorous incident arising out of this procedure. Mr. [Rev. Frederick Augustus Rodolphus Benedectus] Ritz's successor, the Reverend Mr. [John W.] Starman [pastor to ca. 1850], it seems, was overprone to dwell on his bodily infirmities, and certainly in his later years he had sufficient grounds. One Sabbath he rose in the pulpit and as he wiped his eyes he remarked: [indented:] 'Mein sight ist poor, mein eyes ist dim, / I scarce can see to read dies hymn.' [end of indentation; new paragraph] The congregation immediately took up the couplet and sang it. The startled preacher hastened to say in his broken English: [indented:] 'I did not mean to sing dies hymn, / I meant to say mein sight ist dim.' [end of indentation; new paragraph] These words were picked up and sung by the congregation as was its wont. Whereupon the old gentleman, exasperated, blurted out: [indented:] 'I tink der Debbel ist in you all, / Das vas no hymn to sing at all.' [end of indentation; new paragraph] Even with this last couplet the congregation followed through, but beyond this point tradition is silent. This incident [p. 22] probably took place at a time when English was beginning to take its place beside German in the church service. The first mention of such a change in the singing is indicated in the records under date of April 20, 1826, in the following comment: 'To have a committee to regulate the singing in both the German and English languages.'" [ME/Waldoboro; Stahl 1956, vol. II, pp. 21-22]

1826, 20 April – see n.d. (late 1820s?)

1841, 4 May: "The following invitation was issued April 28th, 1841: [new line] 'CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION. [new paragraph] 'THE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY *of the municipal organization of Holden, will be celebrated by the citizens of said town, on Tuesday, the fourth day of May next. ...* ' ... [p. 53, new paragraph] ... After the Address the following hymn, prepared for the occasion by J. H. Bancroft, was sung. [p. 54: hymn text, 8 stanzas of L. M., beginning "One hundred years have rolled away"] [p. 55] "This hymn was read and sung after the ancient fashion, which was called "deaconing." The venerable Deacon Rice, having consented to take part in the services of the church, standing in his place at the communion table, read, line by line. The scene when the whole of that vast congregation rose and joined with the

choir in solemn melody after the manner of “they of a hundred years ago”, was deeply impressive.” [MA/Holden; Estes 1894, pp. 52-55]