

SEATING OF CHOIR/SINGERS, OTHER CHOIR-RELATED MATTERS (SC)

n. d.: "The front gallery [of the meetinghouse], opposite the pulpit, and the lower half of the seats in the side gallery were for the singers to sit in.... [p. 131] A later writer (Rev. Theodore J. Holmes) says: ... 'The singers, too, were, as now, in the gallery.... [←ellipses original] There was a single row of them in the front seats all around, --the tenor and counter or alto opposite the pulpit, the bass and treble on the north and south sides.'" [CT/East Hartford; Goodwin 1879, pp. 130-31]

n. d.: "Clean round the front of the gallery is drawn a single row of choir, headed by the key-pipe, in the center." [CT/Litchfield; White 1920, p. 58]

n.d.: "There are several now living, who remember that under the singers' seats, or just above the door which entered the church from the porch or vestibule, were the figures 1715. This is supposed to be the year in which the church was built. ... [p. 98] ... In the vestibule, on the left entering through the double doors, were stairs by which one would go to the gallery and to the singers' seats. ... Directly opposite the entrance from the vestibule was the pulpit. ... [p. 99] ... As one ascended the steps from the vestibule the gallery extending across that side of the church was entered. From this, extending along the end of the church next to the road, was the side gallery. There was none on the other end and of course none over the pulpit. In the gallery opposite the pulpit were the singers. ... [p. 101] In the same church the singers were first seated on one [p. 102] side of the broad aisle [probably that aisle which "ran through the center of the building from the entrance at the vestibule to the pulpit"—p. 100] but afterwards were removed to the gallery." [ME/Eliot; Willis 1899, pp. [97]-102]

n.d.: "The part of the service belonging to the singers has always been regarded as material to an effective public worship. In ancient times it was a voluntary offering in all the churches. Men and women united themselves in choirs for the purpose, because they enjoyed sacred music. They sung with the heart, and sometimes, perhaps, with the understanding. It has been but a few years since this Christian custom has given way in any of our towns to a select choir, paid in whole or in part. No such change had taken place in the societies in Wells, down to the time when our history closes [1820], and it is believed that even at the present day [1875], of the large number of churches in the County of York, but very few have been compelled to resort to a measure [i.e., paid choirs] so fruitful of dissensions and so inconsistent with the best interests of any religious society." [ME/Wells; Bourne 1875, p. 625]

n.d.: "There are few parishes in New England which have had no trouble with their Sunday choir. Singers are dangerously sensitive, and not always blamable, as some imagine. Their popularity and success depend very often upon popular taste and fickle fashion; therefore all their feelers are out to discover what people think of them. The poet and painter, depending measurably on the same principles of taste and fashion, are subjected to similar influences. The conflict between rival singers is peculiarly fierce; and what committee-man, who has 'had the care of the singing,'

has not found that he must sometimes deal with the parish choir very much as he must with sick children? That Medford has had some of these jarring experiences, is most true; and it is as true that it has enjoyed a general exemption. The first parish has owned generous hearts and sweet voices, who have given their services freely; and the organ has been played gratuitously for years by a gentleman of taste and education." [MA/Medford; Brooks 1855, p. 259]

n.d.: "Although some singers sat in the front seats in the neighborhood of the leader, still many more were scattered throughout the congregation, and gradually it became apparent that the singing could be made more effective by collecting the 'men and women singers' together in a more compact body, and accordingly the choir was formed, which was under the direction of a choir-master." [NH/Concord; Carter 1881, p. 321]

n.d.: "I have heard from a gentleman who was well informed on the subject that the choirs of Farmington and Wethersfield [CT] were greatly distinguished and maintained an active rivalry at times for preeminence." [CT/Farmington; Porter 1873, p. 47]

n.d. + 1829 + 1840s: "The music was an important part of the service at the South Hingham church, and a special place was reserved for the singers in the southwest corner of the gallery. ... [p. 105] ...The singing seats, which had been moved as part of the rearrangement of the interior of the meetinghouse in 1829, were now [1840s] in the gallery at the back of the church, over the vestibule." [MA/South Hingham; Robinson 1980, pp. 76, 105]

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]

1734 and after: “In the first Meeting House it does not appear that any special accommodation was made for the singers. But in the second Meeting House [built 1734] they occupied the front slips on three sides of the Gallery.” [CT/Durham; Fowler 1866, p. 100]

1740 + 1765: “By the year 1740 there were Singers’ Seats built in the middle aisle towards the front, and these were later moved into the gallery.... Parson [Samuel] Deane records in his ‘Journal’ [entry of 15 December 1765], ‘The board of Singers went into the gallery [from their seats on the first floor], 16 in number.’”
[ME/Portland; Small n.d., p. 2]

n.d. (ca. 1748) + 1765 + 1770: “The first singing was purely congregational, led by one of the deacons, or by a person specially chosen for this purpose, and was without instrumental accompaniment. The first innovation upon this general custom was made in 1765, when William Bond and others petitioned the town to grant to them ‘a convenient seat or seats in the Meeting House to set together to sing in time of divine service;’ [←punctuation *sic*] and the town granted them ‘the hind seat below in the Meeting House in the men’s side.’ Five years later the number of persons who had ‘taken pains to acquire some good degree of understanding in the rules of singing’ had largely increased, so that new seats had to be provided to accommodate them; and the town set off the seats ‘in each part of the front gallery to the respective sexes to which they properly belonged,’ and also voted that forty-two [*recte* 41] persons, twenty-six [*recte* 25] men and sixteen women, whose names had been presented to the town, should occupy the singers’ seats.”
[MA/Lincoln; Lincoln 1899, p. 26]

n.d. (ca. 1750-1770) + 1770, 24 September, 22 October + 1771, 7 January: “The proverbial difficulty of managing singing, and especially singers, was felt most keenly and treated most unwisely. It is evident that the ‘rising generation,’ our grandfathers, were weary of the ‘leading’ of good Deacon [Nathaniel] Warriner, who had now, from the ‘deacon’s seat’ under the pulpit, raised the pitch, and literally led the singing for over twenty years. The people generally felt that there was fulfilled among them the prophecy of the Prophet Amos, ‘The songs of the temple shall be turned into howlings.’ Singing masters had made their way to the new town. New music came with them. The old tunes were laid aside. Strange feats of voice and limb were performed by mouth and arm when the new singers came into the seats in the gallery. The congregation could not sing. The poor deacon’s voice was silent. Great were the ‘searchings of heart’ among the ancients. Most unfortunately of all, the town took the matter in hand. The wisdom of the fathers forsook them. The flames burned all the more fiercely for being fanned. The second article in the warrant for town-meeting, September 24, 1770, was ‘To see whether they will come [p. 86] into some method or agreement for more Regular Carrying on the Singing in the Public worship in this town than it is at the present time;’ [punctuation *sic*] and

the third, 'To see whether the Town will be willing to sing four Times in the Publick worship on the Sabbath for the future.' It is pretty evident that this movement originated with the new singers. They appear to be ambitious to excel in quantity as well as quality. There seems to have been no opposition worthy of record to choosing the committee asked for, and ten men were chosen 'to be a Com., to take into consideration the Broken state of this Town with regard to Singing in the Publick Assembly on Sabbath Days, and to consult together and agree upon some Plan or Method whereby to encourage & promote regular and Universal Singing in said assembly, & make report thereof to this or some future meeting.' On the 22d of October, at the adjourned meeting, the committee of ten, Nathaniel Warriner, John Bliss, Thomas Mirick, Moses Stebbins [recipient of Ezra Barker's letter of 31 August 1780, copied here (ca. 1770 + 1780, 31 August); **useful to compare that letter + the present excerpt**], William King, Ezra Barker, Daniel Cadwell, John Jones, Eliezer Smith, and Phineas Newton make an elaborate Report covering two pages of the book of Records in Master [Ezra] Barker's best handwriting, in which a list of twenty-three tunes,--'called Low Dutch, Windsor, Old 100d, New 100d, Stroudwater, Meer, Buckland, Broomsgrove, Bangor, St. Martin's, Warwick, St. Hellens, All-Saints, Little Marlborough, Cambridge, Portsmouth, Southwell, Quercy, Worksop, Wantage, Standish, New York and 149 Psalm Tune,'—[p. 87] is given, which 'shall be made use of in the Publick worship of God in this town;' this 'List is to be transmitted to Mr. Morgan [probably Justin Morgan] (now singing-master in this Town) in order that he may Teach or Instruct his scholars to Sing them according to Rule.' No other tunes are to be introduced without 'consent.' Deaⁿ Nath'l Warriner is to give the lead in singing on the forenoons on each Sabbath & one of the Young Men lately Instructed by Mr. [John] Stickney (as they shall agree among themselves) give the lead in singing in the afternoon of each Sabbath for the space of three months from the Date hereof, excepting when Mr. Morgan is present, then it is expected he will carry the singing.' They also report 'that all who Assist in Singing Shall be at their pleasure either to Stand or Sit when Singing without giving Offence to any; that **the singers lately Instructed by Mr. Stickney who are seated in the Gallery of the Meeting House are at their Liberty to make a decent and orderly Exchange of Seats as They Shall agree among themselves and so to Set for the Space of Three Months from the Date hereof and no longer, or else to continue to Set as they were last Seated;**' and '6thly' and lastly, 'that whoever shall lead in the singing shall be at Liberty to use the Motion of his hand while singing for the Space of Three Months from the Date hereof or a shorter Space as need shall require.' Thus far 'the committee' 'propose to be tried by Vote.' The committee then recommend, that 'as the Beating with the hand in the Congregation [p. 88] when singing is offensive to some it be laid aside as quick as may be and confine the same to the school only; that all in the Town whose voices will admit of it speedily use proper means to get themselves acquainted with the art of Singing Ruleably & well,--in the mean time' they 'recommend to all both old and Young to Join in Singing in the Worshipping assembly and to sing as well as they can; and lastly,' say they, 'we cannot but recommend to ourselves & others to studdy the Things which make for peace, and the things whereby we may Edify one another.' [new paragraph] The town voted what the committee recommended. But it is evident that the flames were not to be

quenched by any such appliances. 'Three months' grace and 'no longer' is given to 'Beating with the hand' and **occupying 'exchanged seats' if they can agree to exchange, which is very doubtful.** The congregation are all to 'sing, as well as they can,' it is true, but to 'Join in Singing' at any rate. The Stickneyites in the 'Gallery' would hardly be satisfied. The compromise is like Nebuchadnezzar's image, gold in the head, but 'clay and iron' in the legs and feet. So it turns out, as the 'three months' are expiring, that an article is inserted in the warrant, January 7, 1771, 'to pass any votes in further addition' to those before passed 'as the Town Shall think proper by further lengthening the Time of the Present Mode of Singing.' This article came from the 'Gallery' party evidently. It is followed by another which came from the 'dea- [p. 89] con's seat,' as evidently. Hear it: 'to make Inquiry into the conduct of *those who call themselves the singers in this Town*, and see wheather they have conducted or proceeded agreeable to the report of the Town's Com^{tee}, and the Town's vote thereupon at our last Meeting and pass such Vote or Votes as shall be thought Necessary in Consequence thereof.' Greek has now met Greek [i.e., the two sides seem equal in strength]. At the meeting it is voted, 'that Deaⁿ Nath'l Warriner Shall continue to Set the Psalm as Usual During the Town's Pleasure; also that Moses Warriner and Jonathan Bliss do the same.' The 'young men' are voted down; the 'Galleries' are in a minority; so it would seem. But there is abundant life in young blood, and, rallying their strength, 'a motion was made whether the singing should be performed in the congregation according to the late mode by Beating with the hand, &c.; it being put, and the House being Divided it passed in the affirmative, 25 against about 19.' The 'Deacon's Seat' now loses, but does not yield; for 'a motion was made' [←close quote erroneous?] to Decide it by the Town List or by Lawful Voters, and after some Debate it was thrown by and the following vote passed, namely, Voted that the Rev. Mr. Mirick [Noah Merrick, pastor from 1741 to his death in 1776] be Desired to call a Society meeting in order to come into some method of Reconciliation with regard to Singing in the Publick worship.' They adjourn; and no more is recorded or known of the result. Poor Mr. Merrick had cares enough of another kind, as we shall soon see, without being dragged into this controversy about the singing. Thus ended [p. 90] the great struggle of the town respecting the method of 'Carrying on the Singing in the Public Worship of God.'" [MA/Wilbraham; Stebbins 1864, pp. 85-90]

n.d. (between 1750 and 1849): "...all the children except the smallest were expected to sit in the gallery; the girls in the north and the boys in the south, while the east gallery was divided between them. The front seats were occupied by the singers,-- the 'treble' in the north, the 'counter' in the north half of the front seat in the east gallery [pulpit on west side of meetinghouse], the 'tenor' in the south half of the same seat, while the 'bass' occupied the front seat in the south gallery. Behind the 'singers' seats' were two rows of seats raised by successive steps, one higher than the other, where the children sat, and it was the duty of the tything man to see that they behaved with propriety. Back of these seats, raised one step higher, was a row of square pews running all around the galleries. These...were occupied by the young men and young women, the former on the south [so, young men placed right behind boys, who in turn are right behind basses + tenors—excellent chaos control] and the

latter on the north side, while the east side was divided between them. The maiden ladies were seated in the north 'high pew' before mentioned [see MEETINGHOUSES file here, 1750-1849], while the bachelors were assigned the one on the south side." [note total segregation of the genders here, all the way back] [MA/Hatfield; Wells 1910, p. 251]

1752 and later: "The choir was ranged along the front [of the galleries] and sometimes extended nearly the entire length of the galleries, the base on the west, the treble on the east and the tenor or 'counter,' with the leader on the south." [CT/New Canaan; Canaan 1935, p. 16]

1758, 11 July: "At the Annual Meeting of the Brethren of the first Church and Congregation in Boston, held in their Meeting house on Tuesday July 11, 1758. [p. 218] It being suggested, that a Number of the Brethren, who were skilful Singers, sitting together in some convenient place, would greatly tend to rectify our Singing on the Lord's day, and render that part of Divine Worship more agreeable, it was Voted that the Committee appoint the Persons and Place." [MA/Boston; Pierce 1961, vol. 39, pp. 217-218]

n.d. (between 1759 and 1818): "Tall pines grew in front of the church and there, always on time, was Dr. West [Stephen West (1735-1819), Yale '55, pastor at Stockbridge 1759-1818], ready to greet his congregation. Inside the church, he bowed to the first families, seated in order of dignity just behind the choir; for the world was not left outside the door. Then he would read Dr. Watts's hymn, *Ye nations round the northern sea*, before climbing into the pulpit to begin his two-hour sermon." [MA/Stockbridge; Sedgwick 1939, p. 102]

n.d. (early 1760s) + n.d. (late 1770s): "As, in 1761, the First church in Boston desired some of their best singers to sit by themselves, and, as two years afterwards, the First parish of Ipswich prepared seats for a like purpose, our congregations here, very likely, adopted the same arrangement near this time. About [p. 624] 15 years afterwards, the front gallery was set apart for singers." [MA/Salem; Felt 1849, pp. 623-624]

n.d. (between 1760 and 1831): "The old meetinghouse had galleries on three sides. In front, all around, was a seat for the singers. Immediately back of this was another seat, and back of all, pews. In the southeast corner of the gallery was a pew, set on posts over the head of the stairs, called the negro pew, but I never saw a negro occupy it. Men and boys occupied the west and south galleries, and the girls the east." [MA/Greenfield; Thompson 1904, p. 538; recollections of Rev. Charles C. Corse, written in a letter to the author]

"Boston July 21d [*sic*] 1761. At a Meeting of the Committee chosen by the Old Church and Congregation, at their Annual Meeting July 14, 1761, to consider of Sundry Matters for their Benefit the following Votes were passed ... 5ly Voted That we apprehend it necessary to encourage and revive the Spirit of Singing in this Church,

that a New Version of the Psalms be introduced among us, and **that a Number of the best Singers among us be desired to set together in some Convenient Place in the Meeting House**, and also that reading the Psalm on the Sabbath Day should be [page torn]" [MA/Boston; Pierce 1961, vol. 39, p. 222]

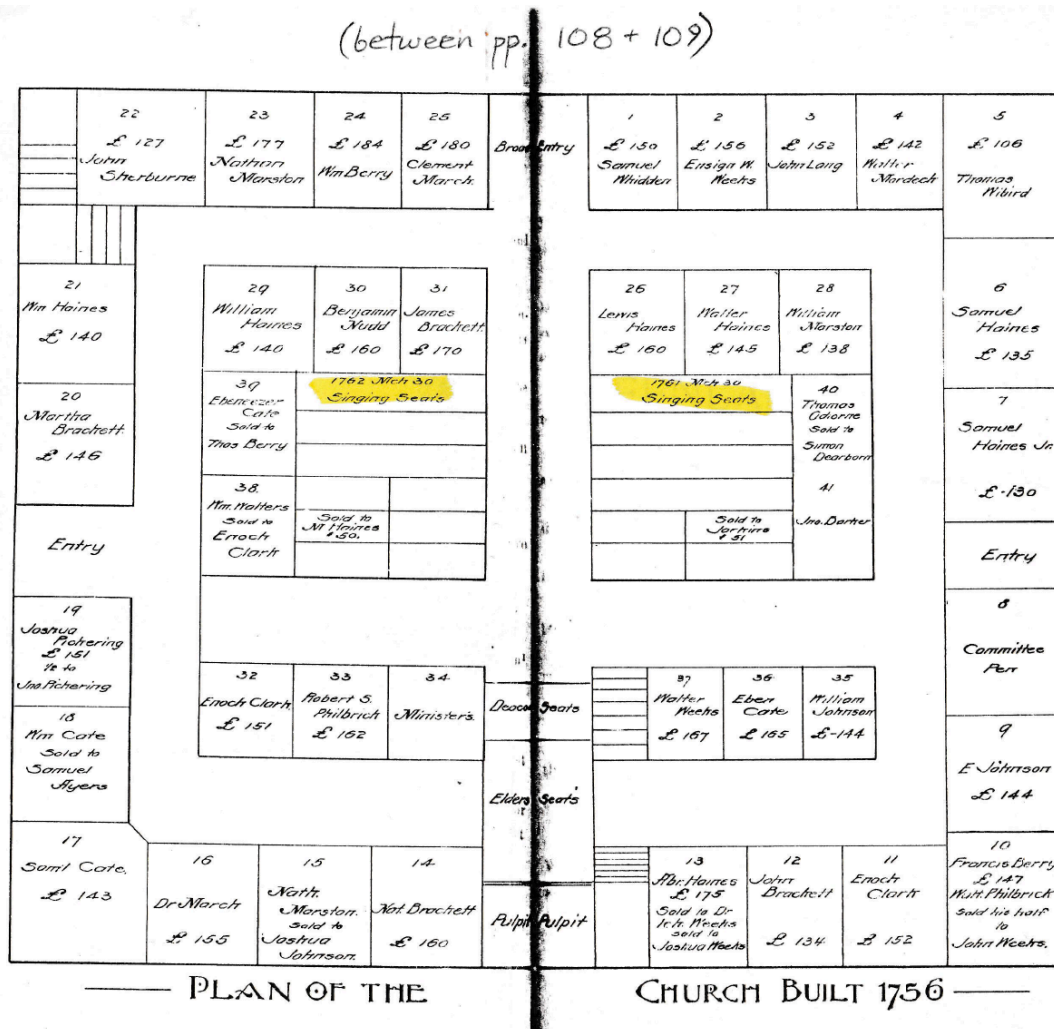
"August 2, 1761, at a meeting of the first Church and congregation by adjournment from the 14th ultimo to this day to receive the report of the large Committee then raised. ... [p. 223] ...Voted to Accept the Report of the Committee that a new version of the Psalms be introduced into this Church. [new paragraph] **Voted that a number of the best Singers among us be desired to sit together in some convenient place in the Meeting House.** [new paragraph] Voted that reading the Psalms on the Sabbath day should be omitted. [new paragraph] Voted that a Committee be raised to conferr and advise with our Reverend Pastors about a Suitable version of the Psalms to be introduced and make report thereof to the Church and congregation at their adjournment." [MA/Boston; Pierce 1961, vol. 39, pp. 222-223]

1761, 9 August: "At a meeting of the first Church after divine Service in the forenoon August 9, 1761. [new paragraph] The Church took into Consideration the desire of a number of the brethren of the Church and congregation to introduce another version of the Psalms etc. amongst us and after maturely considering the same Voted viz. [new paragraph] 1st. That the Version commonly called Tate and Brady with such a Supplement of doctor Watts's Hymns etc. as our Reverend Pastors shall think proper be introduced as Soon as it can conveniently be done. [no new paragraph] 2nd That after the said Version is introduced the reading of the Psalms etc. be Omitted. [new paragraph] 3dly **That a number of our best Singers be desired to Sit together in some Convenient place in the meeting House.** [new paragraph] 4th That whereas some persons among us may not be able to purchase the said New Version that a Subscription be put forward in the Church and congregation to Supply such persons and also the pulpit." [MA/Boston; Pierce 1961, vol. 39, p. 223]

1761, 12 November: "The parish...[p. 341] 'voted to build a pew in some convenient place in the meeting house for the accommodation of the singers.'" [footnote: "Newbury (First Parish) Records."] [MA/Newbury; Currier 1902, pp. 340-341]

1761 + 1762 + 1769 + 1783 + 1805: "["Plan of the Church Built 1756," between pp. 108 + 109 (see image below), includes 2 benches (not pews) of "Singing Seats" on either side of the broad aisle, towards the back: on the left as you come up the broad aisle towards the pulpit, "1761 M'ch 30 / Singing Seats," on the right, "1762 M[?]/ch 30 / Singing Seats"] ... [p. 114] 1762. / Among the votes passed, it was [new paragraph, smaller type:] 'Voted That a number of Persons that will learn to sing by rule shall have liberty to build a singing seat of the hindmost womens seat.' ... [p. 117] ... 1769. / [smaller type:] 'Voted' among others 'the womens hind seat below be for a singing seat[.]' ... [p. 128] 1783. / ... [smaller type:] '[Voted] that y^e singers set in front Gallery y^e present year.' ... [p. 134] [1805. /] [smaller type:] 'Voted to sell the

singing seats - "' [NH/Greenland; Hall 1900, pp. [2 unnumbered pp. between p. 108 + p. 109], 114, 117, 128, 134]



1762: "Entering this porch [on the south side of the meetinghouse; the main entrance to the meetinghouse was here] by one of its two doors we come into the broad aisle of the church, but turning to the south we find a wide flight of stairs leading up to a platform from which a narrower flight affords access to the galleries and the singers' seats.... As we enter from the porch we pass under the singing seats—set apart when the house was enlarged [in 1762] 'for the use of those who shall or have informed themselves in the rules of regular singing so as to be capable of carrying the lead in singing and will sit there for that end.' ... [new paragraph] The broad aisle runs from the porch the width of the house to the pulpit on the north side [so the singing seats were opposite the pulpit]. This [the pulpit] was so advantageously placed that the whole congregation was within a radius of less than fifty feet from the speaker." [ME/North Yarmouth; Rowe 1937, p. 131]

1762 + 1785: "1762. The parish voted, that those who had learned the art of singing, may have liberty to sit in the front gallery. (They did not take the liberty.) ... 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." [This is the Second Church in Rowley.] [MA/Rowley; Gage 1840, p. 93]

1762 – see 1761

1763 + 1764 + 1781 + 1788: "As to seats for choirs, they were designated by the First Parish 1763, being 'two back on each side of the front [p. 213] alley.' Similar provision was made at the Hamlet [→Hamilton] 1764, and at Chebacco [→Essex] 1788. The choir of the First parish began to sit in the gallery 1781. This alteration was soon imitated in other parishes." [MA/Ipswich, The Hamlet→Hamilton, Chebacco→Essex; Felt 1834, pp. 212-213]

1763, May + 1774, 7 March + 1776, 20 May: "At the above meeting [in May 1763], a Committee was chosen to prepare a place for all the singers to sit together in the meeting-house; the chorister choosing the singers, and 'the Selectmen approbating them.' [p. 233, new paragraph] March 7, 1774: 'Voted, that the singers have the two hind seats of the women's seats below;' [punctuation *sic*] and the Committee shall designate who shall occupy said seats. [new paragraph] May 20, 1776: 'Voted, that the singers have one-half of the three front seats in the women's gallery, next to the women.'" [MA/Medford; Brooks 1855, pp. 225, 233] [see also 1770, 11 June]

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 (1st Parish); Stone 1843, p. 255]

"In 1764 [in The Hamlet, later Hamilton] provision was made for seating the choir, by a vote that 'any young men, that are good singers, sett in the men's sixth seat

below, during the Parish['s?] pleasure.'" [MA/The Hamlet→Hamilton; Hurd 1888, vol. II, p. 1213]

1764 – see 1763

1764 – see n.d. (before 1764)

"As early as 1765, Lincoln's voters were assigning special seats to those who wished to sit together 'to sing in time of Devine Service.'" [MA/Lincoln; MacLean 1987, p. 143] [My note from Lincoln town meeting records: on 27 May 1765, William Bond + others allowed to sit together in hind seat below on men's side, to sing]

1765 – see 1740

1765 – see n.d. (ca. 1748)

1765, 27 May + 1766, 4 March + 1770, 5 March, 28 May + 1771, 4 March + 1777, 3 March + 1789, 7 May, 15 May (1789 entries from church records; all others from town meeting records): 27 May 1765, William Bond + others allowed to sit together to sing in hind seat below on men's side; 4 March 1766, petition to move singers up to gallery is denied; 5 March 1770, group of young men request permission to sit together to sing in hind seat below on men's side to sing; request denied; 28 May 1770: "7^{ly} to know the mind of the town whether they will appropriate all the seats in the frunt galery in the meeting house except the fore[-?]seats to the use of those Persons who have taken pains to acquire some good degree of understanding in the Rules of Singing: the seats in each part of said galere to the respectiv[e?] Sexes to which they properly belong During the towns pleasure ... Voted on the Seventh article to appropriate the Seats in the front galieres Except the fore Seats & the hind Seats to those persons who have taken pains to acquire some good degree of understanding in Singing; Dureing the towns pleasure-----"; 4 March 1771, 41 named singers (25 men, 16 women) allowed to sit in singers' seats in gallery; 3 March 1777: "...to act on the following articles... 5^{ly} T[o] Know the mind of the town whether they will appropriate any Seats in the Publick meeting House for the Sociaty of Singers & others who are Skilled in the Rules of Singing to Sit together to Sing in time of Divine Service in said town: and if any[,] where they shall be"; 7 May 1789: church proposes that singers be seated on either side of central aisle "in the Body of the Meetinghouse below"; 15 May 1789: town votes to convert seats into pews for singers [MA/Lincoln, town meeting + church records, notes + transcriptions by NC, probably 1992]

1765, 1 August: "In the same warning [of August 1, 1765] was an article 'To see if the parish will vote that those persons that Come nighest the approved Rule of Singing may have the Previlidge of Being Seated to Gether in the Second Long Seat in the men's Galery, for the Benefit of helping Each other in said Rule; and that they may be Seated to gather, to prevent Disorder they Desire to be Seated in said Seat, or Elsewhere, to Gather in Said meeting house.' [new paragraph] It was 'Voted, that

those parsons [*sic*] that Can Sing by Rule Shall Set to Gather in the meeting house in the front Short Seats in the men's Gallery.' [new paragraph] Here was an innovation. They had singing-schools, and had learned by rule, and of course had new tunes, and had a choir. How the conservatives bore it is not fully known." [NH/Chester; Chase 1869, p. 323]

1766, 4 March – see 1765, 27 May

n.d. (probably late 18th c.): "In the gallery sat, among others, servants, Negroes, and boys, as well as the singers, who had a section reserved for them." [Note the company the singers—the "artists" of the service--kept: those with little power in the community, those who might be feared by some to be liable to "act up."]
[NH/Keene; Keene 1968, p. 35]

n.d. (probably late 18th c.): "In the gallery [of the First Congregational Church] there was one row of pews around three sides of the building. The special places reserved for the choir, called the 'singers' seats,' were some twelve feet long with backs and faced the pulpit." [NH/Keene; Proper 1973, p. 41]

n.d. (late 18th c., early 19th c.): "And then, again, that choir...—how I used to enjoy that singing! The bass voices in the choir most strongly impressed my mind. I remember the females sitting on this side and the males on that, filling the seats about as they do to-day, with the various musical instruments between them. After [p. 144] the altos and sopranos had finished their solos you would hear the heavy bass voices come in, led by Tom Corbett, backed by the double bass-viol. Why, I never heard anything like it since...." [MA/Hingham; Hingham 1882, pp. 143-144, reminiscences in 1881 of Hosea H. Lincoln]

1767, 31 March, 14 April + 1774, 6 December + 1775, 29 March: "March 31, 1767, it was voted in town meeting 'to give eight feet in length and four and one-half feet in width before the deacons' seat for the use of those who lead in singing.' [new paragraph] April 14, 1767, voted, 'to give one-half of the men's gallery on the west side of the meeting house, in the room of the pew before the deacons' seat, the upper end of said seat, for the use of the singers.' [new paragraph] Dec. 6, 1774, voted, 'to exchange the two seats that were given the use of the singers and give them an equal privilege in the front gallery.' [p. 168, new paragraph] March 29, 1775, voted, 'that one-third of the front gallery be allowed for a seat for those persons that lead in singing, the division to be made as followeth, viz.: Beginning over the pillar standing in the pue belonging to the family of Currier and extending as far as the woman's gallery as to complete one-third of the length of one whole front, and that they may have liberty to build a pue if they see fit to do so at their own charge, and that they may raise the floor in the fore seat on a level with the floor of the second seat, and voted that... [7 men's names] be a committee to seat said pue of singers.'" [NH/Hampstead; Noyes 1903, pp. 167-168]

“May 21, 1767, voted and granted the third, fourth & fifth seats in the Frunt gallery to those Persons that have been taking pains to learn to sing Ruleable in the Congregation and to aney others that shall be disposed to learn to sing by Rule.” [MA/Westford; Hodgman 1883, p, 79]

1767, 23 July + 1774, 14 March + 1778, 9 March + 1787, 12 March: “23 July, 1767, the town was asked to allow the men to occupy the whole of the front gallery of the [first] meeting-house, and also ‘to appoint seats for the Quiresters to set in, in order to improve Psalmody, or religious singing’; but both applications were denied. ... [p. 242] ... [new paragraph] “14 March, 1774. A proposition to choose a committee to procure a good bell for the meeting-house was rejected by the town; also, one to ‘allow the signers a seat in the new [second] meeting-house [built 1771-1774, dedicated January 1774] that Psalmody may be carried on with greater regulation.’ ... [new paragraph] 9 March, 1778. The town voted that the seats in the front gallery, in the meeting-house, from the women’s seats to the first pillar in the men’s, be granted for the use of a number of persons skilled in singing, and Ephraim Barker, William Low, Amos Stickney, Abijah Wilkins, and John Kimball, were appointed a committee for seating said seats. ... [p. 273] ... [new paragraph] At a meeting held 12 March, 1787, twenty feet in length, in the centre of the front gallery of the meeting-house, extending from the front breastwork of the gallery to the rear of the back seats of the same, were appropriated for the use of the singers, who were allowed to accommodate themselves in such a way as they chose, at their own expense, ‘provided they did not obstruct the sight of the back pews.’” [NH/Amherst; Secomb 1883, pp. 236, 242, 273]

1767 or 1768: “The first singing-school ever taught in the town was about 1767 or ’8. In the latter year, they were called together ‘to see if the town will grant a number of young men, who have attained the rules of singing, the hindermost seat in the front gallery.’ Upon grave deliberation, that seat was appropriated to ‘those who have learnt the rules of singing, until the further pleasure of the town.’ [new paragraph] This was not accomplished, however, without serious opposition....” [MA/Leicester; Washburn 1860, p. 109]

“In 1768 some difficulties began to arise in regard to the singing on the Sabbath, and a proposition was made to set off a part of the gallery in the west meeting-house [Brunswick, First Parish] for the use of the singers, but it was defeated by a vote of the town.” [ME/Brunswick; Wheeler 1878, p. 363]

1768: “The first attempt to form a choir was made in 1768, when a number of singers petitioned the town ‘to appropriate the front seat in the upper gallery for their use, that they might sit together.’” [Were they successful?] [MA/Framingham; Temple 1887, p. 337]

1768, 8 December, 14 December + 1775, 9 March + 1779: “...the reformers gradually won the day, and we find in December 8, 1768, the subject of singing was agitated, and at an adjourned meeting December 14, all those ‘skilled in musick’ were ‘invited

to sit in ye square pew in front of the pulpit.' Sixteen male voices either responded to the invitation, or were chosen by the parish. [new paragraph] Choirs seem to be a subject about which trouble never ends, for often at the parish meetings they were called upon to decide the momentous question,--whether those who 'assist and lead the church and congregation in the duty of singing praise' should sit in ye square pew in front or in a side pew, or in the gallery. On March 9, 1775, twenty-one men were chosen 'to pitch ye tune.' In all the music so far, the soprano part must have been weak in proportion, as in 1779, young women such as were skilled were invited to sit in ye front pews in the gallery, to assist in music." [MA/Byfield; Dummer 1888, p. 22]

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]

1768 + 1793 + n.d. ("first half of the nineteenth century"): "In 1768 an article in the warrant for the town-meeting was to 'See if the Town will grant the Petition of Sundry of the Inhabitants of the Town requesting they may have the Liberty of takeing their seats in the Meeting House in the front Gallery, or whare the Town Shall think proper, in order to carry on the Deuty of Singing with more regularity decency and good order.' Permission was granted them to take their seats in the front gallery 'for the better Carrying on Singing . . . Dureing the Town's Pleasure.' ... [p. 59, new paragraph] In 1793 the town voted to 'appropriate to the use of the Singers the South East Square in the Gallery of the Center Meeting house.' ... [p. 60, new paragraph] In the first half of the nineteenth century the east end of the gallery was made into seats for the singers, who seem to have been accompanied by a goodly orchestra, including violins, a flute, a clarionet, a bass viol and a double bass." [MA/Sturbridge; Haynes 1910, pp. 57, 59, 60]

"In 1769 'singing was permitted to the lower floor, if persons occupying the designated pews fit them up at their own expense.' The singer's seats were at first below on one side of the centre or broad aisle, but afterwards they were in the gallery on the south side, fronting the pulpit." [ME/York; Emery 1894, p. 114; see also Sylvester 1909, p. 122]

1769 – see 1761

1769, May – see 1726, March

n.d. + 1769, October + 1770 + 1774 + 1784: “[After the adoption of regular singing,] the service of song gradually advanced to more special notice. Instructions in Psalmody were promoted; the choir came to the front, and, of course, must have a becoming place in the assembly. If they were here, as otherwheres, to be awarded seats at the head of the center aisle, it would be somewhat to the discomfiture of those who had occupied them hitherto. The matter was delayed here and in other churches. At Medford, Mass., the church refused to ‘grant seats’ to singers at all, as late as 1770. At Hollis, N. H., in 1784, it was agreed ‘that twelve feet of the hind body seats below, next the Broad aisle, be appropriated to the use of singers on condition that a certain number of them will give the Glass necessary to repair the windows.’ However, a satisfactory location was found for the singers of this society, and without the payment by them of a premium in glass. / In October, 1769, a society of singing masters ‘voluntarily associated with a view to encourage Psalmody in this Government,’ invited the public to the South Meeting-House to hear several new pieces of music performed with voices and instruments, and a sermon preached on the occasion.’ This was a suggestion of coming accessions, and, eventually, with numerous flutes and viols, the singers betook themselves to the gallery opposite the pulpit. Just when this change took place I am unable to say, but the choir secured the place, and thereafter were ready when wanted. They had their part in ‘the becoming Cheerfulness and Decency which characterized the occasion’ when Mr. [Nathan] Strong was installed [in 1774]. [CT/Hartford, MA/Medford, NH/Hollis; Hartford 1883, p. 159]

1769 + early 19th c.: “Improvement on this slow and painful method of rendering praise [lining out] came through voluntary singers joined together to assist in this part of the service. In 1769 the parish voted that the ‘two hind seats on the Men[']s Side of the lower floor be appropriated for the use of those persons who will sit in them to promote that part of divine worship of singing.’ At the beginning of the last century the parish considered the question of building seats for singers in the gallery. They had previously sat in the body of the church in a pew assigned to them.” [ME/York; Banks 1935, vol. II, p. 182]

n.d. (early 1770s?): “When choirs were first introduced into the Norwich churches, which was not long before the revolution, many of the older people were disturbed at the innovation, and even shocked at the new tunes adopted, which, being sung with less quaver and drawl than formerly, seemed to them destitute of unction and suited only to the dance or drum-beat.” [CT/Norwich; Caulkins 1866, p. 340]

“In 1770 it was voted that ‘Singers sit in front gallery and that Quirester should tell singers what tune he is agoing to sing—so that all may strike the tune together.” [MA/Marshfield; Marshfield 1940, p. 94]

1770 – see n.d. (ca. 1748)

1770 – see n.d. + 1769, October

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, 5 March, 28 May – see 1765, 27 May

“On March 7, 1770, it was voted ‘to Devote the two hind Seats Below on Each Side of the Alley for the use of the Singers During the Precinct[']s Pleasure Except those that haue [*sic*] Rights in the foremost of these seats may sett their if they please.” [MA/Lancaster; Weis 1940, vol. [1], p. 161] [compare with entry for May 10, 1772, below]

“June 11, 1770: ‘Voted not to grant seats for singers.’” [MA/Medford; Brooks 1855, p. 339] [see also 1763, May + 1774, 7 March + 1776, 20 May]

1770, 24 September, 22 October – see n.d. (ca. 1750-1770)

1770 + 1771: “The first innovation upon this ancient practice [of lining out—the old way of singing] seems to have been made in 1770, when ‘the two hind seats on the women’s side, on the lower floor, were turned into a pew to accommodate the singers.’ This arrangement, however, did not prove satisfactory; accordingly the next year ‘the singers’ pew was sold, and seat made for them in the gallery.’ The advantages of this plan were so obvious that the choir has ever since retained the position then assigned to them.” [MA/Wenham; Allen 1860, p. 200]

ca. 1770 + 1780, 31 August: “To MOSES STEBBINS, / In WILBRAHAM. (MASS.) / WILBRAHAM Aug. 31, 1780. / SIR. / ... I am now labouring under peculiar difficulties by [p. 784] having my Mind exercised on account of the new Ceremonies and Unscriptural Modes lately introduced into our Publick Worship. [new paragraph]

When I wrote to Solomon Warriner [not the psalmodist, born 1778] the other day [8 August 1780; I have a photocopy of this letter], I little thought of my Letter reaching you and Some others which I find it hath. If I had thought of its becoming So Publick I Should have been a little more particular in Some things and Since you have told me that you have Seen my Letter, I will venture to enter upon the Same Theme with you and a Melancholy Theam it is – And not to Mention or Dwell upon the late practice of rising up at Singing the Doxologies and Sitting down while the Preacher hath at any Time any reference to the three Persons in the Trinity; I say, not to dwell upon this Inconsistency, I will Still treat and enlarge upon what you Saw in my other Letter. And let us examine and View it in the Length and Breadth of it from the beginning down to this day. When our singing wanted to be revived, We got Mr. [John] Stickney and lastly Mr. [Justin] Morgan among us for that purpose. I was one who cast in my Mite to encourage the Singing. But they so Suddenly exchanged old Tunes for New ones and introduced them into the Publick Worship and the old ones being neglected it was but a few that could bear a part in the delightful part of Divine Worship. The old Singers became uneasy and began to complain and not without cause, I among the rest, not only for Myself but for others also. The Town took the Matter in hand and at a Legal Meeting [22 October 1770—see Stebbins 1864, p. 86] selected out a number of Tunes, injoining the School [then taught by Morgan; see Stebbins 1864, p. 87] to practice upon them only until further orders. The Clerk was ordered to Serve the Master of the School with a Copy, I think he paid [p. 785] no regard to it, Saving one Night – **Likewise the Meeting House was seated as much in favour of promoting the Singing as could be convenient with decency as to Age and Birthright.** But alas! where are they now? [new paragraph] Some Tunes were introduced soon which by Some were thought not fit to be Used in So Solemn Worship. Several have Showed their dislike by going out. Also three Persons [likely Deacon Nathaniel Warriner in the forenoon, Moses Warriner or Jonathan Bliss in the afternoon; see Stebbins 1864, pp. 89, 87] were appointed to give the lead in Singing, who have performed well and faithfully according to their best Skill and Judgment (swerving a little, no doubt, sometimes for the Sake of Pleasing, but this by the by). Of late [so, apparently closer to the writing of this letter in 1780] those appointed, for Some reasons are dropped without Sufficient reason, and others Shoved forward in their room without the knowledge or order of the Church, who of right ought to have the first Voice in all Matters of Religious Worship, under their Lord and Master. **Mark what follows; Now Seats are Shifted, Some of the Males have Stretched a Wing over upon the Female Side and have intruded upon their Right, and all with this Cloak, v.z. [sic] for the Convenience of Singing.** [new paragraph] Were our Antient Pious fore-Fathers permitted to arise from their Silent Graves and to take a view, perhaps they would blush at the Sight. Now Merry Tunes come in a pace, So full of Cords or Discords that Another Set of good Singers [the 1770 set having been mentioned above] are Shut out of bearing a part in that Worship unless they will be at the pains to learn, and in that case it is not so certain they will not soon be left behind if the Wheals continue to Trundle as they have of late. We Will now take a View of another branch of the Same Tree or at least of the Consequences arising from the Same cause. In the Morning We assemble for Mutual Divine Worship, And it is our Duty [p. 786] So to

do. The minister comes; he names a Psalm well adapted for the occasion; the Tunester after the Psalm is read and the hearers preparing their Harps for Solemn Sound and to bear a part in the delightful work of United Singing to the Praise of our common Benefactor, names the Tune, and as if he were independent, cries out, Continue. A few, and those mainly out of the Church, Sing While the Church or the bigger part and the others are obliged Solitarily to hang their Harps upon the Willows. Then prayer begins in which we all join unless we are to blame. After that Singing comes in as before described. Then an Excellent Sermon is preached by which we may all be profited unless we are wanting to ourselves. Then a part and those mainly out of the Church Sing as before. We hear the Sound but know not the Matter Sung unless our Memories are like Brass. Doubtless our Animal Frame (or at least Some of us) is Charmed but our Souls, or Rational parts remain Barren and wither away as the Fields, whereon it rained not. How apt are we and liable to be deceived in this Spot. If our Animals are Charmed at Pleasant Sounds We are Sometimes liable to Suppose that we are profited when at the Same time our rational part remains unedified. In this we are no better perhaps than some of the Dumb or irrational Creatures. For many times we find that Some of them Seem as it were put into a Transport at the Sound of Musical Instruments, or even Singing. But to proceed, As I have described Matters we perceive that the whole of our Publick Worship is thro'out Attended with continuing and resting. When Some are Singing others are out of imploy or proper imploy; and that necessarily for want of knowing the Matter [p. 787] Sung – By this time perhaps Sir, you may be apt to think I am Drifting, but I will assure you I am not. My Heart hangs heavy while I am writing and I think the Subject we are upon affords matter for Lamentation. I would Charitably hope that those few who Sing are sincear, but we must remember that Charity is not blind, it must have its proper Object to fix upon. No doubt, Sir if you will join me in Supposing that by Some Such unscriptural Methods the Antient Churches we read of in our Bibles did little by little insensibly swerve from the Rule taught them and are now and have for a long time been given up to Worship Dumb Tools. We are astonished at the Thought. Is it not high Time that our Church was organized and Church Discipline revived? Where are our Deacons, why don't they take their Seats and perform the Deacon's Duty? or let the Church appoint Some Person to read the Psalm and not leave it to the Young Singers to Say who shall read when there is reading? Why can't you at your end [of the town?] and I at ours join immediately and Settle a Minister* upon Some Conditions which may be Safe and equitable, although perhaps you may think it convenient or Necessary to Divide into Two Parrishes hereafter. But lest I weary my Self and you, I will hasten to a Conclusion and Say, To the Law and the Testimony – I think I read Somewhere in my Bible these Words, viz., Let the People Praise thee, O God, yea let all the People Praise Thee – Perhaps you may say we must be of a Condescending Temper and why may they not Sing So Sometimes. I answer, They may Sing So every time if the Holy Scriptures will bear them out. Here lys the pinch. – [p. 788, new paragraph] Please to turn your Eye to the following Texts, viz. Romans; 15 Chap. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, vers. – Chap. 16th, 17th and 18[th] verses. I Corinthians 3rd Chapr. 10, 11, 12, and 13 vers. II Corinthians 6th Chap. 14th verse to the end. Perhaps you will not be able to judge what Inferences I Draw from those Texts, I leave you to Infer for your Self. If you

can without clashing with these Scriptures reconcile me to the present mode of Singing, I will endeavor to have a better Opinion of it. At present I am very uneasy, and I Should be accountable to God and my own Conscience if I did not bear Testimony against it. I View these as not Circumstantial Things, but essential Errors which ought to be rectified. – [new paragraph] I grow weary of Writing and must conclude....” [MA/Wilbraham; Smith/Barker 1931, pp. 783-788]

1771: “The first record of a church choir [in New Haven] appeared in 1771, when the White Haven Church voted ‘that those persons who are singers in the congregation be desired to sit in the gallery together.’” [CT/New Haven; Blake 1898, p. 110]

1771: “Noah Eaton and nine others were chosen Quiristers, by First Parish, or persons to tune the psalm, and to sit, part of them in the Elders’ seat, so called, and part of them in the short seats in the men’s side gallery.” [MA/Reading; Eaton 1874, p. 171]

1771 – see 1770

1771, 7 January – see n.d. (ca. 1750-1770)

1771, 4 March – see 1765, 27 May

1771: “*Sept. 11, Wed.* This day was appointed by the church for my [i.e., Manasseh Cutler’s] ordination. ... [p. 34] ... [new paragraph] The singers had placed themselves in the front gallery, and by my desire they began the solemnity with an anthem.” [MA/The Hamlet→Hamilton; Cutler 1888, vol. I, pp. 33-34]

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 + 1794 (or 1795? –see notes from Lincoln church records, 1795, in INSTRUMENTS): “To return to the choir—the forty-two [*recte* 41] persons ‘who had attained a good understanding in the rules of singing;’—these were at first assigned seats in the rear of the main floor, although galleries had already been built around three sides of the interior [town meeting records, 4 March 1771, state that these 41 singers were allowed at that time to sit in singers’ seats in gallery]; but not until a

later day were the ceilings under the floors of these galleries plastered. Occupied during the hours of Sabbath service, mostly by boys, or by the town poor, and its Africans, the galleries were looked upon as undesirable,--to sit in them was an indication of inferiority. So, not until after the town had been forty years incorporated [i.e., 40 years after 1754], and the church had at [p. 55] last given a hesitating consent to the innovation of a bass viol to assist the singers, could the choir be reconciled to a place in the gallery, facing the pulpit." [MA/Lincoln; Lincoln 1905, pp. 54-55]

n.d. (1771 and later): "The meeting-house...was built in 1771.... ... [new paragraph] The gallery was quite broad and built on an incline. To reach the gallery there was a porch at the center of each end, large enough to contain the stairs, which were constructed in the porches, and thus saved much room in the body of the house, as well as in the gallery. The singers sat in that part of the gallery opposite the pulpit." [NH/Hudson; Webster 193, p. 207]

[ca. 1772?]: "The front gallery and the lower half of the side galleries were reserved for the singers, who were arranged, the tenor and alto opposite the pulpit, the sopranos in the left and the basses in the right side galleries." [CT/East Hartford; East Hartford 1902, p. 45]

1772: "Among the Stoughton papers, quoted by Mr. John A. Stoughton, in his *Windsor Farmes* (p. 97), is the following petition: [smaller type:] EAST WINDSOR, / Sep^r. y^e 9, 1772. / To y^e Gentlemen Society Comm^{tt}. For y^e North Society [Scantic] in said East Windsor, this from us the subscribers are to Desier you as soon as may be to warne a society meeting to do y^e following Business, viz.: [new paragraph] 1st. To see what y^e Society will do Respecting Singing whether they will ap[p]rove of Beeting y^e time with y^e hand in divine worship. [new paragraph] 2d. Whether y^e society will approve of Sounding or Pitching y^e notes with y^e voice or Pitchpipe before they begin to sing. [new paragraph] 3d to see whether they shall appoint y^e Rev. Mr. Potwine to tell the tuner what tune they shall sing. [new paragraph] 4. To see if the Society will agree upon a Serteine number of tunes that shall be sung upon y^e Lord's Day in divine worship in this Society, and what tune they will have sung. [new paragraph] 5 to see whether they will chuse any person or persons to tune the Psalm for us in this Society. [new paragraph] 6. **To see whether the society will agree to Seet the Meeting house againe, or approve of y^e disorderly Sitting in y^e Gallerys among y^e young people.** [new paragraph] 7. To see if the society will agree to sing without having the Psalm read upon the Sabboth in divine worship. [signed by 24 people]" [CT/Windsor; Stiles 1891, vol. I, p. 605]

1772, 16 March: "Then adjourned to the house of Deacon John allens on the 16th Day of March Instant: and then met where and when was Voted 11y. That the Two hind Seats in the Meeting-house in the Body of seats below: be Converted into a seat for singers at y^e Expense of y^e Town. 21y. Chosen for a Committee to see that said Singing Seat be finished and Completed Eleazer Craft: Jonathan Brown & Benj^a Kimball." [MA/Manchester; Manchester 1891, p. 135]

1772, 13 April: "The fore-seats in the gallery were regularly seated before they were occupied by singers, and were very respectable seats. [criticism of singers implied here?] On the 13th of April, 1772, the town gave directions to the seaters of the galleries, 'that the fore-seats in the side galleries shall be left for the singers.' This is the first notice of the separation of the singers from the congregation in Hadley." [MA/Hadley; Judd 1863, pp. 40-41]

"During the next year (May 10, 1772), those who sat in the second seat in the women's gallery were granted the right to make the hind seats of this gallery into pews at their own cost, provided it did not interfere with the singers who sat in the front seat of that gallery." [MA/Lancaster; Weis 1940, vol. [1], p. 161] [compare with entry for March 7, 1770, above]

1772, 18 May + 1795, 2 March, 8 March + 1796, 7 March, 4 April, 9 May, 24 October: "[pp. 183, 18 May 1772:] "To Hear the Petition of Phinihas Upham and others to know the minde of the town if they will give Liberty to a number of Singers to Set together in the Second & third and fourth Seats in the mens front Gallery and act thereon [p. 184:] ... Voted to Grant the Petition of Phinihas Upham and others" ... [p. 453, 2 March 1795:] ... To [know] the minds of the Town whether they will make such Alteration in the front Gallery as Shall better accomadate the Singers, and make such Provision therefor as Shall appear to be Nessessary and Expedient or act any thing relative to the Matter-- ... [p. 455, 8 March 1795:] ... Voted that Isaac Hobbs, Joseph Russell, Thad^s: Spring, Daniel Stratton & Cap^t. Joseph Nichols be a Committee relative to an Alteration being made in the front Gallery of the meeting House for the better accom[m]odation of the Singers, that they View the Premises Consider the expedience, Propose a plan of alteration and report to the Town at the adjournment of this meeting-- ... [p. 462, 7 March 1796:] ... 12th: ... to give thier [*sic*] other Committee instructions wether they shall or shall not proceed to make such alterations in the front gallery (agreeably to thier former Directions) for the better accomadation of the Singers as hath been proposed—or any other alteration that the Town Shall think expedient or act any thing relative thereto— ... [p. 464, 4 April 1796:] ...on the 12th. Article in the Warrant relative to Accomadating the Singers. 1st voted that the 2^d, third, & fourth Seats in the front gallery be removed and that the Space they now Occupy be Converted into two Pews, to be finished Decently now and in Such a manner as shall best accomadate the performers of of [*sic*; accurate transcription?] that part of Divine Service—and that S^d. Pews [p. 465] be appropriated (During the Pleasure of the Inhabitants of s^d. Town) to the use of the Singers, male & female that already have, or do hereafter acquire Such Skill in that Sublime art as Shall Quallify them to carry on that Part of the Publick worship of God in a Decent and becoming manner— [new paragraph] 2^d Voted that the former Committee relative to Building Pews for the Singers be Dismissed, and that Artemas Ward Esq^r. Deacon Isaac Hobbs Mess^{rs}. Joseph Russell & Eben^r Brackett be a Committee to cause such Alteration as is above described— ... [p. 466, 9 May 1796:] ... To hear the request of the Singers for some further accommodations in point of Seats in the meeting-House than was made for them the last march meeting and See

if the Town will make any further Provision for them in that behalf— ... Voted that the Second, third and fourth Seats in the front [p. 467] Gallery be Converted into two Pews for the use of the Singers during the Pleasure of the Town— ... [p. 469, 24 October 1796:] ... to hear the Petition of divers Persons in behalf of the Singers respecting a Seat for them in the meeting-house— [back a page, to p. 468; the 18th-century clerk “blundered in copying” + had to insert text out of chronological order; date is still 24 October 1796:] ... Voted that the Singers Male & female may Occupy the three first Seats in the front Gallery during the Pleasure of the Town— ” [MA/Weston; Weston 1893, pp. 183, 184, 453, 455, 462, 464-465, 466-467, 469, 468 (rather than 468, 469; see immediately above)]

“1773, a meeting was called and among the articles was one to instruct the committee ‘to set apart a Seat or Seats....for such persons as are or may be skilled in the Art of Singing. At the meeting it was voted That such Persons as are skilled in Singing shall have liberty to set together in the back Seats....and if a greater number of Persons, skilled as aforesaid, shall incline to set together than that Seat will Conveniently accom[m]odate they shall have liberty of Setting in the next Seat. And those Persons skilled as aforesaid Setting in those Seats shall tune the Psalm, provided it shall be agreeable to the minister of s^d Parish.” [MA/Rowley; Jewett 1946, p. 110]

“Finally, in 1773, the society voted ‘that the people who have learned the rule of singing have liberty to sit near together in the same position as they sat this day at their singing meeting, and that they have liberty to assist in carrying on that part of divine worship.” [CT/Farmington; Bickford 1982, p. 117]

1773: “The church remained attached to the old way of singing hymns until 1773, when it voted to permit those who had ‘learned the rule of singing’ to sit together to form a chorus. The formation of singing schools at various times had the effect of increasing the size of the chorus, which lined the front of the gallery and was controlled by the chorister opposite the pulpit.” [CT/Farmington; Bickford 1982, p. 285]

1773 – see 1726, March

1773, 1 March + 1778, 2 March, ca. 23 March + 1779 + “later date”: “At what date a special class or choir of singers was formed to carry on this part of the service, it has been found impossible to ascertain. The first action of the town upon the subject of sacred music was taken March 1, 1773, when it [new paragraph, smaller type:] ‘Voted and chose Thomas Brigden Esq. and messirs Lemuel Houghton, Stephen Holden, Abraham Stone, Moses Thirsten, John Hoar[,] Joseph Holden, Jr.[,] Reuben Miles, Nathaniel Brown[,] Samuel Cooke[,] Sebez Jackson as Modelators [modulators? --one meaning of “modulate” is “to tune to a key or pitch”] of the Tune on Lords Days in times of Divine Service.’ [new paragraph, regular type:] The article in the warrant under which these [11] men were appointed provided for the assignment of ‘a place for them to set in,’ and the selectmen were instructed ‘to

make an alteration in the Front gallery on the wimmen's side,' in order to meet the implied necessity. [new paragraph] Again, on the 2d of March, 1778, the town [new paragraph, smaller type:] '*Voted* that Thanks be Returned to Mr[.] Houghton for his Service Tuning the psalm on Lords Days and Voted To Chuse a number of persons to Tune the psalm on Lords Days Then Voted and Chose messirs Sebez Jackson, Lieut. John Hoar, Joseph Holden, John Fosket, David Nichols, Isaac Williams, Paul Walker, David Foster, Nathan Darby.' [new paragraph, regular type:] In the warrant for a town meeting, three weeks later, was an article [new paragraph, smaller type:] 'To see whether they [the voters] [←square brackets in original] will give the two hind Seats in the meetinghouse on the frunt side in the men's and wimen's side To accomidate the Singers.' [new paragraph, regular type:] Whereupon it was [new paragraph, smaller type:] '*Voted* to give the Seats mentioned in this article to accomidate the Singers and Voted to build them on the Town's Cost, and Voted to chuse three as a Committee to build said pews, and Voted that Said Committee make an Equail Division in the Pews for men and wimen and that those who are already appointed Singers [are] to take Said Seates when finished [p. 283] and that they [are] to Invite any into said Seates who are Singers till Said pews are filled and to continue their till the further order of the Town.' [new paragraph, regular type:] Some change in the location of the choir seems to have been desired the following year, 1779, since it was [new paragraph, smaller type:] '*Voted* that the Singers have the Benefitt of the four hind seats in the front Gallery on the Men's & Women's side instead of the Seats they now Sit in, etc.' [new paragraph, regular type:] At a later date, of which no record has been found, these servants of the sanctuary were given the occupancy of the front seats in the front gallery, opposite the pulpit, a position they retained while the house was used as a place of public worship." [MA/Westminster; Heywood 1893, pp. 282-283]

1773, April + 1774, December + 1811 + 1825 + 1841 + 1846 + 1851 + 1852: "In April, 1773, the spring after this [meeting] house was first occupied[,] a choir was allowed by the following vote. '*Voted* that the [p. 49] people who have learned the rule of singing, have liberty to sit near together in the same position as they sat this day at their singing meeting and they have liberty to assist in carrying on that part of divine worship.' What this 'position' was will occur at once to those 'old inhabitants' who remember the long line of singers around the front of the gallery which was marshaled and controlled by the chorister opposite the pulpit, assisted by a few leading singers. At times this line would be greatly abbreviated and demoralized. Again after a fresh impulse given by 'a singing school,' its well-filled ranks would stretch all along the front, composed of 'young men and maidens, old men and children.' [new paragraph] ... But alas! very soon, in December, 1774, a large committee was required to compromise 'the difference among the singers.' At the same time it was voted to sing at the close of the second service in the winter as well as in the summer. ... In 1811 a large permanent committee was appointed to regulate the singing in every particular. ... [p. 50; new paragraph] ... In 1825 liberty was given to the choir to choose its own leader during the pleasure of the society. In this way came into being what was known as the Associated Choir, the existence of which is manifest on the records of the society in 1841. This society received liberal

appropriations for several years, but some differences having arisen which could not be adjusted, its services as an association were dispensed with by vote of the society in 1846. Unhappy controversies having followed this event, the society in 1851 passed some conciliatory resolutions expressive of their high estimate of the value of the service of this body, inviting its members to unite with the existing choir. In 1852 resolutions of a more positive and earnest character for conciliation and adjustment indicate a serious disturbance of feeling among the singers in the society." [CT/Farmington; Porter 1873, pp. 48-50]

"...on the 12th of April, 1773, the Ecclesiastical Society 'Voted that the people who have learned the rule of singing have liberty to sit near together in the same position as they sat this day at their singing meeting, and that they have liberty to assist in carrying on that part of divine worship.' ...The change was made by other towns of the state about the same time. In one of the churches of Windsor, in 1771; in Farmington and Simsbury in 1773: [punctuation sic] in Norfolk and Columbia in 1774: and in Harwinton in 1776." [CT/Farmington; Gay 1891, p. 21]

1773, May 18: "...voted to Sing New tunes mening Salme tunes halfe of y^e time and old tunes the other halfe with a Proviso that the Singers Sit below..." [CT/East Granby; quoted in Turkey Hills 1901, p. 38]

"At a regular Meeting of November 5, 1773, the townspeople passed two votes which are very significant. ... [new paragraph] *Article 5. To know if the Town will appoint one or more seats in the Meeting House for the use of the Singers. Voted to have Mess. Jeremiah Fitch and James Wright to sett in the fore seats in the front Gallery as they are appoined (appointed) to Before the Psalm or Tune.* [new paragraph] ... In Bedford, the singers sat in the front part of the gallery, facing the high pulpit and about eye level with the minister." [MA/Bedford; Brown 1975, p. 99]

1773 + ca. 1776: "The first reference in the [Ashburnham town] records to this subject [sacred music] occurs at an early date: [new paragraph, smaller type:] To see if the town are willing that the singers should sett together in the Public Worship in any part of the gallery that shall be thought proper. [new paragraph] Voted that the singers shall have the front gallery to set in, in time of Public Worship viz : the men's side as far back as the long pew. [new paragraph, regular type: Thus, as far back as 1773 and as far back as the long pew, the town provided for the accommodation and recognized the existence of a choir. That the singers increased [p. 325] in numbers is seen in a vote a few years later 'to let the singers have the front part of the gallery to set in that they may not be so crowded.'" [MA/Ashburnham; Stearns 1887, pp. 324-325]

1773 + 1781: "In 1773 the church [in the second precinct of Rochester, today Mattapoissett] had 'desired Benjamin Hatch, Saml[.] Jenney, Timothy West, Elihu Shearman, Saml. Eldredge & Gideon Hammond to sit in fourth seat in the meeting-house and lead the Church and Congregation in singing God[']s praises.' In 1781 the precinct voted 'For the accommodation of those that lead in singing the use of the

two hind seats in the body seats, on the lower flower [floor], both on the mens and Womans Sides, **So long as the present method of Singing by Select numbers shall continue.** And the said singers may erect doors at the entrances of Said Seets [*sic*] at their own Cost, if they think proper, but not to raise the lower flower higher than it now is.” [MA/Mattapoissett; Rochester 1907, p. 219]

1774 – see n.d. (before 1764)

1774 – see 1768

1774 – see n.d. + 1769, October

1774, 7 February: “We find now and then a society record relating to the choir as, for instance, on ‘Feb[.] 7 1774 voted that choristers shall sit in next pew north of pulpit’...” [Is this a choir, or choristers?] [CT/Meriden; Gillespie 1906, p. 146, 1st numbering]

1774, 7 March – see 1763, May

1774, 14 March – see 1767, 23 July

1774, 16 May, 5 December: “...finally in 1774, without so much as a murmer [*sic*] of protest, we find first this entry: [indented, smaller type:] May 16, 1774 Town meeting ‘voted to new seat the Meeting House but not to appropriate any part of the Meeting House to Singers’ [not indented, regular type:] followed by this highly significant entry: [indented, smaller type:] Dec. 5, 1774 Voted that for ye better and more decent carrying on of public worship, Deacon Wheeler would lead in ye Singing, one half of ye Time, and ye Singers the other half, in ye Congregation. [not indented, regular type:] Thus, the old way/new way debate was resolved in Concord by a gentle compromise.” [MA/Concord; Billings 1985, p. 179]

“In September, 1774, the society [new paragraph, smaller type:] ‘Voted that the singers may sit up [in the] Gallery all day, if they please, but to keep to their own seat, the men not to infringe on the women pues.’ [new paragraph, regular type:] From this it appears, that at this date the old method of performing this part of divine service by the congregation was not yet dispensed with in this society, but for what reason it was necessary to pass a solemn vote to keep the males from *infringing* on the ladies’ rights, does not appear.” [CT/Woodbury; Cothren 1854, p. 249]

1774, 6 December – see 1767, 31 March, 14 April

ca. 1774 + 1779: “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. [new paragraph] In 1779, the church took into consideration the ‘melancholy decay of singing in public worship,

and chose 20 persons who should sit together in the body pews below and take the lead in singing, the women to sit separate from the men.” [MA/Concord; Hudson 1904, vol. I, p. 250]

1774 or shortly after + 1798 + 1805 + 1807: “A choir was collected and seated in the front seats of the galleries.... The first appropriation to aid the choir, was \$12 in 1798. In 1805, \$60 was given by vote. In 1807, \$60 more. Sums were sometimes expended for that purpose, at the discretion of the selectmen. At other times, sums were raised by subscription, and teachers hired from abroad. This choir has generally been ambitious to excel in that important and pleasant part of divine worship. They have almost uniformly borne the palm, when set in competition with the neighboring choirs, and it is believed, few exceed this at the present time. They have, as before noticed, in reversion, an annual sum of \$50, as an income to encourage them in their present exertions.” [CT/Norfolk; Roys 1847, p. 31]

n.d. (late 1770s) – see n.d. (early 1760s)

1775: “It was also voted that the second and third seats in the front gallery be the seats for the singers to sit in; and at another meeting, it was voted to have two doors to the said two seats. This is the first mention of a choir.” [MA/Arlington; Cutter 1880, p. 49]

1775, 9 March – see 1768, 8 December, 14 December

1775, 29 March – see 1767, 31 March, 14 April

1775 and after: “The second meeting-house [built 1773-1775] was a large two-story building.... Galleries were built on three sides of the church, supported by pillars planted in the church floor. They were divided into pews, and the gallery opposite the pulpit was provided with seats for the singers.” [NH/Wilton; Livermore 1888, p. 130]

ca. 1776 – see 1773

“1776. ... [‘]Voted that those persons that are made choice of to tune the Salm on Sabbath Days, and others that may be Desirous to Joyn in singing may have seats by them selves. Voted that those persons made choice of for singing shall have the Liberty of the second seat in the front gallary for that purpose.[’] This privilege was obtained with difficulty. The people were fearful of dangerous innovations.” [MA/Chelmsford; Waters 1917, p. 679]

1776: “Among other votes this year pertaining to the meeting-house is the following: That the ministerial pew in the meeting-house be appropriated ‘to those that is best Skilled in Singing at the present.’ There is no record of any examination as to proficiency of those who occupied the ministerial pew.” [NH/Goffstown; Hadley 1922, vol. I, p. 382]

"April, 1776. Voted [in the East Windsor church], that 'the young men who sing on the tenor be allowed to sit in the north front gallery.'" [CT/Windsor; Stiles 1891, vol. I, p. 730]

1776, 20 May – see 1763, May

"In 1777, a town meeting was held in Sept., at which the only business transacted was to locate a Sabbath-day house on the Green, and to enact as follows, viz.: ... 'Voted that those persons men and women in the galleries who are skilled in singing psalms; to carry on the divine service of singing psalms.' / It would seem from this that the voices below were not in harmony with those above, and the services of praise were to be confined to the skilled ones in the galleries." [CT/Goshen; Hibbard 1897, p. 86]

1777, 3 March – see 1765, 27 May

1778, 1 January: "Upon the Petition of the Singing Society, that they may be allowed to form certain Seats in the front gallery of the Meeting house, into a Pew for their better Accommodation, at their own Expence Voted That the Town will allow the Singing Society leave to form the requested Seats in the Gallery into a Pew for their better Accommodation, they making the desired Alteration at their own Expence; reserving to the Town an absolute Right to alter or dispose of the same, whenever they think proper: the proposed Alteration to be under the Direction of the Selectmen, who are appointed a Committee for that Purpose[.]" [MA/Brookline; Brookline 1875, p. 274]

1778, 2 March, ca. 23 March – see 1773, 1 March

1778, 9 March – see 1767, 23 July

"December 15, 1778. ... 'It was Voted by the Parish that no Hats Shall be hanged on the Gallery Pillows, The Gallery Seats from the East Alle to the front Voted by the Parish to the Singers'. [spelling + punctuation *sic*] [MA/Needham; Clarke 1912, p. 213]

1778 + 1781: "It was seven years afterward [i. e., 7 years after 4 leaders were chosen "to conduct the singing"] that the first choir appeared in the Westborough meeting-house, and the innovation was indorsed by the following town-vote, recommending 'to those male persons who are disposed to sing the praises of God in publick to set as much together as they conveniently can, in ye men's front Gallery, without depriving those who usually set there of their places. And to those female persons who in like manner are disposed to sing, to set in ye women's front gallery for ye purpose aforesaid, and to Set there in a decent manner during ye town's pleasure.' [new paragraph] This action of 1778 seems to have been well up to the stage of progress then possible, and the permission to women as well as men to sing

in the choir was in advance of the prevailing custom. So far as the record shows, there was no serious opposition to the change. In 1781 the west end of the men's gallery, as far as the alley, was appropriated 'to those that were inclined to assist in the worship of singing on the Sabbath;' [punctuation *sic*] and thus the church was fairly committed to the innovation of a choir." [MA/Westborough; Deforest 1891, p. 157]

1778 + 1786: "In 1778, 'Voted, that the singers sit in the three back seats below, in front of the pulpit, both on the men's and women's side.' ... [new paragraph] In 1786 it was 'Voted, to cut the women's gallery for the singers, and that the singers shall have the upper part of them'; that is, nearest the pulpit." [MA/Randolph; Randolph 1881, p. 94 (from "History of the Psalms and Hymns and Music of the First Church of Randolph" by Rev. Asa Mann)]

1779 – see 1768, 8 December, 14 December

1779 – see 1773, 1 March

1779 – see ca. 1774

1779, 29 March: "Voted to allow the Singing Society to Occupy the Seats in the front Gallery, During the Pleasure of the Town, and to allow of such Alterations in the Seats as shall be most convenient for Sd Singers[.]" [MA/Brookline; Brookline 1875, p. 284]

1779, 2 July + 1785, 28 March + ca. 1806: "An innovation was effected at a town-meeting July 2, 1779, presaging the decadence of congregational singing:-- [new paragraph, smaller type:] Voted that the singers have liberty to seet in the south end of the Side Galaries both on the men's and women's side in the short seats as far as the ally—each sect observing their proper side. ... [p. 212, new paragraph, regular type:] March 28, 1785, the choir won the second step in dignity. It was voted to make the two hind seats on both sides of the aisle into pews for the singers. ... [p. 216, new paragraph] ...it was not until 1806 that the meeting-house was furnished with a steeple. This was built as an addition to the front, and in it was hung, in 1807, the first bell used in the town for calling the congregation together. ... The cost of the bell tower—one thousand dollars—was met by the sale at auction of sixteen pews built in the space that had been devoted to the choir [that's a lot of space!]. ... [p. 217] ... The singers were thenceforward seated in the front gallery." [MA/Harvard; Nourse 1894, pp. 207, 212, 216-217]

"The town, Aug. 3, 1779, was requested to act on three articles presented in a petition which had been sent to the selectmen, signed by a number of persons. [new paragraph] Article 1. To hear the complaint of any aggrieved person, and allow every one liberty to stand or sit, during the singing in public worship; [new paragraph] Article 2. To see if the church and congregation may introduce Dr. Watts' version of the psalms and hymns into the public worship; and [new

paragraph] Article 3. **To see if the town will grant the “Choreesters” (choir?) any particular seat or seats in the meeting-house.** [p. 158, new paragraph] The petition was granted, and permission was given to introduce said ‘psalms and hymns’ upon trial for three months; and also **voted four men’s seats and three women’s seats below in the meeting-house to accommodate the singers.** [NH/Lyndeborough; Donovan 1906, pp. 157-158]

1779, 5 August – see 1726, March

1779, 13 August + 1782 + 1791: “In 1779, both the town and church records indicate a resolution: [indented, smaller type:] Aug. 13, 1779: The Church then proceeded to consider ye melancholy decay of singing in public worship—and after some debate ye Chh voted to choose twenty persons brethren of ye Church and others [women] [←square brackets added in Billings 1985; this “others” might refer not to women but to “brethren” (perhaps both men + women) of the congregation rather than the church] who should sit together in ye body seats below, to take ye lead in singing. Also voted it is ye desire of ye Chh yt ye women singers sit opposite too ye men and assist in ye singing. [not indented, regular type:] In 1782, the decision to build singers’ seats, voted down in 1774 [see 1774, 16 May... above], was passed: [indented, smaller type:] Voted that a Body of Seats in the Meeting House in this Town should be taken away and pews erected on the same grounds for singers. [not indented, regular type:] Two rear pews were removed and the rest moved forward four inches, to [indented, smaller type:] make room for Pews to be there erected about 5’ and 10” wide...that 2/2 (sic) of the ground on the men’s Side and 1/3 of the ground on the [p. 180] women’s side should be appropriated for those singers who shall be appointed by a joint Standing Committee from Town and Church in this Town, to sett in Said Pews for the above purpose. Passed 53 to 44 with this amendment that the whole of the Ground should be appropriated to the use of those who lead in Psalmody, provided those should require [it?]. [not indented, regular type:] In the 1791 remodeling, the singers’ seats were put in the center of the balcony: [indented, smaller type:] the (2 rows of) galleries and windows taken down..., one row of galleries and two rows of windows made...the Singers Seats to be in the front gallery in the center of the Same, one seat of which to project beyond the Gallery. [not indented, regular type:] Was the projecting seat for the director?” [MA/Concord; Billings 1985, pp. 179-180]

1779 + 1780 + 1782 + unspecified later dates: “In 1779 it was voted by the Parish to consent to the building of a seat in the meeting-house to accommodate singing. This seat was to be ‘before the seat the Deacons sit in.’ It is uncertain whether the seat was built. For we find a petition for a Parish Meeting, 1780, to see if the Parish would allow seats for the singing school. No action seems to have been taken on this petition. Another petition of the same kind was presented in 1782, for the use of the three hindmost seats. This petition was refused. At about this time, it is said, a part of the singers sat in the gallery and a part below. When the new house was building, the same question came up again. At one meeting the privilege of sitting together

was denied: at a subsequent meeting it was granted. The seats allowed were in the front gallery.” [MA/Andover; Andover 1859, p. 56]

1779 + 1792: “In 1779 it [the church] took into consideration ‘the melancholy decay of singing in public worship, and chose 20 persons, who should sit together in the body seats below, and take the lead in singing.’ The women to sit separate from the men. They removed into the gallery soon after the repair of the [meeting] house in 1792.” [MA/Concord; Shattuck 1835, p. 192]

1780: “...a far more violent and determined resistance 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....” [MA/Leicester; Washburn 1860, p. 109]

“In 1780, Joshua Chandler’s pew in the meeting-house was ordered taken up, ‘that the singers might have proper seats.’ This is the first reference to any distinctive musical [p. 288] body. Few country churches had a choir at this date.” [CT/North Haven; Thorpe 1892, pp. 287-288]

1780 – see n.d. (before 1764)

1780 – see 1779

1780, 31 August – see ca. 1770

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

1781 – see 1763

1781 – see 1773

1781 – see 1778

1781, March, December + 1783, February: “In the warrant for March meeting, in the year 1781, we find this article:--‘To see if the precinct will permit the singers to sit together in the front gallery, or allow them such a part of it as the precinct shall think proper.’ In reference to this article, they ‘voted to do nothing about it.’ [new paragraph] ... [at precinct meeting, December 1781:] ‘Also, voted the two hind seats, below, both men’s side and women’s, for the use of the singers.’ Here the precinct, as a special favor, grant the singers the back seat on the lower floor that they may sit together. In February, 1783, Dea. Amariah Bigelow and five others presented a petition, ‘To see if the precinct will grant to the use of the singers the front gallery, both men and women’s side, all but the fore seat, so long as they shall perform singing with decency and good order.’ This petition was not granted. This appears

to have been the last effort during the ministry of Mr. Fairbanks [i.e., until at least 1793] to improve the singing. The friends of the effort probably left the singing to take care of itself, and the congregation to enjoy or endure it as they might be able." [MA/Boylston; Sanford 1853, p. 30]

1781, 6 March: "There are many records of the appointment of committees of men to promote singing in public worship, but it was not, so far as I have found, until March 6, 1781, that any women were put on such a committee. [?] It was then 'Voted to appropriate the Two Womens Seats in the front Gallery for Such Women as are Skilled in musick to Set in.'" [MA/Byfield (Byfield Parish of Newbury); Ewell 1904, p. 155]

n.d. (1781, 24 December?): "Also, voted the two hind seats, below, both men's and women's, for the use of the singers." [MA/Boylston; Ainsworth 1887, p. 8]

"In 1782, after independence had been won and peace declared, the common device for raising church revenue was used. Pew occupants were asked or required to pay for them, and the building plans were completed 'as far as the funds would go.' A part was used to finish the front gallery and provide handsome seats for the singers, who had previously sat on either side of the center aisle near the front of the auditorium.... [new paragraph] The provision of singers' seats, however, represented the settlement of a sort of musical feud. There had been a long dispute as to whether the singers [choir or congregation?] should stand or sit when they sung a hymn. Evidently it was not a question which could be settled by vote: convictions were too strong. Neither group would compromise. So some stood and some sat. This [p. 32] situation was not very edifying in a solemn religious service. The new seats offered a solution: all could remain seated." [ME/Kennebunk; Freeman 1952, pp. 31-32]

"In 1782, a request was made for the assignment of 'some particular part of the meeting-house for those persons to set that have learned to sing by rule,' and, with commendable liberality, the town granted them 'The two hind seats in the mens side and Two in the womens side below.' A few years later the singers were promoted to seats in the galleries, and from the first were often styled 'the choir.'" [NH/Rindge; Stearns 1875, p. [264]]

1782 – see 1779

1782 – see 1779, 13 August

"March 19, 1782, it was voted 'that the singers should have the east half of the front gallery, exclusive of the back pew.'" [MA/Boxford; Perley 1880, p. 248]

1782, 13 May: "...also voted That those that Lead in Singing in Said Society Sit in y^e meeting house where They think most Convenient to Sing[;] also voted that y^e Choeristers Set Such tunes as they think Proper according to y^e meetors

Propounded[;] also voted not to Read y^e Psalm Line by Line[;] also voted to finish y^e front Seat in y^e Gallery[;] also voted a farthing on y^e Pound to Defray y^e Charges[;] also voted to Chuse m^r Isaac Owen J^r Sam^l [sic] Forward Thomas Stevens J^r Roswel Skinner and Jesse Forward To be Choiristers..." [CT/East Granby; quoted in Turkey Hills 1901, p. 48]

1782 + n.d. (possibly 1783-1785): "As has been mentioned, the singers originally sat promiscuously in all parts of the house. Many efforts were made to effect a reform in this matter, and have them sit together, as manifestly more convenient for the singers and more edifying to the audience. But this too, was considered an innovation, not to be peaceably acquiesced with. Even as late as 1782, an article was inserted in the warrant at the annual meeting 'to see if the town will grant seats in the gallery in the meeting house to the singers that they may sit together.' But it passed in the *negative*. The town having been favored with the services of Mr. Solomon Howe, a celebrated instructor in sacred music, who substituting some of the sweet and pleasing airs of Billings, for the slow movements of Williams and Tanner [corrected to "Tansur" on p. iv], effected such a reform in church music, that the singers were allowed to sit together, and the front part of the gallery was appropriated for their use." [footnote: "One old gentleman felt himself so much outraged, with what he considered such an improper manner of performing public worship, that he told the minister if he gave his encouragement to such improprieties he would *serve them a trick that the devil would'nt* [punctuation sic], *he would leave them.*"] [Solomon Howe had children born in Brookfield, MA—6.7 miles west of Spencer—in 1779, 1781, + 1783; his next child was born in Swansea, MA in May 1785] [MA/Spencer; Draper 1841, p. 100]

n.d. (ca. 1782-1831) + 1867: [during the pastorate (1782-1831) of Noah Miles:] "Besides the Scripture reading and the prayers, there was also the singing of psalms. The church choir occupied the gallery at the back of the church. When a psalm was to be sung, the congregation would rise and, turning their backs to the minister, face the choir. ... [p. 308] ... [new paragraph] ...Through Fisk [Prof. Martin Heald Fisk, frequently quoted here; delivered historical address concerning town of Temple] we do know that the congregation still stood and faced the choir for the singing of hymns until 1867. The choir still occupied the gallery, which extended clear across the east end of the sanctuary, accessible only by high stairs. [new paragraph] ...Fisk reports that 'in the year 1867 the gallery and singing seats were lowered [?] and the church repaired.'" [NH/Temple; Temple 1976, pp. 300, 308]

"In 1783 a committee was chosen, 'to collect all of the church and congregation that are skilled in singing and who will go into the singing seats and that said singers shall not vote anyone out of the seat without the advice of said committee, nor go out themselves as individuals, nor as a body, without acquainting said committee with their designs and giving their reasons that the committee may have an opportunity to fill their places.' Evidently then as now there were drawbacks in the artistic tempera- [p. 139] ment and the singing seats were often occupied by the war

department of Zion." [ME/North Yarmouth; Rowe 1937, pp. 138-139; quoted almost *verbatim* in Yarmouth 1881, p. 11]

1783 – see 1761

1783, February – see 1781, March, December

1783, 13 March: "As the Committee did not sell the pews in the gallery, they were settled with and discharged, March 13th, 1783. Voted, that Gen Joseph Badger have all the pews in the gallery, excepting what had been voted to Antipas Gilman, to be disposed of as he saw fit, provided he finished the gallery. The town were to provide and put in all the joists wanting, and find boards and nails to lay the floors, and build the breast work. They were also to build the stairs, and the doors that enter the gallery; the singing pew in the gallery to be finished by Gen. Badger." [NH/Gilmanton; Lancaster 1845, p. 188]

"1783," 17 November – see 1793?, 17 November

n.d. (possibly 1783-1785) – see 1782

1783 + 1786: "In 1783 it was voted to read a psalm to be sung; and three years later the position of the singers, which had been on the east side of the alley, was changed to a more conspicuous position in the middle of the gallery." [MA/Canton; Huntoon 1893, p. 312]

1784 – see n.d. + 1769, October

1784, 26 January: "Perhaps the most interesting development [during the Rev. Mr. Atwater's ministry] was that of the choir and the singing school. As early as January 26, 1784, it had been directed 'That no Person that is not seated in the first seats in the frunt and side Galleries should set in s^d seats on any Day of Publick Worship, except those that sing, in order that they may have suffitient room to set together ye better to perform that part of Worship.' From this we know that the choir, at that [p. 118] time, sat in the front seats of the galleries, both on the sides of the building, and facing the pulpit." [CT/Branford; Simonds [1919], pp. 117-18]

1784, 11 February: "...after hearing several other candidates,...a more unanimous request was sent, in 1783, to the Rev. John Mellen, of Sterling, to come and labor among them; and this call was successful. He was settled in Hanover, February 11, 1784.... 'Six churches were sent to on the occasion.... ... *Anthems* were sung by the choir, on entering and leaving the Meeting house.'" [Was this the Hanover church's own choir, or a choir specially put together for the occasion, perhaps drawing its singers from a variety of churches? See June 9, 1797 in this file.] [MA/Hanover; Barry 1853, p. 67]

"March 1, 1784. Voted 'That the Fore Seat in the Meeting House be appropriated to the singers if needed.'" [MA/Greenfield; Thompson 1904, vol. I, p. 286]

n.d. (1784 and after): "'The singing was always by a large mixed choir; they occupied the gallery at the rear of the church [church built summer 1784], called the choir loft. It was customary for the congregation to rise during the sing- [p. 195] ing and turn to face the choir.['] ... [p. 205] ... [new paragraph] The singing in our church was always by a large volunteer choir occupying the gallery opposite the pulpit...." [RI/Bristol; Thompson 1942, pp. 194-195, 205; source of quote on pp. 194-195 apparently not given]

1784 + 1802: "When the meeting-house was finished, in 1784, it was fitted up with a singers' pew in the gallery opposite the pulpit. This was a large, square pew, with a box, or table, in the middle, for the singers to lay their books on. In singing they rose and faced each other, forming a hollow square. ... [p. 533] ... [new paragraph] When the addition was made to the meeting-house, in 1802, the old singers' pew was taken away, but seats assigned them in the same relative position opposite to the pulpit. They stood in singing, but did not turn round." [NH/Concord; Bouton 1856, pp. 531, 533]

1784 + ca. 1790 + 1813: "Three ['lots,' which I take to mean either pews or discrete groups of seats] in the center of the front row [in the south gallery, opposite the pulpit] were bought [in 1784] by three men who gave them to the town for the use of the singers during public worship services. ... [p. 120, new paragraph] In the meetinghouse, the singers' benches were probably as old as the gallery itself. They needed repair, and [ca. 1790] the townsmen took the women's side seats in the side gallery for the use of the singers. The action was a kind of eminent domain. Even these seats needed attention, for the voters decided to 'let them be made convenient for them to sit in without damaging them.' With this permission, the singers moved from the south to the east gallery." ... [p. 151, new paragraph] ... The townsmen tried to reseat the singers once more [in 1813], but that plan was unclear [?] and it failed." [MA/Bedford; Mansur 1974, pp. 112, 120, 151]

n.d. (1784 and after) + 1859, 27 October + n.d. (1859 and after) + 1868: "The paneled pulpit [in the Congregational Church, 4th meetinghouse, built 1784] was built on a long side, the north, with a steep little winding flight of red-carpeted stairs, and a most impressive sounding-board. It was so high that in the cosy niche beneath, back of the communion table, sat or stood, the two men—tenor and bass—who led the congregational singing, with only the adventitious aid of a tuning fork. Afterwards a choir was formed, and established in the middle of the long gallery opposite; and there a bass-viol came into play, afterwards a violin, and lastly a melodeon. ... [p. 421] A glance at the interior of the church [Congregational Church, 5th meetinghouse] as it appeared at the time of its dedication [27 October 1859] would show many features not seen now. The large chorus choir occupied the gallery at the opposite end of the church from the pulpit. ... The music of that day as on other days was inspiring. The accompaniment was a bass viol played with much

skill by Abijah McEwen. Later a melodeon with two banks of keys came into use. But an organ was much to be desired and an Organ Fund Society was formed by the women of the church.... Nine years after the dedication [i. e., in 1868] an organ was purchased at a cost of about \$2500." [note that sequence of instruments in 4th meetinghouse—bass viol, then melodeon—is then apparently repeated in 5th meetinghouse; might there be some confusion here?] [CT/Stratford; Wilcoxson 1939, pp. 411, 421]

1785 – see 1762

1785 – see 1768

1785, 28 March – see 1779, 2 July

"not long after" 1785 – see 1768

1786: "It was about this time [1786] that singing began to be conducted by a choir sitting in the gallery, about which there were some conflicting feelings that caused some little commotion in the church and community, but which soon quieted down, all being convinced that the change was an improvement.... [p. 33] This new departure in singing, from the deacon or deacons in front of the pulpit, to the gallery, took place in the old church in the spring of 1786." [CT/Torrington; Orcutt 1878, pp. 32-33]

1786 – see 1778

1786 – see 1783

1786, 13 April, October: "During the early years of this church, congregational singing was exclusively practiced in the worship of the sanctuary. The senior deacon read the psalm or hymn—a line at a time—and all the people who could sing followed with such harmony as their abilities could command. In 1786 it was decided that this essential part of the sabbath services should be conducted by a select choir, and that the back seats in the front gallery should be exclusively appropriated to the use of the singers. As this measure received some opposition from persons who had occupied those seats, it was conceived proper to bring the matter before the people at a regular town-meeting. The following article was accordingly introduced into a warrant calling a town-meeting: [new paragraph] 'To see if the town will vote the two hind seats in the front gallery, to be fitted for the use of the singers, instead of the two hind seats on the lower floor.' The meeting 'voted to choose a committee to confer with the singers about the carrying on that part of worship, and concerning their seat, and report at the next meeting.' [new paragraph] The committee submitted the following report: [new paragraph] 'We, the subscribers, being a committee to agree with sundry persons respecting an article in a warrant for the last meeting of the town, respecting a convenient seat for the singers; having attended to that service, beg leave to report,--that having held a

conference with them, we have agreed that the two hind seats in the front gallery be made into a proper pew, with a table suitable for them, or convenient for books, and they take the said pew for their seats so long as they serve in singing. ... [3 names of committee members, then:] 'Shirley, April y^e 13, 1786.' [new paragraph] This report was accepted; yet, as the persons who were removed from their seats by the change were disaffected, the matter was again brought before the town at a [p. 228] meeting held in October of the aforesaid year. It was, however, voted not to rescind the former vote, and the singers were accordingly established in the front gallery for all coming time." [MA/Shirley; Chandler 1883, pp. 227-228]

1787, 12 March – see 1767, 23 July

1787, 28 May: "Choir. What portion of the [meeting] house, if any, was assigned for the use of the choir we do not know—in fact the only hint that there were those who led the Congregation in their songs of praise, is found in the record of May 28, 1787 when it was 'voted that the Division in the front gallery be moved three feet toward the Eastward, and that the ground be improved by the singers During the pleasure of the Town.'" [MA/Princeton; Blake 1915, vol. I, p. 134]

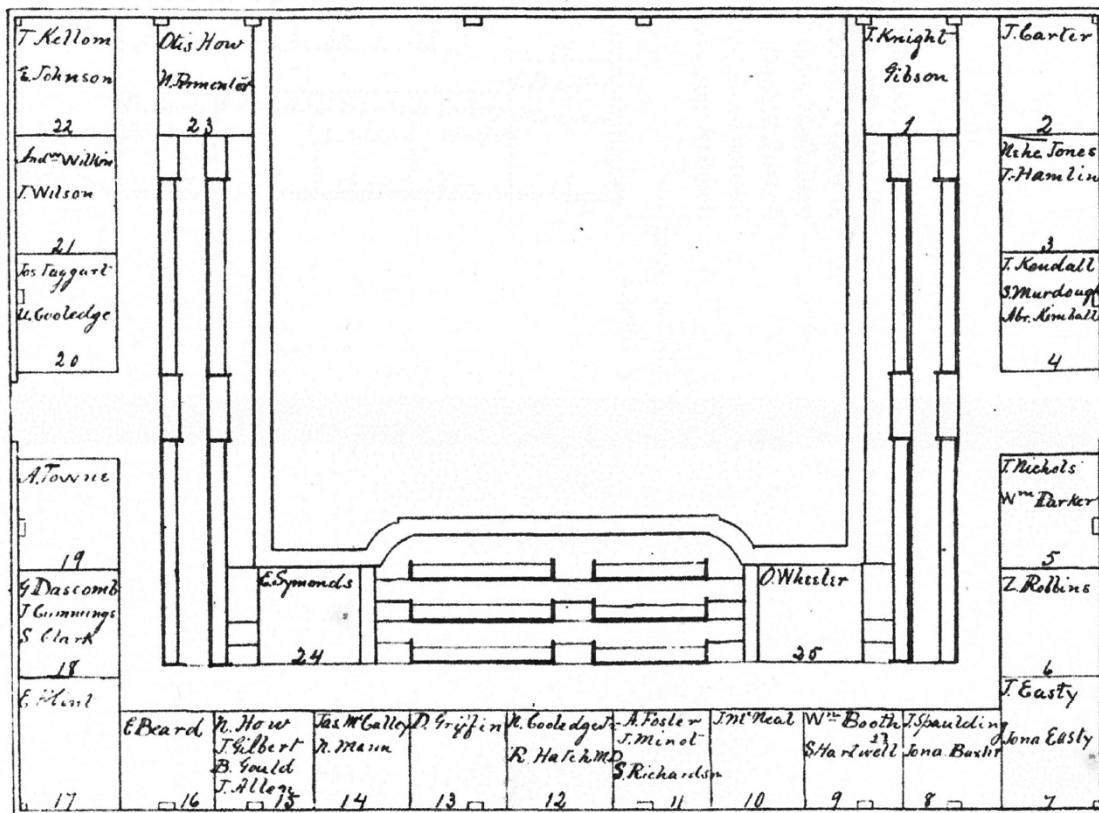
1787 + 1791, 1 March + 1792, 6 March: "In 1787 the manner of singing was changed. The singers were seated in one place by themselves instead of being mixed with the congregation. The town at that time [new paragraph, smaller type:] Voted to Grant the two middle body seats below, men and womens side, for the Singers. ... [new paragraph, regular type:] In 1791 the singers were seated in the gallery, by vote of the town. [new paragraph] March 1, 1791, the town [new paragraph, smaller type:] Voted to grant half of the Front Gallery for the Singers and take it out of the Senter. [new paragraph, regular type:] In 1792, March 6, the town [new paragraph, smaller type:] Voted to annex the womans seats in the front of the Gallery to the Singers Seats." [NH/Jaffrey; Cutter 1881, p. 154]

n.d. (1787?) + 1796 + 1813: "Jacob Fisher and William Jefferds were appointed a 'Committee to Advise and Regulate the Singers.' But it was a difficult labor which was thus put upon them. The singers would [p. 626] not be regulated. The difficulty appears to have been that some were lazy, and chose to sit down and sing, while others preferred to stand. The choir still occupied the seats on the lower floor. One would suppose that the sitting posture, whereby most of the singers were out of the sight of the audience, would not be the most acceptable to intelligent musicians. But the committee, being unable to bring the parties to satisfactory terms, appealed to the Parish, and, at a regular meeting, it was voted 'That it is the Desire of the People in general that the Singers should keep their Seats.' But this arrangement continued only a few years. The singing seats were very unfavorable to the freedom required in the performance of their duties. ... [discussion of musical instruments used; see I n.d. (1787?)-1812] With these several instruments, the seats were very poorly adapted for the accommodation of the choir. A special meeting was called, in 1796, to see if the Parish would move the singers into the front gallery. It was voted to do so. To avoid all cause of complaint, as no very acceptable provision was made for

them there, it was further 'voted that the singers should not be disturbed until there is a han[d]some seat built for them in the front Gallery;' and to make the position more satisfactory, it was decided that they should have the whole front gallery. But this did not entirely meet their wishes, and in 1813, the Parish voted to 'alter the front gallery to accommodate the singers.'" [ME/Wells; Bourne 1875, pp. 625-626]

1788 – see 1763

1788, 4 November + late 1789 and after: "Proposals to the town of Hillsboro. [new line] I, Joseph Symonds of Hillsborough in the County of Hillsborough and State of New Hampshire, Do now give the home farm of Samuel Symonds Late of Hillsboro Deceased with all the priviledges and appertinances thereto belonging, as a free gift, agreeable to the Desire of his Son Deceased, provided that the town Build Board and Shingle a Meeting house in Said town in Eighteen Months from the Date of this Meeting cal[l]ed to hear and act upon sd proposels; said house to be set upon the Land that has been appropriated for that Use by Col: Hill and Likewise **in finishing sd house that they Build a convenient seat in the fore part of the front Gallery and always reserve the same for the use of the singers in sd town.... [no other specifications for the meetinghouse that is to be built]** ... [new line] Given under my hand this fourth Day of Novemr AD 1788. [new line] JOSEPH SYMONDS.' ... [p. 20] ... [new paragraph] ... The choir occupied the front of the South gallery, facing the pulpit, the women at the right and the men at the left, the performers on instruments occupying the transverse seat at the extreme left, backed by pew No. 24, the leader occupying a short seat at the extreme right, hinged to the gallery front, so it might be raised to allow the singers occupying the front seat to pass, but not shown on the plan of the galleries, on page 14." [see plan of gallery, below] [NH/Hillsborough; Densmore 1890, pp. 9, 20]



between 1788 and 1792 + after 1792, 10 April: "We will now let Phoebe H. Tarbox, one of the old attendants at the church, tell about it in her own words. "Through the south porch was the main entrance as all that came had to come up the old road south. As we enter the entry to the church we turn to the right and go upstairs. There are the singing seats, in back of them a few pews where I usually sat. As you enter the church the broad aisle leads straight to the pulpit. There was a large sounding-board, in back of that a high window with an oval top set with glass cut in different shapes. The pews were square with drop seats which we had to turn up for prayer as we always had to stand. There was a little drop table on which we put our books. All the heat this church ever had were little foot stoves inside [p. 151] of which were dishes of coals. These were carried to church by the people.' [new paragraph] The seats for the singers which she mentioned were not in the original church [completed 1784] but were added probably during the summer of 1792, as one of the actions taken at the Town Meeting held April 10, 1792, was as follows: 'Voted that Dr. Watts's version of the Psalms be used in the congregation of Peterborough for the future, also voted to choose a committee to procure seats in the breast and front of the gallery, decent and comfortable to accommodate a sufficient number of singers to carry on the singing in as good order as the circumstances of the congregation would admit of. Also voted that Robert Smith, John Moor, and Thomas Steele be said committee to buy or hire said seats or pews as they shall think best, also voted that Jonathan Smith, John Gray, Oliver Felt and Samuel Smith to set them [i.e., set the tunes; see 1792, 10 April, below] and to invite

such persons to assist them as they think proper.' ... [p. 160] ... [new paragraph]
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." [compare middle section of this with 1792, 10 April—below] [NH/Peterborough; Morison 1954, pp. 150-151, 160]

1789 – see 1771

1789, March, 12 October: "In the warrant for the meeting in March, 1789, there was an article as follows: 'To see if the parish will agree to appropriate any part of the front galery in the meeting-house for a pew or pews for the singers to sit in.' The parish voted the singers the pew, and also raised £10 for levelling round the meeting-house. [new paragraph] In the warrant for the meeting held October 12, 1789, was this important article, 'To see if the parish will make any addition to the pew in the galery where the singers sit.' After a long debate in which the capacity of the pew and the capacity of the singers was discussed, and the extravagant demands of the musical portion of the parish commented upon, it was solemnly voted 'to enlarge the singing pew to seventeen feet and no larger.' ... [p. 66, new paragraph] ... So far as we can learn, its [the meetinghouse's] builders worked in harmony, bearing themselves like men even under the trying circumstances of the enlargement of the singing pew. ... LOCATION AND PLAN OF THE OLD MEETING-HOUSE. [new paragraph] ... In the front gallery was a space arranged to accommodate the choir...." [NH/Milford; Ramsdell 1901, pp. 65, 66]

1789, March + 1798, April: "Eventually, as a means of improving congregational singing, the best singers were encouraged to sit together. In Carlisle, in March 1789, it was voted 'that those who may be Disposed to Set together for the purpose of Singing shall have the two hind Seats below.' Nine years later, in April 1798 when a vote was taken to vendue pew ground which was not already sold, it was also voted to sell the singers' seats, 'the ground where the two hind seats are upon the floor of the Meetinghouse for Pews.' At the same time provision was made to give the singers 'the fore Seat and the Second Seat in the front gal[l]ery.'" [MA/Carlisle; Wilkins 1976, p. 99]

1789, 7 May, 15 May – see 1765, 27 May

late 1789 and after – see 1788, 4 November

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 1784

"May 31, [p. 154] 1790. 'V. to seat the singers in the front gallery, in the two foremost seats.'" [NH/Temple; Blood 1860, pp. 153-154]

1791: "The singers [in the new meetinghouse built in 1791] occupied seats in the front of the gallery facing the pulpit, with a ledge for their books before them, and there were three steps downward to the front." [VT/Pomfret; Vail 1930, vol. I, p. 208]

1791 – see 1779, 13 August

1791, 1 March – see 1787

1792 – see 1779

1792, 6 March – see 1787

1792, 10 April: "It appears that Watts'[s] Hymns were introduced by a vote [p. 90] of the town at a meeting, April 10, 1792. The following vote was passed: 'Voted, That Dr. Watts'[s] version of Psalms be used in the congregation of Peterborough for the future'; also, 'Voted, To choose a committee to procure seats in the breast and front of the gallery, decent and comfortable, to accommodate a sufficient number of singers to carry on the singing in as good order as the circumstances of the congregation will admit of'; also, 'Voted, That Robert Smith, John Moore, and Thomas Steele be said committee to buy or hire said seats or pews as they shall think best'; also, 'Voted, That Jonathan Smith, John Gray, Oliver Felt, and Samuel Smith are to set the tune, and to invite such persons to assist them as they think proper.'" [NH/Peterborough; Smith 1876, pp. 89-90; compare with between 1788 and 1792 + after 1792, 10 April—above]

after 1792, 10 April – see between 1788 and 1792

1793 – see 1768

1793?, 17 November + 1794, 6 March: "Nov. 17, 1783 [listed between entries for March 14, 1793 + March 6, 1794, so *recte* 1793?] – Voted that the second and third seats in the front gallery [*sic*; accurately transcribed?] be appropriated to the use of the singers. ... March 6, 1794 – Warrent [*sic*; accurately transcribed?] 'To see if the precinct will take any measures to encourage the singing by accom[m]odating the singers with seats – Voted the [*sic*; "they" mis-transcribed?] choose a committee to prepare a seat in the meeting House for the singers. This committee recommended that a pew be made for the singers 16 feet in length from the second post upon the men's side in front between the foreseat and the front pew.[']" [MA/North Brookfield; Fiske notes]

1793 or 1794 and later: “[before the singers moved to the gallery:] There were two rows of body seats in front [on the main floor of the meetinghouse], on which were seated men and women on opposite sides. Behind these were two rows for the singers. When the singers stood, they faced each other, with a partition between them, on which to lay their books. The Deacons sat in their place before the pulpit and lined off the Psalm. ... [new paragraph] At length a change was made, the stairs in the [northwest + southwest] corners were removed. The west gallery [long side of the meetinghouse, opposite the pulpit] was enlarged for the singers by adding the swell in front. Deacon Pierce, carpenter from Dorchester, was employed by the town to make these alterations, about 1793, or 4. He converted the body seats above named into pews, and the singers went into the gallery, and the poor were seated in a pew by the pulpit. ... When the stairs were removed from the west corners of the church, it was necessary to provide other means for reaching the galleries. ... A new two story porch was erected [on the south side of the meetinghouse] by Mr. Pierce, with stairs to the south, or women’s gallery, and also to the south end of the west gallery.... Communication was also made [from the main meetinghouse building] with the tower on the north, by which access was had to the men’s gallery, and also to the north end of the west gallery. [new paragraph] The removal of the singers from the seats before the pulpit to the gallery was not effected without some solicitation. They were at first quite unwilling to go up. But means were employed which, both before and since that period, have been found most efficacious for changing even the stubborn will. Mr. James Brackett,...chairman of the committee on the alterations, made a supper for the singers at his house. A fine festival was enjoyed, and the singers were no longer unwilling to go into the gallery. ... [p. 121, new paragraph] ... There was originally a row of pews on the back of the west gallery, and several of them in the middle were subsequently taken away to leave more space for the singers. [MA/Quincy; Whitney/*NEHGR* 1864, pp. 120, 121]

“In 1794 The Parish voted a committee of nine men to consider and report: ‘On what principle the Front Gallery may be given to the singers.’ The result was that the dignifying of the pews was abandoned [“dignifying”: assigning pews to parishioners in order of their perceived importance, precedence, dignity], and the front gallery devoted to the use of those ‘that carry on the exercise of singing in time of Divine service.’” [MA/Medway; Jameson 1877, p. 73]

1794, 6 March – see 1793?, 17 November

1794 (or 1795?) – see 1771

1795, 2 March: [from Town Records:] “Voted that it tis [*sic*] the Desire of this town that the Singers take their seets provided for them by the town and As[s]ist in singing as formaly [formerly? formally?] as they wish to make no premance.’ [Preeminence.] [←square brackets in original; “preeminence” really intended?]” [MA/Westford; Hodgman 1883, p. 154]

1795, 2 March, 8 March – see 1772, 18 May

1795, n.d., 18 November, 13 December + 1796, early, April: “[In planning the College church, built 1795]...the front seat in the south gallery and so much of the front seats in the side galleries as might be necessary, were appropriated for the use of music. ... The building was dedicated on Sunday[,] December 13, 1795, by public exercises... [p. 12] ... The proprietors arranged for music with the musical society of the College, giving the performers the front seats in the gallery, as has been said, and consulting ‘as to the tunes which shall be sung and other matters’ necessary in connection with music. The result was not wholly satisfactory and in April, 1796, they voted to ‘request the inhabitants who can sing to meet at stated times for the purpose of improving in music till such time as some measures for joining with the musical society in College are adopted.’ ... [new paragraph] On the 18th of November [1795]...the proprietors voted to give to the Trustees for the accommodation of the students the west half of the gallery, except so much as might be necessary for music....” [NH/Hanover; Lord 1913, pp. 11-12]

1796: “While the meeting-house was being built in 1796, the town chose a committee to confer with the singers, and ascertain what accommodations they desired in the new house, and instructed them to grant all reasonable requests made by the choir concerning the arrangement of seats for their use.” [NH/Rindge; Stearns 1875, p. 267]

1796 – see n.d. (1787?)

1796, early, April – see 1795, n.d., 18 November, 13 December

1796, 7 March, 4 April, 9 May, 24 October – see 1772, 18 May

1796, November: “...voted to appropriate to the use of the Singing Society in Said Town the front gallery and so much of the side galleries next the front as shall be necessary for their accommodation.” [MA/Sudbury; Hudson 1889, p. 430]

1797: “The first recorded effort to improve the singing is dated 1797, when it was voted to build singers’ seats and spend twenty dollars for instruction and for many years at different times the parish has maintained instruction in singing. Thus for more than one hundred years this church has laid emphasis upon the desirability of good singing.” [MA/Brookfield; Anniversary Exercises 1905, p. 16]

“June 9, 1797, a Committee was chosen to *seat the singers*; and alterations were made in the house to provide for their accommodation.” [But note that a choir sang at Rev. John Mellen’s settlement in 1784; see 1784, 11 February in this file.] [MA/Hanover; Barry 1853, p. 68]

1798 – see 1774 or shortly after

1798, April – see 1789, March

“in May, 1798, the town voted ‘that the four pews in the front gallery are assigned to the use of the singers.’” [MA/Bedford; Brown 1891, p. 15]

n.d. (1798 and later): text mentions “galleries on three sides, the orchestra opposite the pulpit” in second meetinghouse, dedicated 1798 [MA/Berkley; Sanford 1872, p. 31]

n.d. (between 1798 and 1817): “It [the Congregational meetinghouse] was made with a gallery on each of the sides, and seats in these galleries rising one above the other as if constructed on an inclined plane. The seats in each gallery were long slips, and there were four or five slips in each gallery. The music of the sanctuary was then, as now [1876], a very important part of worship, and the front slip in each gallery was sacred to the use of the singers and the ‘players on instruments.’ We had not the organ in those days, but we did have both vocal and instrumental music, that to my youthful mind [the author, Rev. Charles Nichols, born 1798 at Derby Narrows, in Derby until almost 20] was impressive and inspiring beyond what I can express.... In those days the choir would on pleasant Sabbaths almost fill the three front slips around the galleries of the old meeting-house.” [CT/Derby; letter from Rev. Charles Nichols “To My Dear Christian Brother, Rev. Mr. [J. Howe] Vorce,” written at CT/New Britain, 24 June 1876; quoted in Orcutt 1880, p. 294]

“[In 1799]...the old Cong. church on the hill was erected.... It had a gallery on one end and both sides. Both the ground floor and the gallery, except the singers’ seat, were partitioned into square pews, in which one-third of the audience sat with their backs to the speaker and another third had to look over their shoulder.” [VT/Pawlet; Hollister 1867, p. 109]

“MEETING, MAY 14, 1799. ‘Voted to seat the singers in the galleries. Voted to give the Singers all the front seats and all seats in the East gallery, and one half of the seats in the West gallery.’” [MA/Pelham; Parmenter 1898, p. 266]

n.d. (ca. 1800): “In the front [of the meetinghouse] was a gallery of pews; on the left hand, a gallery of long seats, which the singers occupied: on the right, a gallery, filled mostly by single men, who had no other seat; up back, high in the corners, or cock loft, as they called it, were the negro pews, rarely occupied by more than one or two of that class of worshippers.” [MA/Bedford; Brown 1891, p. 54]

n.d. (early 19th c.): “The old choirs did not sit as now, compact, but were spread out in the form of a parallelogram; hence, the necessity of the conspicuous position of the leader in the centre, and hence the reverberating or rolling movement of the music.” [CT/Waterbury; Anderson 1896, vol. III, p. 1069]

n.d. (early 19th c.): “It may be amusing to the present generation to learn something of meetinghouses and their congregations as were their fashions and usages at the

beginning of the present century in this vicinity and generally throughout the rural towns in New England.... [new paragraph] ...On three sides of the house there was a gallery supported by pillars. The front seat was appropriated to the singers, which was [p. 543] usually filled with a good old-fashioned New England choir. The leader occupied the centre with his pitchpipe to set the tune, for there was no musical instrument used in the sanctuary in those days. Then it was regarded as a privilege as well as a duty to belong to the choir, and those who could sing, and even some not gifted by nature in that accomplishment, were ready to avail themselves of it.” [MA/Greenfield; Thompson 1904, vol. I, pp. 542-543; reminiscences “written about 1874 by...Reverend Preserved Smith, who died in Greenfield in 1881, aged ninety-two years (so, born ca. 1789)]

n.d. (early 19th c.): “The ‘choir’ connected with the town church in the early part of the century attained a wide reputation, not only for its size, numbering at times thirty or forty persons, but for the excellence of its performances. It had no superior, and perhaps no equal, in the north part of Worcester County, and its renderings on important public occasions were exceedingly attractive and meritorious, receiving many encomiums both from the general public and from experts in such matters. The same praiseworthy qualities have characterized to a greater or less extent its lineal successor, the choir of the First Parish, under the efficient leadership of George F. Miller, Harrison G. Whitney, and others. [new paragraph] The choirs of the other societies have also had a good name in the community, and at times have risen to a high standard of proficiency in the divine art of sacred song.” [MA/Westminster; Heywood 1893, p. 465]

early 19th c. – see 1769

n.d. (“first half of the nineteenth century”) – see 1768

1801, April: “April Fast [*sic*; “First” mis-transcribed?], 1801. This day was the first that I [Jonathan Hayward, age 13] Set in the Singers’ Seat.” [MA/Danvers; Hayward/Danvers 1915, p. 53]

1802 – see 1784

1803, 8 March: “In relation to having a choir [in the Presbyterian church] there had been some innovation and compromise, as we find, March 8, 1803, that the parish [new paragraph] ‘Voted, That the Singing be carried on in the Singing Pew the whole of the day.’” [NH/Chester; Chase 1869, p. 325]

1804: “Article fifth [of the Constitution of the Northwest Parish of Cambridge Singing Society, apparently formed in 1804] imposes a fine for non-attendance of members, &c., and every member shall sit in the singing seat on Sundays when he is at meeting [33 members, all males].” [MA/Arlington; Cutter 1880, p. 111]

“May 7, 1804: ‘Voted, to accommodate the Singing Society with convenient seats in the Front Gallery.’ [new paragraph] ‘To act on a Refer’d Article, which is to hear the report of their Committee Chosen by the Town, for the purpose of viewing the Meeting House in order that the Singers may be accommodated with convenient seats.’ [new paragraph] The Committee report as follows: ‘We the Subscribers being Chosen a Committee at the last Town Meeting in order to see which is the best way to finish the front gallery in order to convene the singers, and to take under consideration the first article—beg leave to report as follows:—It is our opinion that it is best to Build a Porch in the front of the Meeting House 12 feet Square and 14 feet Posts, and to swell the front Gallery, and build two convenient seats for the Singers....” [MA/Lincoln; Lincoln 1905, p. 66n]

n.d. (before 1805) + 1805: “The town was accustomed to choose annually a committee ‘to regulate the singing.’ In 1805, the town ‘*voted*, that the singers shall regulate themselves, so long as they shall continue to fill the seats assigned them, and behave with decency and order.” [MA/Framingham; Temple 1887, p. 338]

1805 – see 1761

1805 – see 1774 or shortly after

1805 – see n.d. (before 1805)

1805, 31 March: “Went to meeting all day, singers set up [in] Gallery.” [MA/Danversport; Putnam/Danvers 1916, p. 54]

1805 and later: “The most notable changes [to the meetinghouse] took place in 1804-5, when housewright Abner Wheeler was hired to build a new front porch twelve-feet square and fourteen feet high. The balcony [or gallery] level of this porch was subsequently used by the church’s singers, who were soon accompanied by a bass viol.” [MA/Lincoln; MacLean 1987, p. [362]]

1805 and later: “A row of seats extended around the gallery, and back of these seats was a row of square pews, each of which would seat nine or ten persons. Two rows of seats on the west end of the gallery were occupied by the singers and players on instruments.” [meetinghouse constructed in 1805; location of pulpit not discovered (if on east side of house, would be opposite singers)] [RI/Barrington; Bicknell 1898, p. 441]

n.d. (1805 or 1806?): “In this town the singers sat separate from the congregation, forming a choir, at a very early date....” [note, on p. 263: “In 1805 or 6, Ichabod Johnson kept a school.... His school was the first that was allowed a permanent station in the gallery, as a choir.”] [NH/New Ipswich; Kidder 1852, p. 262]

ca. 1806 – see 1779, 2 July

1806, 5 May: "Our new singers [having just completed a 4+-month singing school taught by Samuel Holyoke] set in seats first time, sang Smyrna, Quakenburg & Alpha [all 3 tune titles appear in Holyoke *CH* 1804; ALPHA + SMYRNA att. Holden, QUAKENBURG marked as 1st pr., probably by Holyoke]." [MA/Danversport; Putnam/Danvers 1916, p. 68]

1806 and after: "In 1805 the *outside* of a plain, wooden building, two stories high, forty feet wide, and fifty feet long, was completed; rough benches for a time served for seats; a year afterward the *inside* was finished. Galleries were built on three sides—north, south, and west—and in the west gallery the singers were placed." [Methodist Church] [RI/Bristol; Munro 1880, p. 265]

1807: "One article of the constitution [of the newly-formed West Cambridge Musical Society (the new name of the Northwest Parish of Cambridge Singing Society)] provided that 'every member shall sit in the singing seats when at meeting [38 members, all males]." [MA/Arlington; Cutter 1880, p. 114]

1807 – see 1774 or shortly after

1813 – see 1784

1813 – see n.d. (1787?)

1814, 29 August: "At a special town meeting (Aug. 29, 1814,) the town [break; smaller type:] 'Voted petitioners have liberty at their own cost to moove the west end of the Signers Seat to the East end of the female Signers;' [break; regular type:] and it may be said, by way of explanation, that the 'Signers' were really the *singers*, and that the 'petitioners' were the [p. 169] male singers, and that their ambition to sit near the fair charmers of the choir was quite praiseworthy and sensible, while the last expression, 'the East end of the female Signers,' must be left to the unaided interpretation of the reader!" [NH/Francestown; Cochrane 1895, pp. 168-169]

1815-1819: "[']The whole front gallery [of the meetinghouse] was occupied by the choir, which in Sterling,' in 1815 to 1819, 'was very large and composed of some of the finest voices it has ever been my privilege to hear' [quoted from Joseph Allen's "history of the Worcester County Association"]." [MA/Sterling; Sterling 1931, p. 35]

1817 + ca. 1826 + 1827 + 1831-1838: "In 1817 the choir of the First Baptist church was composed of singers from various parts of Newton and vicinity, Brookline, Brighton, Watertown and Waltham. [compare with St. David's Musical Society, discussed on pp. 756-757 of this source: "existed in Newton in 1816" (p. 756), "composed of singers belonging in Newton and neighboring towns" (p. 757)] The leader at that time was **Mr. Thomas Richardson, of Oak Hill, who always sang soprano**. When no instrument was present to give the key-note of the tune to be sung, the leader, taking his wooden pitch-pipe, drew out the little pipe within, on which were printed the first seven letters of the alphabet, and setting it to the letter

with which the tune commenced, he sounded the tone; upon which the whole choir, **repeating the sound with the syllable belonging to it**, rose and sang the hymn or psalm. There was generally a bass viol, as an accompaniment, sometimes, two,--played by Messrs. Charles and Walter Richards. Two brothers Oliver often came from Waltham, one of them an excellent bass singer, the other a skillful player on the bassoon, which the choir regarded as a valuable addition. [new paragraph] ... The singing-books in use were, first, the Billings and Holden Collection; afterwards, the Bridgewater Collection. [new paragraph] About 1826 Mr. (afterwards Rev.) Jonathan Aldrich, then a student in the Theological Institution [Newton Theological Institution, a Baptist theological seminary founded 28 November 1825 in Newton Centre, Mass.], became leader of the choir, and many new members were added to it.... The instruments used in the choir at that time were two clarionets...and a trombone.... In 1827, Mr. Asa R. Trowbridge brought into the choir a double bass viol, the first instrument of the kind used in Newton. In later years, he played, in the church music, successively, the double bass viol, small bass viol, violin, bassoon, trombone and octave flute. In 1831 he was chosen leader of the choir, and served in that office seven years. The singing-book used, the latter part of the time, was the Boston Handel and Haydn Society's Collection. [p. 504, new paragraph] After Mr. Aldrich resigned the charge of the choir (1827), Mr. (afterwards Rev.) Benjamin C. Wade, of the same class in the Institution (1829), was elected to fill the place. He reorganized the choir, bringing in some additions to it, and selecting leaders of each part. ... Under the management of Mr. Wade, the singing of this choir took a high rank in the town. At this period, frequent meetings were held at the Spring Hotel, Watertown; the Ellis Hotel, Newton Upper Falls; Mancy Thornton's Hotel, near Newton Centre, and at the Theological Institution, for the practice of choruses and anthems from the Handel and Haydn Society's Collection, under direction of Mr. Wade. These festivals brought together the singers of Newton and vicinity, and furnished a pastime at the same time fascinating and improving." [MA/Newton; Smith 1880, pp. 503-504]

"In 1818 the Handel Society was organized, under the leadership of the eminent Dr. Eli Todd, and was invited by the society to conduct the service of song, which it did with great acceptance. [note: "This society was very numerous, and the members occupied all the seats in front of the pulpit; Dr. Todd having drawn the long and straggling line into a compact mass in the center of which he stood, animating and swaying all by his eye and his instrument [a violin]."]" [CT/Farmington; Porter 1873, p. 49]

n.d. (probably 1820): "Voted to give up the front seats in the gallery of the new meeting-house for one year, for the use of the singers, or leaders above named, and all those who may sing peaceably under them." [NH/Dublin; Dublin 1855, p. 198]

"In 1821 the 'singing seats' were altered so that the space [p. 19] behind them could be used for a vestry." [ME/Hallowell; Page 1900, pp. 18-19]

1821 and later: "The north gallery [of the First Parish's second meetinghouse, built 1821] was for the choir..." [ME/Topsham; Wheeler 1878, p. 653]

"1822. ... This year, the Baptist meeting-house was enlarged to nearly twice its former capacity. ... There were galleries around three sides, the semi-circular part opposite the pulpit being occupied by the singers." [MA/Medfield; Tilden 1887, p. 224]

n.d. (pre-1823, 1823, after 1823): "'The singers' seats, two rows in each gallery, extended from the north to the south galleries.... [p. 200] ... The female singers, were modestly partitioned off in a compartment of their own. ..." [ME/Hallowell; Nason 1909, pp. 199-200]

"In 1824 the parish voted that twenty men who were specified by name be a permanent choir with power to elect their leader; but it was added, 'you[r] com[mittee]^s however cannot forbear remarking that so far as has come to their knowledge Capt. Ira Stickney has the year past given the most pleasing satisfaction as a leader of the singing in publick.' So Captain, afterwards Major, Stickney who was then only twenty-seven was already at the head of military and musical matters in the parish, and had that warm place in the hearts of his fellow-parishioners which he never lost. The vote continued that the choir have power to enlarge their number, but should use no instrument but a bass-viol—was a violin thought too frivolous? It was also voted 'that those ladies who have of late sat in the singers Pew are [p. 185] respectfully invited to continue in the seats.' If it had as many women as men the choir would be forty strong. Under its efficient chorister it must have led the service of public praise with noble effect." [MA/Byfield (Byfield Parish of Newbury); Ewell 1904, pp. 184-185]

ca. 1826 – see 1817

1827 – see 1817

1829 + 1840s: "The singing seats, which had been moved as part of the rearrangement of the interior of the meetinghouse in 1829, were now in the gallery at the back of the church, over the vestibule. Edwin B. Whitcomb, who joined the choir in 1842 at the age of fifteen, has left a description of the choir of that period. [new paragraph, indented] *It was then under the leadership of Mr. John Cushing; he sometimes played a clarinet but usually a violin. The violin in many instances was all we had, but a double bass viol was procured, and when we had both to give us the chord or pitch, we thought ourselves nicely fixed, as the two together could saw out the last line of the verse, and then we could come in on the next after a little rest. The singing seats were then on the easterly side of the church, and the congregation would rise up and turning their backs to the pulpit, would face the singers. The conductor perched up on a high box situated in the center of the singing seats and back one row from the front, and with his bow on the strings and after looking right and left to see that everyone was ready, would draw his bow vigorously several times across the*

strings. . . [p. 106] Later on, as funds grew more plenty, a flute was purchased. [punctuation sic] and I do not remember that anyone played it except Mr. Seth Dunbar. I remember that he always blew a smooth flowing tone and never brought the flute into prominence. [new paragraph, not indented] Mr. Whitcomb writes with great respect of several South Hingham musicians of this period. One was Joshua Jacob, 'celebrated in this and all the neighboring towns as being "immense" on the clarinet.' He could also play the violin and the bass viol, and 'had a perfect ear and detected the least "out of tune" in instrument or voice; and when pianos were introduced, he was the only one employed to keep them in tune.'" [MA/South Hingham; Robinson 1980, pp. 105-106]

n.d. (ca. 1831): "The singing of fifty years since was neither congregational, nor delegated to a quartette. It was the day of large choirs. Their organization was sometimes entrusted to a committee of the society, but more generally some of the leading singers were requested to take the matter in charge. They recruited the ranks and chose leaders for the different parts,--treble, alto, tenor, and bass. Frequent meetings for practice took place, often at private houses; and in the social intercourse thus arising, mutual attractions were sometimes experienced, and life-long arrangements for two voices became the result. [p. 240, new paragraph] But the serious service of the choir is more our present concern than the social and domestic results engendered. Sunday, of course, was the field-day for this service, and the inevitable occasion of something a little more like dress-parade than is desirable for holy time. For the choir occupied a very conspicuous position, not thrust into a little box at one side of the pulpit, or in its rear, but balancing the pulpit at the other end of the church, and exposed to general attention and scrutiny when the congregation, with the minister, rose, turned, and faced the singers during the singing of the hymn. A partial defence from the public gaze was found in the curtains hung with rings on a rod. These were ordinarily drawn aside for seeing the minister; but when the choir rose for action, they were breezily extended along the line. We all probably feel that the abandonment of this custom of turning around to the singers was a right step, and calculated to place sacred song in its true position of worship to God, rather than in that of a performance before men." [MA/Lowell; Greene 1881, pp. 239-240]

1831-1838 – see 1817

n.d. (mid-19th century) + 1870-1880: "In later days the church has had a large and noted choir, but for the past ten years we have practiced congregational singing, which, whether it be more entertaining or not, certainly meets the longings of many hearts, as a mode of worship." [ME/Yarmouth; Yarmouth 1881, p. 11]

1840s – see 1829

1840: "The church choir about this time (1840) was said by the ministers who exchanged with Dr. [Joseph] Allen, to be the best choir in the county. ... [new paragraph] This choir and singing-school were important institutions in their day,

furnishing a great deal of the entertainment of their time, not only for this church but for the town as well. The members were devoutly interested. And, as no one was permitted to sing in the choir on Sunday, who had not previously attended the rehearsal, interest was kept at a white heat. [new paragraph] Thanksgiving Day was made much of in those days, a principal feature of which service being the music and singing by the choir. For weeks beforehand the anthems were rehearsed and thoroughly learned; so that when the great day [p. 123] arrived, the choir was letter-perfect." [MA/Northborough; Kent 1921, pp. 122-123]

1845 + 1851: "From time to time the parish meeting voted a job description for the sexton. In 1845, for example, he was specifically instructed to cleanse the singers' seats and to replenish the spit boxes with new sawdust once a week. And in 1851 the sexton's duties were described in full: 'to ring and toll the bell for meetings, sweep and dust the house once a month, make fires when wanted, dig paths if any, and clean the stove and funnel . . ." and particular attention was to be paid to the cleanliness of the singing seats. The sexton was even, on occasion, given the job of dealing with the perennial problem of 'unruly and noisy boys.'" [MA/South Hingham; Robinson 1980, p. 105]

1851 – see 1845

1867 – see n.d. (ca. 1782-1831)

1870-1880 – see n.d. (mid-19th century)