Abstract: Reverend Nathan Stone (1708-1781) led the church in Southborough, Massachusetts, beginning in 1730. A religious conservative, like his father Nathanael Stone of Harwich, Massachusetts, he also served as secretary to the powerful "Marlborough Association" of local ministers.
Descriptive Summary

Identification: MSS 380
Creator: Stone, Nathan, 1708-1781.
Title: Reverend Nathan Stone sermons
Inclusive Dates: 1705-1774
Extent: .33 linear feet (1 box)
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Citation: MSS 380, Reverend Nathan Stone sermons, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.
Shelving Summary: Box 1: Shelved in SPEC MSS manuscript boxes (1 inch)
Location: Special Collections, University of Delaware Library Newark, Delaware 19717-5267 Phone: 302-831-2229 Fax: 302-831-6003 URL: http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/
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Biographical Note

Reverend Nathan Stone (1708-1781) led the church in Southborough, Massachusetts, beginning in 1730. A religious conservative, like his father Nathanael Stone of Harwich, Massachusetts, he also served as secretary to the powerful "Marlborough Association" of local ministers.

The Reverend Nathan Stone was born in Harwich, Massachusetts, on February 18, 1708 to Nathanael (1667-1755) and Reliance [Hinkley] Stone (d.1759). Nathan Stone's paternal grandfather, Simon Stone, was the first of his family to come to America from England -- sometime between 1653 and 1667 -- and his son Nathanael (sometimes spelled Nathaniel) was the first minister of Harwich. Nathan's paternal grandfather was Thomas Hinkley, governor of the Plymouth colony from 1680 to 1692. Nathan attended Harvard College, leaving in 1726 after participating in a student riot, but returned to continue his studies in 1729. In 1730, Nathan was ordained reverend for the newly created town of Southborough, Massachusetts, and soon became an influential and highly respected member of the community.

He was elected secretary to the "Marlborough Association," a post he held for many years. This association comprised a collection of ministries from local towns which met for the purposes of mutual assistance, and to guide the spiritual direction of the area's inhabitants. In an age when there was still no clear-cut division between Church and State, this body wielded a great deal of power. Nathan also contributed to Ezra Stiles' book, The Ecclesiastical History of British North America, with an account of the history of Southborough. On October 21, 1734, Nathan married Judith Fox, daughter of Reverend Jabez Fox of Woburn. She died in childbirth, however, in February 1748, leaving him a widower with several children. Three years later he married again, this time to Mary Thacher, daughter of Middleborough Reverend Peter Thacher.

Nathan Stone, like his father, was religiously conservative, holding fast to traditional Puritan ideals, and was firmly opposed to the radical revivalism of the Great Awakening that was occurring around him in the late 1730s and early 1740s. Though he managed to keep the majority of his congregation from succumbing to these influences, he could not stem the tide of social and religious "laxness" that began to overtake the colonies in the years before the American Revolution. By the 1760s, the tightly-knit religious community of his youth was rapidly coming apart, the Puritan ethics he so revered were disappearing, and New England colonists were quickly becoming radicalized in their opposition to the Crown. Nathan Stone was horrified by the Boston Tea Party, and watched with disapproval as Southborough and other local communities began to organize their own militias. Indeed, by the 1770s Nathan Stone had become so frustrated with his congregation's reactionary tendencies towards Britain that he would openly berate them from the pulpit, even naming those individuals whose activities did not meet his strict ethical standards.

As the inevitability of open conflict became apparent, Stone continued to urge reconciliation and caution to his parishioners. Yet, by the late 1770s his attitude had changed, and he came to accept the war for independence as a just one. Nathan Stone died on May 31, 1781, and several weeks later the town held a day of prayer and fasting in his honor.

Sources:

Scope and Content Note

The collection comprises twenty-five sermons and several sermon fragments which span the period 1705 to 1774. The two earliest are attributed to Nathanael Stone, and the rest to his son, Nathan Stone. Most of the sermons were preached at the Meeting House in Southborough, Massachusetts, and the dates and locations preached are generally provided. A few even record whether they were given in the morning or the afternoon, and almost every sermon includes the scriptural passage upon which the sermon was based. All but a few of these sermons were written by Nathan Stone. Two of them are dated 1705 and were given at Harwich, suggesting that they were written by his father, Nathanael Stone. Several of the remaining sermons were delivered in other locations, such as Marlborough and Westborough. Stone's conservatism and deep concern for the state of his parishioners' souls is very evident in his sermons, which frequently speak of sin and redemption.

The sermons themselves were written on small sheets of paper, many of which had been stitched together. Some bear signs of water damage, though none are illegible. It is also interesting to note the deterioration of Stone's handwriting, quite evident in the later sermons.
Selected Search Terms

**Personal Names**

Stone, Nathan, 1708-1781.

Stone, Nathanael, 1667-1755.

**Topical Terms**

Church history--18th century.

Congregational churches--Massachusetts--Clergy--History--18th century.

**Geographic Names**

Harwich (Mass.)--History--18th century.

Southborough (Mass.)--History--18th century.

**Form/Genre Terms**

Sermons.

**Occupation**

Clergy.

**Personal Contributors**

Stone, Nathanael, 1667-1755.

**Related Materials in other Repositories**


Nathanael Stone sermons, 1708-1714, Massachusetts Historical Society.
Arrangement

The sermons are arranged in chronological order.
Detailed Description of the Collection

"[T]hy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy." Exodus 15:6 , 1705 January 29 [Box 1 F1]

17pp.
Given by Nathaniel Stone Sr. at Harwich, on a "Thanksgiving Day on ye account of another victory obtained by ye D[uke] of Malborough over the french forces." This sermon was given again on 1705 April 12.

"Know ye not that there is -- a great man fallen this day in Israel?" Samuel 3:38 , 1731 January 17 [Box 1 F1]

8pp.
Given at the Meeting House in Southborough, upon the death of Mr. Breck.

"Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord." Lamentations 3:40 , 1733 March 1 [Box 1 F2]

2pp.
Given in Southborough, and again in Framington on 1734 September 8.

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Psalms 66:18 , 1732 April 9 [Box 1 F2]

8pp.
Given in Southborough, the morning and afternoon.

1736 February 19 [Box 1 F3]

2pp.
Given in Southborough, and again in Harwich 1737 June 12.

"[W]hich is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Colossians 1:27 , 1737 October 16 [Box 1 F3]

2pp.
Fragment of a sermon given.

"Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Ephesians 6:23 , 1739 February 25 [Box 1 F4]

2pp.
Given in Southborough. On the last page is an addendum entitled "Improvement."

"For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving." Timothy 4:4 , 1739 November 29 [Box 1 F4]
Given on a Thanksgiving Day in Southborough.

"For without me ye can do nothing." John 15:5, 1740 February 7 [Box 1 F5]

12pp.

Given in Southborough and again on 1740 February 7.

"Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshiper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth." John 9:31, 1742 or 1743 March 16 [Box 1 F5]

16pp.

Given at Marlborough, and again at Westborough, 1746 February.

"[L]et us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Hebrews 12:1, 1744 December 23 [Box 1 F6]

15pp.

Given in Southborough. Note: File missing.

"[B]ut the greatest of these is charity." Corinthians 13:13, 1745 January 27 [Box 1 F6]

8pp.

Given in Southborough. Note: File missing.

"But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation." James 5:12, 1747 February 22 [Box 1 F7]

8pp.

Given in Southborough.

"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." Psalms 73:25, 1747 August 2 [Box 1 F7]

16pp.

Given in Southborough.

"I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?" Jeremiah 8:6, 1754 February [Box 1 F8]
"[A]nd he said, Behold, this evil is of the Lord; what should I wait for the Lord any longer?" 2 Kings 6:33 , 1759 January [Box 1 F8]

24pp.

Given in Southborough. Pages 3-16 are missing from the text.

"And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God." Luke 14:15 , 1760 June 22 [Box 1 F9]

12pp.

Given in Southborough.

"[B]ut sin is a reproach to any people." Proverbs 14:34 , 1761 May 3 [Box 1 F9]

12pp.

Given in Southborough.

"If ye know these thing, happy are ye if ye do them." John 13:17 , 1765 February [Box 1 F10]

40pp.

Given in Southborough.

"But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" Job 14:10 , 1773 January 3 [Box 1 F10]

8pp.

Given in Southborough.

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." Romans 3:24 , 1774 October [Box 1 F11]

40pp.

Given in Southborough.

"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy." Psalms 103:8 , September 14, 21 [Box 1 F11]

10pp.
"And the way of peace they have not known." Romans 3:17, undated [Box 1 F12]

4pp.

Though this and the following sermon focus on the same passage, they are two completely different works.

"And the way of peace have they not known." Romans 3:17, undated [Box 1 F12]

8pp.

"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." James 2:19, undated [Box 1 F13]

5pp.

Unidentified fragments, undated [Box 1 F13]

6 items

Includes small fragments of sermons, with no reference to date or location, as well as two undated fragments of notes that were sent to Nathan Stone.