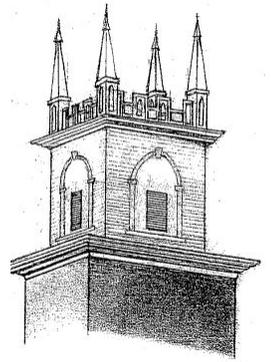


+ N.E.W.S. CONNECTION  
 Pittsford Congregational Church  
 United Church of Christ  
 121 Village Green  
 PO Box 570  
 Pittsford, VT 05763



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Message from the Pastor

ROOMS OF Y. M. C. A., *Pittsford Oct 1st* 1867

To O. E. Douglas, Cor. Mem. Ex. Com.,  
 Brattleboro, Vt.

The Report of our Association from *Jan* to *Oct* 1867 is as follows:

PRESIDENT, *George W. Eagers*

COR. SEC'Y, *Simon Gilbert*

Present number of members professing Christ,	44	Males,	}	76
	32	Females,		
Number of members who do not profess Christ,	2	Males,	}	2
		Females,		
Since last Report we have creased in number,		Males,	}	
		Females,		
Conversions since last report, members of Association,		Males,	}	
		Females,		
Conversions, not members of the Association, but living in town,		Males,	}	
		Females,		
No. Prayer Meetings each week, <i>7</i>		No. Sunday Schools each week,		
Average attendance at meetings,		Average attendance at S. S.,		
Population of town about		No. Churches (all denominations,) in town,		

viz: *1 Cong. 1 Baptist 1 P. Meth. 1 Wesleyan*  
*Methodist*

Above: A completed inventory sheet from 1867, tucked in the folio, showing that the Pittsford chapter of the Y.M.C.A. counted a total of 76 members who professed Christ [and two who did not!], among the four Protestant churches in town: Congregational, Baptist, Primitive Methodist, and Wesleyan Methodist.

Below: Secretary's minutes in the folio list the various locations in town where meetings took place: Parmelee School house, Furnace School house, Richardson School house, Burditt School house, Fire Hill, and Wheaton School-house, and not mentioned in this instance, the Methodist meeting house.

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Meetings for April 12<sup>th</sup>

Parmelee School-house - G. L. Fayfield, G. Morgan, E. H. Hatch  
 .cock, W. P. Ward, L. F. Scofield.

Furnace School-house - J. W. Doncklee, R. R. Drake, B. P. Barnes,  
 J. D. Mielow, D. J. Mercure.

Richardson School-house - D. K. Hall, A. Norris, Chester S. Thomas -  
 D. Austin, A. D. Jeffery, W. H. Palmer.

Burditt School-house - L. Gilbert, Chamney Thomas, A. Thomas -  
 B. P. Manly, L. W. Eagers.

Fire Hill - G. A. Smirde, A. Smith, A. Hammond, A. Mielow  
 D. D. Hall,

Wheaton School-house - J. B. Carpenter, H. P. Jeffery, M. Campbell  
 R. Burditt, J. Eckley, D. L. Mills.

Our church historian Ivy Dixon brought to my attention some time ago a large folio volume she catalogued in our archive. It contains the constitution and articles for the formation of Pittsford's Young Men's Christian Association, known to all of us as the Y.M.C.A. Records of its minutes span the years from 1867 to 1872, with many pages in the volume left blank.

Some thoughts to share with you on the value of this artifact and how it could speak to us today. The organization's constitution, written in an elegant hand, states:

It shall be the duty of members to promote brotherly feelings among members to assist and counsel them; to visit them in sickness; to interest them in meetings of the association and to induce them to take part in the efforts for doing good...and securing their attendance at some place of worship on the Sabbath.

The first thing that strikes me is that no single place of worship was spelled out. Their efforts reflected the coming together of the different Protestant churches in the community. That needs to happen more often among all churches today! You may well ask, where were the young women at this time? Typical of the era, young women served this group in ancillary capacities. Y.W.C.As eventually became their own separate organization.

To put the Pittsford chapter in historical context, let us be reminded the first Y.M.C.A was founded in London in 1844 by George Williams, along with 11 others, who were concerned about the lack of healthy activities for young men in big industrial cities. They did not want them resorting to taverns and brothels! Seven years later, the first American Y.M.C.A. was founded in Boston.

It does not seem at first glance that any of these circumstances would have been the same in Pittsford. An understudied and often forgotten aspect of our local history lies in what life was like here for families after the Civil War. Pittsford sent 155 men to fight for the Union, of whom 21 died. Some of these soldiers volunteered; others accepted a paid bounty. All told, the town spent \$19,079, creating a debt that took years to pay off. Many of the soldiers who returned came home as walking wounded—chronically ill—and some afflicted by Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome, with virtually no understanding at that time of its true impact. In short, the Y.M.C.A. promoters sensed a need to do something for a vulnerable segment of the population. And they did, with weekly meetings all over Pittsford; locations noted in the minutes.

By the early 1870s, the activities of the Y.M.C.A. waned. One set of minutes stated that some men felt harried by so many meetings during farming season. Minutes stop abruptly in 1872, when the United States, as a whole, plunged into a deep and pervasive economic depression. Did the Y.M.C.A. accomplish its objectives during its time in Pittsford? If my own experience is a guide, I would like to think it did.

My parents sent me to a Y.M.C.A. summer day camp following kindergarten. As we would spend summer days on the water, they wanted me to become a good swimmer. This would be followed by several years at Fall River's downtown Y.M.C.A., Saturday mornings and Monday afternoons. I made a cross-section of friends and enjoyed participating in swim meets. All these experiences prepared me well to serve one summer as a lifeguard. (Those stories for another time!)

What implication does our historical book have for us today? Its efforts and activities attempted to meet a need for Christian education and fellowship among young people. Though we can easily list all the challenges that deter young families and teenagers from attending church, we cannot close our eyes and give up on meeting that need. High on our must-do list are opportunities for the engagement of middle and school students.

Looking ahead, the beginning of the church new year in Advent and the joyful traditions of the Christmas season are a natural time to create occasions to focus on children and teens. Several families have discussed baptisms of their children, a wonderful rite of initiation in Christian life. If you have children or grandchildren thinking about baptism, a little encouragement on your part goes a long way. Plans are in the works for a "Children's Sunday."

If we believe that we **can** buck the trend that laments so few young people in church, then we **will**, through our combined efforts, help our youth value the place of worship and Christian fellowship in our lives today.

Yours in shared faith,

Michael F. Dwyer, Pastor