



BHC Special Collections  
Sermons and Early Church Printings Collection  
By Meg Rinn  
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**Descriptive Summary**

**Creator:** Bridgeport History Center

**Title:** Sermons and Early Church Printings Collection

**Dates:** 1683-1935

**Quantity:** 22 pamphlet boxes

**Abstract:** Containing mostly Congregational material, this collection of sermons and early church printings offers insight into religion in both early Bridgeport and the rest of Connecticut. In addition to material printed in New England, there are works from the 1680s-1740s made in England, reflecting common reading habits for laypeople and reference material for Connecticut preachers.

**Language:** English

**Repository:** Bridgeport History Center

**Administrative History:**

Over the years, the Bridgeport History Center has amassed a large collection of printed sermons and other printed materials related to early churches in Bridgeport and around the state of Connecticut. They were placed into one section of shelving, and have since been organized.

Printed sermons were popular both in England and in New England. It became less and less expensive to print material, and easier for people to afford such objects. Often times preachers had works printed at the preacher's request, paying printers for a particular run of copies. This was a form of spreading the gospel and the preacher's opinions, which in early America often carried political weight.

A large majority of the churches represented in this collection are Congregational churches, the particular version of Calvinism that was brought to the United States and practiced by Puritans. Early Congregational churches did not have the hierarchies of the Church of England and other Episcopal churches. Almost all of the material is post the First Great Awakening in New England, which saw a sweep of religious fervor that, when subsided, exposed theological disagreements among churches. The history grows much more complex from there, and indeed there are entire books dedicated to the topic. What the collection of sermons and printed materials offers are ground level snapshots of a faith in flux in the late 1700s and into the early 1800s.

Note that with one or two exceptions, there are almost no sermons or printed materials related to Catholic churches, as the faith did not have a presence in Connecticut until later in the 1800s.

The presence of sermons from the late 1600s into the early 1700s printed in England demonstrate the popularity of printed sermons as a genre, but also represent the sort of reference material a Connecticut preacher might have at hand, or else items that colonists brought with them when

coming to America. These sermons are printed on cotton rag paper and are in generally good condition.

In the future these items will be listed below with authors, titles, and printed dates, along with publisher information. Until then, those seeking specific sermons or to review the material to understand religion's intersection in Bridgeport are encouraged to [contact the Bridgeport History Center](#).

**Scope and Content note:**

The vast majority of the material within the collection are printed sermons given by primarily Congregational and other Protestant denomination preachers in the late 1700s to the 1800s in Bridgeport and around the state of Connecticut. Several are written by Lyman Atwater, and others are so-called "election sermons" which were frequently used to open new sessions of various legislative bodies.

There are also several years' worth of books related to the Dioceses of Connecticut State Convention of the Episcopal Church.

There is highly minimal Catholic material present in the collection, and a small amount of Universalist material. This reflects the staunchly Protestant nature of the late colonial and early America in New England and neighboring states.

**Arrangement Note:**

This is an artificial collection with no identified donor(s) at this time.

Bridgeport churches have been arranged alphabetically by denomination (Congregationalist, Universalist, Catholic), and then alphabetically by church name. Sermons have then been placed in chronological order.

Churches throughout the rest of Connecticut have been arranged alphabetically by town, with materials related to state wide activities following. Materials from other states in the region have been placed next, arranged by name of state and then chronologically. The final series contains sermons printed in England, which are also arranged chronologically.

**Administrative information:**

**Provenance:** Found in collections.

**Preferred Citation:**

Please cite individual items according to the style guide you are using.

**Names and Subject Tracings**

*Subject tracings*

Bridgeport, Conn.

Congregational churches

Church growth--Congregational churches

Sermons, American

Sermons, English

**Detailed box and folder listing**

Series I – Bridgeport churches

Box 1 –Baptist – Congregational

Box 2–Congregational

Box 3 – Congregational

Box 4–Congregational

Box 5–Congregational –Methodist

Box 6 – Methodist – Denomination unknown

Series II - Connecticut churches

Box 7 – Bethel – East Windsor

Box 8 – Greenwich–Fairfield

Box 9 – Fairfield

Box 10 – Fairfield–Hartford

Box 11 – Hartford

Box 12 – Hartford–New Canaan

Box 13 – Newfield–North Canaan

Box 14 – North Coventry–Redding

Box 15 – Redding–Stratford

Box 16 – Stratford–Unknown

Series III–Connecticut State

Box 17– Baptist – Episcopal Annual Convention

Box 18 – Episcopal Annual Convention

Box 19 – Episcopal

Box 20 – Massachusetts – New York

Box 21 – New York - USA

Series IV

Box 22 – England