

[After the History of Bedford was printed, the Rev. Mr. Stearns died. The following biographical notice is extracted from a sermon preached by the Rev. Samuel Sewall at his interment.]

“Rev. Samuel Stearns, of Bedford, was a son of Rev. Josiah Stearns of Epping, N.H., by his second wife, a daughter of Rev. Samuel Ruggles of Billerica. He was born at Epping, April 8, 1770; fitted for college after his father’s death, at Exeter Academy, under the patronage of Hon. John Phillips, its founder; and graduated at Harvard College in 1794. His theological studies he pursued under the direction of Rev. Jonathan French of Andover, (whose daughter, Miss Abigail French, he afterwards married,) and was ordained over the Church and Society in Bedford, April 27, 1795. A new religious society having been legally formed, Nov. 9, 1832, by the name of the “Trinitarian Congregational Society”; and the Church having voted, at a meeting, May 9, 1833, to dissolve its connexion with the First Parish, and to accept an invitation given it to unite itself with the new society, for the purpose of maintaining public worship and the institutions of the Gospel, Rev. Mr. Stearns was solemnly constituted the Minister, or Religious Teacher of that society, June 5, 1833. He died Dec. 26, 1834, of a decline, the result, probably, of a scrofulous affection, with which he had been many years more or less afflicted. It is worthy of remark, that during the whole of his protracted ministry, almost thirty-nine years, he was never absent from his people at any communion season but one, viz. that which occurred about a fortnight before his death. Previously to the communion before, viz. that on the second Sabbath in October, he had cherished an earnest desire that he might be able, if it were God’s will, to officiate once more on the interesting occasion, and then bid his church farewell; though he was apprehensive that the weather, or the state of his health, would be such, as to prevent him. But in this particular, divine Providence was propitious to his wishes. The weather on that day was remarkably fine; and (to use his own words) “his spirits were enlivened, and strength seemed to be given him for the occasion.” Having obtained his son, Rev. William A. Stearns of Cambridgeport, to perform the previous services, the venerable man about the close of the sermon, with thankful heart, yet with emaciated countenance and feeble step, entered the house of God; and there, having once more, according to his desire, ministered the memorials of Christ’s dying love, and united with the church in singing a hymn, he took his final leave of them in the solemn, affecting address, alluded to in the foregoing discourse. From that day he went no more abroad, being confined to his house, and most of the time to the room in which he died, till his death.”

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APPENDIX. — No. VI. Votes for Governor.

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