The act formally creating the Lowell Fire Department was passed by the Legislature, February 6, 1830. It was not, however, until some time afterward that active measures were taken to organize a department on an efficient basis. The first fire engine purchased was called the Niagara, and was kept in a house at the corner of Central and Merrimack streets, afterwards being removed to what is now Hosford Square. In 1832, Captain Josiah G. Peabody, Charles Gregg and others organized a fire company, which did efficient service. From this time until 1836 the engineers were as follows: Kirk Boott, 1832; Joseph Tyler, 1833, 1834, 1835; Oliver M. Whipple, from 1835 to 1836. The assistants were: Joseph Tyler, Warren Colburn, 1832; George Brownell, 1832, 1833, 1835; J. M. Dodge, 1832, 1834, 1835; O. M. Whipple, 1833, 1834, 1835; Alvah Mansur, 1833, 1834; Israel Whitney, 1833, 1834; Abiel Abbott, 1833; James Cook, 1833, 1834, 1835; William Wyman, 1833; George Motley, 1835; John Avery, 1833; Jonathan Bowers, 1833, 1834, 1835; Charles L. Tilden, S. A. Coburn, David Dana, Jonathan M. Marston and Alpheus Smith, 1835.

The Coming of the Churches—The commencement of religious services in downtown Lowell and the establishment of St. Anne's Church has been described. As the town acquired a population of prevailingly religious people its churches multiplied and grew prosperous.

The consecration of St. Anne's, as noted, occurred on March 16, 1825. Thence followed parochial activities which belong to the records of the town. The early wardens, with their dates of election, were: Warren Colburn, 1825; Allan Pollock, 1825; Joel Lewis, 1827; John O. Green, 1830; Elisha Huntington, 1833; J. H. B. Ayer, 1833; Robert Means, 1835; George Brownell, 1835. Successive treasurers were Nathaniel Gordon, 1824; Thomas Billings, 1828; Benjamin Mather, 1829; George H. Carleton, 1833. The first three clerks were George B. Pollock, 1824; Joel Lewis, 1828; Daniel Bixby, 1835. The first baptism was that of John Wright, son of Kirk and Anne Boott, March 20, 1825; the first funeral, that of a child of Josiah B. French, January 12, 1827. On August 26, 1826, Joel Lewis offered himself for the first confirmation. On July 17, 1825, James Flood and Harriet Bowers became the church's first bridal pair.

The good Dr. Edson's activities, except his interest in costly educational innovations, as recorded above, were of a sort to justify the expectations entertained of him by the directors of the Merrimack Company. He has told about them at a later date. "My early relations with the Merrimack Corporation," he related at the fiftieth anniversary exercises in 1876, "it having given the church and parsonage, and for the first few years gathered the pew rents for the support of divine worship, as a provision for all the people in their employ,
being it was but right to make the ministrations as generally and as extensively acceptable as might be, gave a very general claim upon my services, and it is but a fair question to ask whether my pastoral labor for the rich and poor, ministering to the sick and afflicted, the dying and the dead, caring for the children and their education, and ready discharge of other ordinary items of ministerial duty, have been such as to justify the original outlay and answer the reasonable expectations of the Merrimack Company.”

Concerning the significance of this establishment of St. Anne’s Church at East Chelmsford, Bishop William Lawrence dwelt at some length in his sermon at the seventy-fifth anniversary of the church: “Although a majority of the directors of the Merrimack Company were Unitarians, they voted to build an Episcopal Church; and an Episcopal clergyman was called. We can hardly appreciate the significance of that now. Although the Episcopal Church was very little known in Massachusetts outside of Boston, and was not recognized there as a church of reconciliation, yet here, in this city, the Episcopal Church was planted, the only parish for the whole community—the house of worship for Christian people of all names. Here, at the Lord’s table knelt the members of many denominations, and at the hands of the pastor received the Sacrament. Here, in unity of spirit and the bond of peace, they prayed in the prayers of their common ancestors of old England. Here they together recited the Apostles’ Creed, to which for several generations New England had been a stranger. Thus, until the growth of the population demanded new churches, St. Anne’s stood, like a parish church in old England, as the church of the whole people.”

Toward the support of St. Anne’s every operative on the Merrimack corporation was at first required to spend pay thirty-seven and one-half cents a month.

A story of the rejection by a portion of the population of the religious services that the company at first may have thought to make obligatory upon all, has been told by the Rev. D. C. Eddy, D. D., who said, in an address at the semi-centennial jubilee of the First Baptist church: “After the consecration of the Episcopal church by Bishop Griswold in 1825, the inhabitants of the village made it their religious home, without much declaration of sect or creed. It was doubtless the intention of some of the directors of the Merrimack company, especially of their agent and treasurer, Kirk Boott, to make the place an Episcopal settlement. The operatives were expected to attend service, and the sum necessary to pay for a seat in the sanctuary was regularly deducted from the wages of each. Mr. Boott, with his English education, Episcopal tendencies and military habits, did not readily see how burdensome such taxation must be to a people educated in
New England, and who inherited all the just prejudices of their ances
tors against an established church, and a religion supported by the
taxation of those who declined to enjoy its benefits. Against such
an enforced system of worship old New England has always been
vehemently protestant, and when something like it was tried in
Lowell, all outside of the Episcopal church were dissenters. Yet until
two other churches were formed, the First Baptist and the First Con
gregational, the latter of which was organized in 1826, a few months
after the former had begun its existence, the tax continued, but was
at length abandoned, a very strong public opinion expressing itself
against it."

There was, as a matter of tact, room for many denominations in
the expanding community.

The Baptist church, which made a great many converts in this
part of New England about 1820, claims a certain priority even over
the Episcopalians, in that meetings addressed by Rev. John Park
hurst, of South Chelmsford, were held in 1822 at the house of Abel
Rugg, at the corner of Hosford Square and Wamesit street. Shortly
after the Episcopal church occupied St. Anne's the Baptists estab
lished a meeting of their own in the vacated school house of the
Merrimack company, and early in 1826 definitely organized a religious
society, inviting Rev. John Cookson, then of Malden, to become their
first pastor. Their meeting house was dedicated November 15, 1826.

The First Congregational Church was founded as a consequence
of the gathering together for service of prayer in 1824 at a corpora
tion boarding house of a few men and women who had a preference
for the traditional forms of New England orthodoxy. Their society
was organized June 26, 1826, with a membership of about fifty persons.
In 1827 they dedicated the house of worship on Merrimack street,
which down to 1884 was a Lowell landmark. The first pastor was
the Rev. George C. Beckwith, who served less than two years. He
was succeeded by the Rev. Amos Blanchard, D. D., whose ministry
lasted fourteen years.

Roman Catholicism, now so prominent in the religious life of
Lowell, had an appropriate field for expansion even in the first days
of the town. Mass was celebrated, so far as known for the first time
at East Chelmsford, by the Rev. John Mahoney, in 1822. Many Irish
workers were already employed in excavating and construction, and
some of them had settled in the district called "the Acre," whence
so many of the race have risen to honorable and prosperous condition
in life. Father Mahoney was the first Roman Catholic pastor to be
settled in Lowell. He reported, in 1827, to Bishop Fenwick that
"there are twenty-one families and thirty unmarried men settled here."
By 1830 the Roman Catholics of the town numbered about four hun
dred and arrangements were made for the erection of the first church, which was dedicated by Bishop Fenwick on July 3, 1831.

Methodism was very active in the twenties. Its emotive qualities attracted so many of the operatives and others of the new manufacturing town that three Methodist societies were started within a few years of each other. Miss Phebe Higgins is said to have been the first to proclaim Methodism at East Chelmsford. James A. Barnes, in 1824, formed a "class" for religious instruction, out of which grew both the St. Paul's Methodist Church and the Worthen Street Methodist Church. The first Methodist house of worship was that on Chapel Hill, dedicated November 29, 1827. This afterwards became St. Paul's. Rev. Hiram Walden was installed as pastor in the following June. Mr. Walden did not remain long, for on December 14, 1827, he was succeeded by the Rev. A. D. Merrill, who is remembered as a vigorous preacher and strong organizer. He was followed by Rev. Benjamin F. Lombard, July 30, 1828; Rev. Aaron D. Sargent, June 17, 1829, and, on May 27, 1830, by Rev. Ephraim K. Avery.

A Second Methodist Church was formed in 1831, worshiping in a large dwelling house at Lowell and Suffolk streets, and having as its first pastors Rev. George Pickering and Rev. David Kilburn. This society afterwards purchased a brick church on Suffolk street which had been erected by the Baptists. This was where St. Patrick's now stands.

Unitarianism, despite the fact that a majority of the directors of the Merrimack company resident in Boston were Unitarians, did not get a foothold in Lowell until nearly seven years after the new industrial developments were under way. On August 30, 1829, a meeting was called at the home of Thomas Ordway to consider the expediency of organizing a Unitarian society. Next a conference was held at the Old Stone Tavern, at which steps were taken to form the First Unitarian Church. The list of original supporters included the names of several prominent citizens, among them being Judge Seth Ames, John P. Robinson, John Avery, John A. Knowles, Judge Hopkinson, Dr. Elisha Bartlett, Samuel Batchelder and James G. Carney. The first religious exercises were held in the school house of the Appleton and Hamilton companies in Middlesex street, now the Free Chapel, Rev. Caleb Stetson preaching the first sermon. On May 9, 1830, Rev. William Barry came to Lowell to preach and made so favorable an impression that he was given a call. In the following October the church took the name of "The South Congregational Society." The parish then consisted of about sixty families. The first communion service was observed May 1, 1831. On September 17, following, ground was broken for the erection of the present meeting house on Merrimack street, which was dedicated on Christmas day, 1832. Mr.
Barry remained with the Unitarian Church until July, 1835, when he resigned and was succeeded by the Rev. Henry Adolphus Miles, author of the little history of Lowell, published in 1846, to which every one who writes about the early days of the city must confess his debt.

Various institutions of a civilized community were under consideration in the first fruitful years of Lowell. The time was one in which much idealism was prevalent in New England. The new factory town came in for its full share of welfare movements.

The Middlesex Mechanics' Association was incorporated June 18, 1825, in order, as Cowley puts it, "to minister by a library of books, by public lectures and various other means to the intellectual needs of the people." It had as its model the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanics' Association of Salem, founded about thirty years before by Paul Revere. As Hon. Frederick Lawton has described it, it was a "trade guild, with provisions for the mutual support of needy members, the control of apprentices, and the encouragement of good craftsman ship; and limited its membership to mechanics, meaning thereby any persons who had learned a trade." The manufacturing companies, influenced by Kirk Boott, gave this association a lot of land on Dutton street and contributed most of the funds with which its substantial building was erected. As Kengott writes in his "Survey": "For many years the Middlesex Mechanics' Association wielded a powerful influence in the social, intellectual and moral life of the community. Holyoake would have called it one of the 'sunlight' features in its life of the town and city of Lowell."

The Pioneer of Lowell Thrift Institutions—Encouragement of saving among wage earners began in Lowell in March, 1827, when the Merrimack company announced that any of the employees so desirous might allow their wages to stay in the counting room and go on interest at six per cent., payable semi-annually. It was provided that not more than $100 might be deposited at a time and that the company would not accept more than $1,000 from any one depositor. This plan was continued until the summer of 1829, when it was discontinued, presumably because a better plan had been originated through the effort of the superintendent of the Hamilton company and some of his associates.

"After one of the Hamilton mills was in operation," wrote Mr. Batchelder, "I found that those in our employ suffered such frequent loss of their money by having in their boarding houses no safe place to keep it, that I allowed them to deposit it with the company on interest, and opened books for the purpose, on the plan of a savings bank. After a time Mr. Nathan Appleton suggested that it might be doubtful whether our charter would authorize this: I