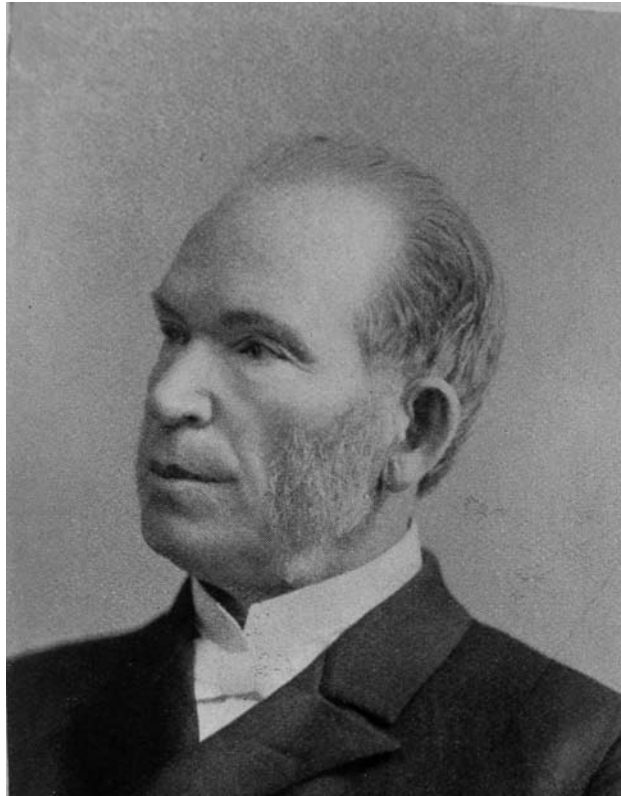


## **Moses H. Bixby**

August 20, 1827-March 20, 1901



**Moses H. Bixby**

BIXBY, REVEREND MOSES HOMANS, A. M., D. D., Pastor for twenty-six years of the Cranston Street Baptist Church, Providence, was born in Warren, Grafton County, N. H., August 20, 1827, son of Benjamin (was born in Salem, New Hampshire, in 1790) and Mary (Cleasby) Bixby. His grandfather, George Bixby, whose ancestors came from England, was a native of Topsfield, Massachusetts, the American home of the Bixby family. Dr. Bixby was the fifth of eight sons, all of whom were Christians, and five were ministers of the Gospel. He was converted at the early age of ten years, and at the age of twelve made a public profession of religion, uniting with the Methodist Episcopal Church in his native town, the only church known to him at that

time. Feeling himself called to the ministry of the Gospel, he entered at once upon the work of preparation. For five years he studied in various schools of his church, especially Newbury Seminary, and the Biblical Institute, under the presidency of Rev. Dr. Dempster, afterward removed to Concord and Boston, and now known as Boston University. He was the youngest theological student that ever entered the Biblical Institute, now Boston University. At sixteen he was a Sunday-school superintendent, and at seventeen was licensed to preach the gospel. About this time he read, with great interest and profit, President Dwight's Theology, and the works of Andrew Fuller, which had great influence on his religious belief, and as he

had always believed in immersion only as baptism, he united with the Baptist Church in East Hardwick, Vermont. This changed all his plans of study. After this he studied several years at the Derby Seminary, under Rev. Austin Norcross, and in the Baptist College in Montreal, which was then under the presidency of the Rev. J. M. Cramp, D.D., assisted by the Rev. Dr. Davies, afterward the distinguished Professor of Hebrew in Regent's Park College, England. He received the degree of Master of Arts from Dartmouth College. For several years he paid his way by teaching vocal music, and he was never aided by any education society or church during the twelve years of his preparatory studies. In 1849, at the age of twenty-two, he was ordained in Vermont, and preached the Gospel in Williston and Johnson, baptizing many converts continued in the pastoral office about four years. In 1851 he was appointed missionary to Burmah by the American Baptist Missionary Union, but was not able to reach the field until 1853.

In January 1853 he sailed for Burmah as a missionary of the American Baptist Missionary Union. Stopping on the way at Cape Town, South Africa, and being detained there a month, he preached repeatedly to a little company of believers, who were soon after organized into a Baptist church, and it is said that more than twenty Baptist churches have since been formed there. He preached also on board the ship Baltimore in Table Bay, to very large congregations gathered from the ships and the shore, and forty persons professed their faith in Christ. He reached Maulmain, Burmah, in June 1853, where he found the English church without a pastor and almost extinct. Within a few months, under his preaching, the chapel was filled, and the membership increased from nine to forty-five. After this he travelled extensively for several years in the Tenasserim and Martaban provinces, preaching the gospel to many thousands of the natives. But the failing health of his wife compelled him to at length to return to this country. After a long and tedious sea-voyage, in which his infant daughter starved almost to death, he landed in New York only to see his beloved wife breathe her last before they could reach home.

In 1857 he became Pastor of the Friendship Street Baptist Church in Providence, where he remained over three years and where his labors were greatly blessed. In the manual of that church we find the following record: "His labors were greatly blessed. . . . His relations as the pastor of the church were always held in subjection to the cherished purpose of his life, and as soon as a door was opened for him to re-enter the field of foreign missions, he did not feel at liberty to continue in the pastoral office. . . . It was a sad day to this church when Mr. Bixby announced his intention to sever the pastoral ties. . . . During this pastorate one hundred and seventy-six were added to the church." In September, 1860 Mr. Bixby was recalled to Burmah, and was appointed to open a new mission to the Shans, a numerous race of people for whom nothing hitherto had been done. Sailing via England and the Red Sea, he entered the field early in 1861. Just before he reached Burmah, ten thousand Shans, driven out of the Shan States by war, came in a body to Toungoo and settled near his destined home. Encouraged by this providence, he entered with great earnestness upon the work of the new mission, nor did he labor in vain. Success immediately followed, and continued from year to year. The chief's son was soon converted, and converts were multiplied, churches were formed, and a training school was established. After this, for eight years Mr. Bixby travelled extensively over various provinces, far into the interior and among savage tribes, often in great peril, but always with marked tokens of Divine favor, preaching the Gospel to various tribes, baptism converts, organizing churches, establishing schools, and training teachers and preachers. But these labors and exposures proved too much for his naturally robust constitution, and at length his health broke down and he was again compelled to return to this native land. He left his family behind, fully intending to go back; but after a year all hope of his resuming missionary work in that climate being abandoned, his family was called home. For ten successive years he was a sufferer from Burmah fever, but he finally regained his health, and after more than a quarter of a century of service

in the home field, is now able to do as much work as at any period in his life. Under his supervision was gathered and organized the Cranston Street Baptist Church in Providence, over which his pastorate has continued uninterruptedly to the present time. In the incipient stages of the enterprise the responsibility rested upon him alone. Seeing the possibilities of the field, he personally assumed large pecuniary obligations for a church lot, in September 1869, and in three months completed a chapel with a seating capacity of five hundred. This building was enlarged three times within ten years. It was opened for public services the first Sabbath in January 1870 the Sunday-school with thirty-five members and the congregation with forty-two hearers. In the following October the church was organized with fifty-six members. In nine months it was doubled, and in eighteen months tripled. The chapel has been thrice enlarged to suit the growing demands of the school and congregation; the audience-room will seat over one thousand people, and there are thirteen rooms besides, all in use. The school now numbers nine hundred and twenty-four, and more than three thousand have been members. The church now numbers four hundred and fifty, and more than five hundred and fifty have been received into it, more than three hundred by experience and baptism. In these ten years of toil he has regained his health, and after thirty years in the ministry, in which he has preached the Gospel in the four great divisions of the globe, he is still vigorous, and actively employed in the work. In 1875 the Central University of Iowa conferred upon him the honorary degree of D.D.

A new, beautiful and commodious house of worship was dedicated in November 1893, and in January 1895 the twenty-fifth anniversary of the church Sunday-school and pastorate was fittingly celebrated. The results of these twenty-five years of labor are seen in three houses of worship, two for the home work and one for a vigorous outstation; two Sunday-schools, numbering nearly a thousand members; and an addition of eleven hundred and sixty-five to the church, of which seven hundred and twenty-seven were by experience and baptism. Dr. Bixby's

labors have not, however, been confined to his church alone, he having given counsel and help to many others, and supervised the building of four churches besides his own. He is preeminently the friend of young people and deeply interested in whatever tends to uplift the rising generation. For fifteen years he has been a member of the School Committee, and it was through his efforts that the normal music course was introduced into the schools of Providence. Fourteen successive years he was chosen President of the Rhode Island Baptist Education Society, and only resigned on account of the pressure of other duties. Thirty young men and twenty young women have gone from his church to college. He is a trustee of Brown University, Newton Theological Seminary, Hartshorn Memorial College at Richmond, Va., and Worcester Academy; also a member of the executive committee of the last named institution. Dr. Bixby is even more vigorous now in the ministry than in his earlier years, and is preaching to larger congregations than ever before. He is in his twenty-seventh year with the Cranston Street Church, and the thirtieth year of pastoral work in the city of Providence. Dr. Bixby was married, in November 1849, to Miss Susan C. Dow, of Malden, Vt., who died in Burlington, Vt., in August 1856, ten days after her arrival from Burmah. He was married again, in 1857, to Miss Laura A. Gage, principal of the New Hampton Ladies' Seminary, who has since shared his labors and successes. His daughter Jennie, born in Maulmain, in 1855, is the wife of Rev. Freeman Johnson, M. D., missionary in Toungoo, Burmah. His son, Ernest Merle, born in Toungoo, Burmah, is the founder and head of the Bixby Silver Company of Providence, R. I.

1AN ACT TO INCORPORATE THE CRANSTON STREET BAPTIST SOCIETY, IN PROVIDENCE.

*It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:*

SECTION 1. **M. H. Bixby**, Marshall Woods, Alvah Woods, **Andrew Comstock**, Experience S. Barrows, Charles Doell, W. S.

1 Jan. Session 1870, pg 184 & 185, At the General Assembly of the State of Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations By Rhode Island, Published by Published by Henry Ward, Secretary, 1868

Nichols, LeGrand Scholfield, William Tinkler, Zelotes R. Corp, Raymond E. Barrows, **Joseph Harris**, Joseph A. Bottomly, A. Z. Horton, Samuel Hudson, W. M. Brown, **John B. Hartwell**, **J. C. Hartshorn**, Benjamin F. Clarke, Robert B. Holden, O. A. Jillson, Frederick Miller, and such others as they may elect, their associates and successors, are hereby created a body corporate, with perpetual succession, by the name of the "Cranston Street Baptist Society," for the purpose of establishing and maintaining the public worship of Almighty God in the city of Providence and propagating the Christian religion according to the usages of the churches composing the Warren and Providence Baptist Association, with all the rights and privileges, and subject to all the duties and liabilities set forth in chapter 125 of the Revised Statutes, and of all acts or parts of acts in amendment thereof or in addition thereto.

SEC. 2. Said society shall have power to receive and hold, transmit and convey any real or personal estate not exceeding one hundred thousand dollars in value, to make such by-laws as are not repugnant to the constitution and laws of this State, and to elect such officers as they may deem necessary. Any three of the above named persons may call the meeting for organization.

SEC. 3. This act shall take effect from and after its passage.

Members in bold text above are also members of the founding on Buttonwood Beach Association.