

PASTORS OF FAIRFIELD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Rev. Daniel Elmer Pastor from 1729 – 1755



Daniel Elmer's Gravestone near the Stone Monument

The Rev. Daniel Elmer was the 8th pastor of Fairfield Presbyterian Church, serving 26 years as shepherd in what was known then as the Church of Christ at Fairfield. The locale south and east of the Cohansy River eventually became known as Fairfield as many of the settlers to the region were Puritans from Fairfield Connecticut. Elmer himself was born in Fairfield, Connecticut, a natural candidate to provide spiritual guidance to settlers from the "home colony."

Daniel Elmer's tenure as pastor lasted 26 years, the second longest of the forty-four Shepherds of Fairfield Church. Accounts of his ministry prove him to be an able and gifted pastor who weathered a great rift in the church over evangelistic methods and preaching of the Great Awakening. At his death, the two factions of the church came together, a testimony to his gracious and Spirit led ministry.

The excerpt below is from Richard Webster's, *History of the Presbyterian Church in America*, 1857.
M. Schuelke

Daniel Elmer was born in Fairfield, Connecticut, in 1690, and graduated at Yale in 1713. He married soon after, and, "for some time, carried on the work of the ministry" in Brookfield,¹ Massachusetts.

The General Court allowed the town twenty pound for three years, to aid in sustaining the gospel. Elmer received only half of this encouragement, having left before 1715. Where he spent the next twelve years is not known.

In 1728, he settled at Fairfield, in Cohanzy. At the declaring for the Confession, in 1729, he was the only minister who professed himself unprepared to act. Time was granted him to consider; and the next year he informed the synod that he had declared before the presbytery his cordial adoption of the Confession and the Catechism.

Whitefield visited West Jersey in the spring of 1740. Gilbert Tennent was there in the summer; and, while Whitefield was preaching (November 19) On Wednesday, the Holy Ghost came down "like a mighty rushing wind" at Cohanzy. Some thousands were present. The whole congregation was moved, and two cried out.

¹ The Rev. Dr. Joseph J. Foot's Historical Discourse at Brookfield.

At the separation in 1741, Elmer and his elder, Jonathan Fithian, though present at the opening of the sessions, seems to have gone home before the Protest was introduced. He adhered to the Old Side. The congregation divided: even his own son occasionally went to Greenwich to hear Andrew Hunter. Finley spent much time in the vicinity; and New Brunswick Presbytery was constantly importuned for supplies, and their most promising candidates were sent to Cohanzey.

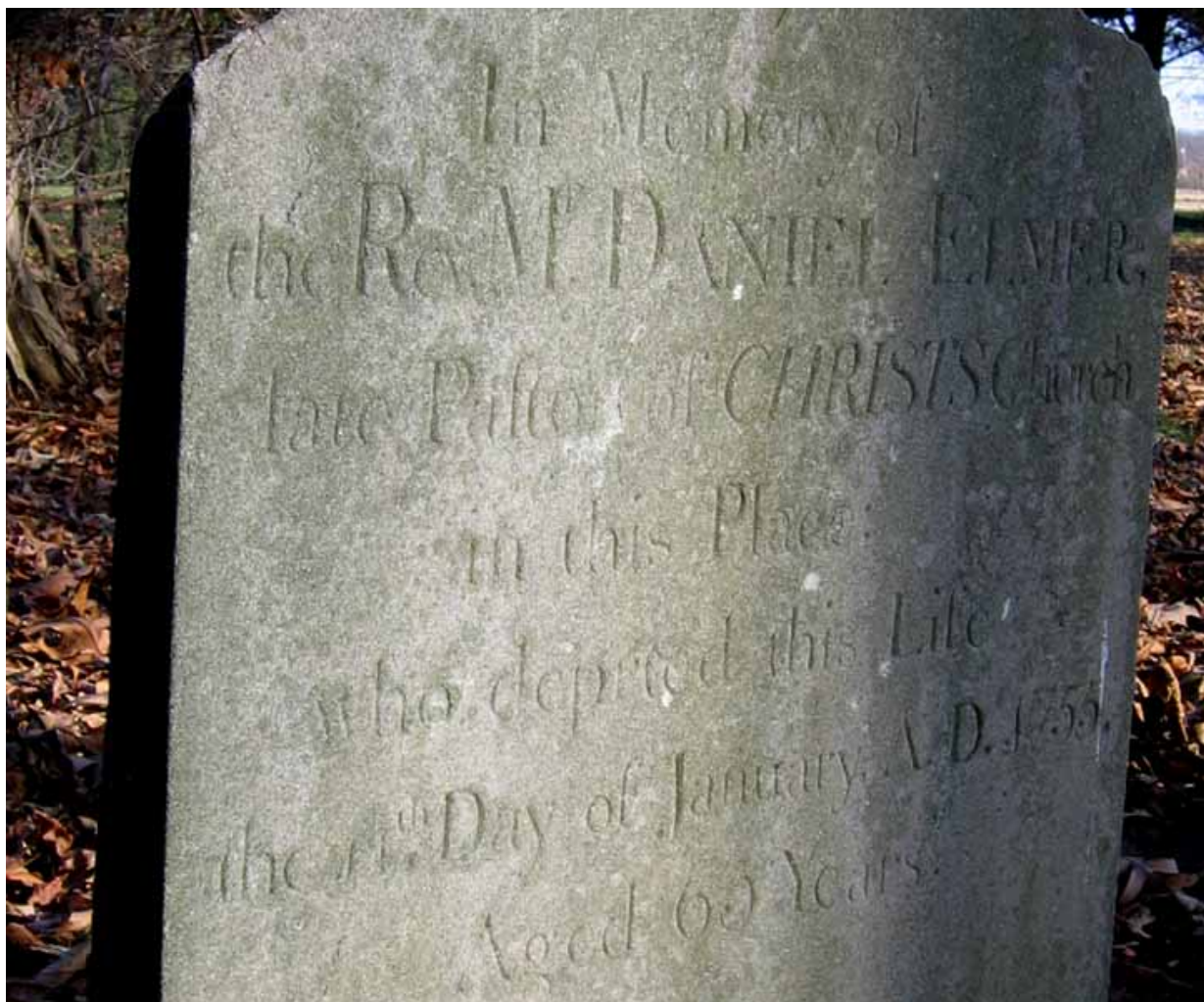
At Elmer's request, Cowell, McHenry, and Kinkaid were sent by the synod, in September, 1754, to endeavor to remove the difficulties he complained of in his congregation; but all proceedings were stayed by his death. He lies buried in the Old New England town-graveyard, with this inscription:—

"In memory of the Rev. Daniel Elmer, late pastor of Christ's Church in this place, who departed this life, January 14, 1755, aged sixty-five years."

Dr. Alison wrote to President Stiles, July 20, 1755, informing him that the two parts of Elmer's congregation had united on his death, and introducing Mr. Thomas Ogden, whom they had sent as their messenger to Connecticut to procure a minister.

Elmer married Margaret, daughter of Ebenezer Parsons, of West Springfield, Massachusetts, and sister of the Rev. Jonathan Parsons, of Newburyport; she was the mother of three sons and four daughters. His second wife was a Webster, the mother of two sons and three daughters.

His son Daniel was born in 1714, and was the father of Dr. Jonathan and General Ebenezer Elmer.





THREE GENERATIONS OF DANIEL ELMERS
The top stone to the left is the Rev. Daniel Elmer's.

The stone in the middle left is his son's, Daniel Elmer, Esquire; his stone reads:

In Memory of
DANIEL ELMER Esq
who departed this Life
May 2nd 1761
in the 46th year of his age

The stone at the bottom is of grandson, also, Daniel Elmer, Esquire; inscribed on his stone:

In Memory of
DANIEL ELMER Esq
who departed this Life
June 30th 1775
in the 53rd year of his age