

## An Overview of our History

Compiled by Mildred B. Shaw, Church Historian

Organized in November 1771 when the first minister, Reverend Joseph Woodman, was installed, this building is the second building of the Sanbornton Congregational Church. The first meetinghouse was built on Tower Hill on the South side of Centre Cemetery. In 1834 the original building was taken down beginning in April and built over at this present location. The "new" meetinghouse was dedicated on September 24, 1834. It is on the National Register of Historic Landmarks, as are the Sanbornton Public Library, formerly the Woodman Academy, and the Town Hall. Upon the church's construction, it was voted to sell spaces or horse sheds to church members at the rear of the building. In the 1950's the Sanbornton Fire Department fire trucks were kept there and earlier it was used as a workshop for the school. The last remaining horse shed was removed in 2000.

In 1990 a handicapped access to the church was completed leading out the right side of the chancel area. At the rear of the church in 1996 a memory garden was created outside by the side door. A granite bench memorializing Janet Norman, late wife of the Reverend Leslie Norman (1992-2002), and a peace pole also adorns this area.

The church's one story main block has a shallow, shorter, two-story gable roofed entry pavilion on it's street gable end. Above the pavilion rises a two-stage belfry tower. The main block and the pavilion both have clapboarded walls, sill boards, cornerboards, and the same pedimented box cornice with moldings and frieze. The two bay wide pavilion has two entries (each a paneled door with a built-in stained glass window, paneled side trim with corner blocks topped by paneled triangular "finials"), 12/8 sash windows in the second story, and a semi-elliptical louvered fan in the pediment accent the building. The main block is lit by tall, large, stained glass windows topped by Gothic arched blind louvers and trimmed by molded, arched frames with "impost blocks," two windows in the street gable end and three windows in each side facade. The first stage of the tower, clapboarded with cornerboards and a box cornice with moldings and frieze, has one painted arched louver with molded frame in each public facade. The clapboarded upper stage, trimmed by wide paneled corner pilasters and another box cornice with moldings and frieze, has a Gothic arched louver set in molded frame with "impost blocks" in each public facade. The upper stage is surrounded by and crowned with balustrades with simple balusters and corner posts topped by tall pyramidal "pinnacle."

## ***HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS***

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1771 – Congregational Church organized with the ordination of Reverend Joseph Woodman, November 13, 1771

1775 – Building of first meeting house begun, completed in 1789

1829 – Separation of church and state in Sanbornton

1834 – Church moved from Tower Hill to present site and extended

1870 – Rear singing gallery moved to the main floor

1871 – Church Centennial celebrated

1897 – New pews installed in the church

1903 – Memorial windows installed

1921 – One hundred fiftieth anniversary celebrated

1946 – November the church incorporated

1947 – New church constitution accepted

1949 – Electric organ installed

1951 – Chancel remodeled

1953 – Balcony converted to classrooms

1953 to 1966 – Church shared minister with Northfield-Tilton Congregational Church

1961 – Affiliated with the United Church of Christ

1968-69 – Addition to rear of church with pipe organ installation

1971 – Bicentennial of church celebrated and Catharine B. Currier retired after 53 years as church organist

1974 – Excavation project began for undercroft, completed in 1980 with Christian Education, Fellowship and Community Service facilities

1976 – Inauguration of expanded Estey pipe organ, rebuilt in 1987

1981 – Acquisition of Fiske House for use as Parsonage

1988 – Pastor's study at church completed

1989 – Expansion and renovation of Parsonage

1990 – Handicapped access completed

1995 – Church Music Vision realized with new hymnals, choir robes, and organ pipes

1996 – Two hundred twenty-fifth anniversary of the church