

CHAPTER XII

THE CHURCHES

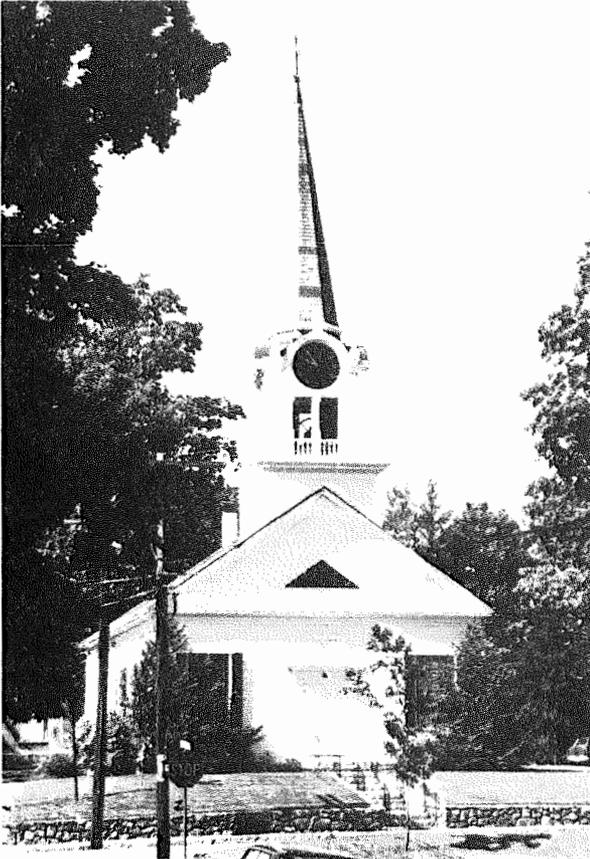
Five churches, all well attended, made up the religious side of life in Jaffrey prior to the 1930's. Today there are only three churches, The First Congregational Church at Jaffrey Center, and the United Church and St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, both in the east village. The divisiveness that had its roots back in the early Colonial days has disappeared and those of the Protestant faiths have joined to form one church, The United Church of Jaffrey. The church edifice is the former East Congregational Church on Main Street, which has had an addition built on for increased facilities.

THE FIRST UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF JAFFREY

The first of the Protestant churches to be dissolved was the First Universalist Society of Jaffrey, which was organized in 1822. Its last pastor, the Rev. Myron L. Cutler, died in 1930, after which members of the church worshipped either with the East Congregational Church or the First Baptist Church. Mr. Cutler's pastorate of nearly forty-three years was the longest pastorate of the church, extending over nearly a half of its pastoral history.

According to records still extant, the first recorded meeting of the First Universalist Society of Jaffrey was held on June 12, 1858, thirty-six years after its organization. Apparently records of earlier meetings were not preserved. Its last recorded meeting was held on October 4, 1939, 117 years after its incorporation. At a prior meeting, held on September 1, 1939, the Society voted to convey its real estate consisting of land and church edifice to the New Hampshire Universalist Convention with "the understanding that the Convention shall offer the same to the Woman's Club of Jaffrey," and, if accepted, "to convey the said property to the Woman's Club." The church organ was designated to become the property of the Woman's Club, but the pews and pulpit were reserved to be given to some church in need of pews and pulpit. The East Jaffrey Woman's Club voted in November, 1939, to "accept the gift of the Universalist Church" as a meeting place for the club. Hitherto, the club had held its meetings across the street in Library Hall.

At the October 4, 1939, meeting, which was held at the home of Alice W. Poole, the First Universalist Society "voted unanimously that the trustees of the First Universalist Society of



CUTLER MEMORIAL CLUBHOUSE

East Jaffrey be authorized and instructed to transfer the funds of said Society to the New Hampshire Universalist State Convention." And thus passed into history a church that had become too small, like many another church of today, to maintain its parish and to hire and support a new minister.

THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

The First Baptist Church was the second religious society to

be organized in Jaffrey. (See Vol. I, pp. 228-231.) It was also the second religious body to join with the East Congregational Church as the Federated Church of Jaffrey. The first church was the Universalist Society of Jaffrey. The Baptist Church in Jaffrey was founded in 1814 and previous to that time the Jaffrey Baptists, of whom there were many, worshipped with those of the faith in Temple, New Hampshire. The names of many substantial early settlers of Jaffrey figured prominently in the church, many of them temporarily as some moved West to newer fields, while many lived out their lives here without their descendants staying on to carry on the ancestral acres. But the one name that stood out longer than any other was Prescott, always prominently identified with the activities of the church for over a hundred years. Col. Benjamin Prescott and his wife, Rachel, were original members and the Prescott name continued prominent in the annals of the church until the death in 1926 of Julius E. Prescott, a zealous worker of the church and prominent businessman of the community. His zeal in obtaining new members for the church during the early decades of the present century are still well remembered.

During the lives of many Jaffrey residents still living the Prescotts, Goodnows, and Baldwins were strong men of the church and to them and their fellow parishioners, as well as to their predecessors, the church building was an edifice built with precision and maintained with devotion that would stand unscathed by destructive forces for another hundred years. With their and their wives' departures from earthly scenes their names also disappeared from the active church membership rolls, for they left no progeny. Many others of the early devoted members, who held places of honor in the support of the church, were for years remembered by their names on the beautiful stained glass windows erected with filial regard or in loving memory by relatives, with a feeling of perpetuity. But times change, things change — even things once believed to be changeless are wrought by the hand of Change and nothing remains constant.

Thus it was with the First Baptist Church of Jaffrey, erected in 1829 and 1830 with a strong feeling of fidelity and religious fervor to become the second meeting-place for worship service in Jaffrey, with never a question but that it was built for the ages. Another Prescott—Oliver—was engaged to frame the build-

ing and commenced his work on June 15, 1829, and the house was raised eleven days later. The cost of framing was seventy-five dollars and the cost of finishing, which was let to Aaron P. Howland, was eight hundred dollars. It was ready for use on June 12, 1830, and dedicated on June 30, 1830.

But chance and progress weave an unpredictable pattern as time marches on and in 1968 it became evident that the old edifice had served its usefulness, first as a place of worship for over a hundred years, and later as a parish house for a United Parish. Besides, the land on which it stood was already designated as the site of the proposed United States Post Office. That meant just one thing—the removal of the old landmark.

As the demolition crew progressed with the work of tearing down the edifice and the framework became exposed, it was evident that the hand of a master workman had placed the integral parts together so solidly that they would have held for another hundred years, had not the usefulness of the building vanished with the passage of time. A spectacular feature of the razing of the building was the removal of its belfry with a huge crane and gently placed on the ground. Admired by many, it was purchased by Edward Thomas of Concord, Massachusetts, a man with a penchant for collecting old buildings. On Monday, September 16, 1968, the belfry set out on its journey to the Massachusetts town.

Relics of the old Baptist Church remaining in Jaffrey include the stained glass window in memory of Aunt Hannah Davis, which was presented to the Jaffrey Historical Society, and the old Revere bell from the belfry of the church which is now the property of the United Church of Jaffrey. (Hannah Davis was the maker of handboxes which today are prized collectors' items.) The "Foundation or Marker Stone" of the First Baptist church has now been placed on the town park in front of the new Post Office.

During its final decades as a house of worship, the pulpit of the First Baptist Church was filled by the following pastors:

Rev. Frank K. Neary, 1923 to 1936

Rev. Willard S. Smith, 1936 to 1942.

Rev. Roger W. Floyd, 1942 to 1949.

THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN JAFFREY

Following the fourteen year service of the Rev. David C. Torrey as pastor of The First Congregational Church in Jaffrey from 1918 to his death in 1932, the following ministers have served the church:

- Rev. Lathrop C. Grant, 1934-1944.
- Rev. Anders G. Lund, 1945-1952.
- Rev. Frederic A. Pease, Jr., 1953-1957.
- Rev. Walter J. Leibrecht, 1957-1958.
- Rev. Merton E. Sherman, 1958-1960.
- Rev. Arthur H. Bradford (interim), 1960-1962.
- Rev. John H. Leamon, 1962-

The parsonage barn, used for some years as a parish assembly room, was entirely remodeled and linked to the main house of worship in 1969. The work was commenced in June under the direction of Architect Guy H. Wilson of Concord, New Hampshire. The renovation included the construction of a new kitchen, wash and cloak rooms, and a passageway to the sanctuary. The space for the Church School session and other activities was doubled. The Woman's Society of the church provided wall to wall carpeting.

Frank Lindquist was chairman of the building committee and was assisted by Mrs. Roger Smith, Mrs. Grosvenor Calkins, Mrs. C. R. Lyle, and William Torrey. Mrs. Smith for the Woman's Society had charge of the interior decorating.

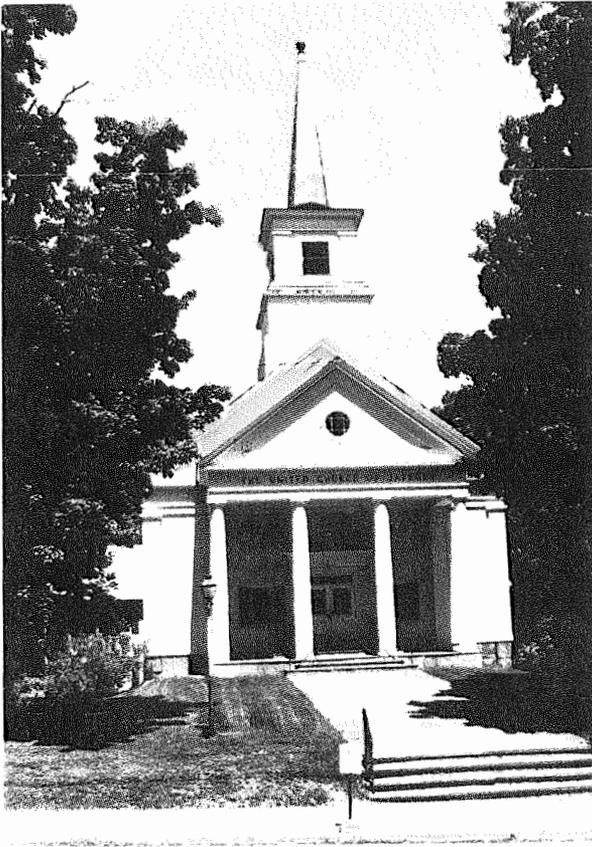
A fund-raising committee for the project was headed by Dr. J. Seelye Bixler as chairman, with Suzanne Pierce as vice-chairman. Graham B. Blaine and Professor Charles Taylor were the other members of the committee.

The newly renovated building was dedicated at the Sunday morning worship service, October 19, 1969, with the following order of service taking place. The morning worship service in the sanctuary included the responsive service led by Mrs. Charles Hamilton; the New Testament Lesson by Deacon Richard McFadden; and a brief sermon on "Our Church" led by the minister, the Rev. John H. Leamon.

Following this service Deacons Walter Greene and Copeland Draper led the congregation into the parish house, where the Litany of Praise was led by Peter Ruffle, a member of the Church School. Brief statements were made by Dr. Bixler and Mr. Lind-

quist, after which the keys were presented by the building fund chairman Lindquist to Suzanne Pierce, chairman of the Board of Trustees.

Rev. Leamon led the Litany of Dedication and Dr. Arthur H. Bradford offered the concluding prayer.



UNITED CHURCH OF JAFFREY

THE UNITED CHURCH

The history of the East Congregational Church, now the United Church of Jaffrey, is told in detail in Volume I, pages 232-234. In 1949 the former church became the Federated Church of Jaffrey, created with the acceptance of Articles of Agreement by the East Congregational Church and the First Baptist

Church on October 17, 1949. Thus were brought together in a common fellowship of worship and work two churches possessing histories of faithful service to the community. The First Baptist Church had been founded on January 28, 1814, and the East Congregational Church was organized on April 14, 1849. Into the life-blood of the two came active workers from the Universalist Church which was dissolved in 1939.

Both member churches of the Federated Church retained their identity, carrying out their responsibilities in the care of trust funds and properties until in January they each voted to close their separate books and become one United Church of Jaffrey.

In 1968 the old Baptist Meetinghouse, which had been used for church and community meetings, community suppers and fairs, Eastern Star and Charity Lodge of Masons meetings, as well as meetings of the Jaffrey Lions Club and Girl Scout meetings, was torn down. Its lovely old wide pine boards, leaded glass windows, and superb pipe organ were all sold for a new use. The genuine Paul Revere bell in the steeple of the church was retained to be installed in the steeple of the United Church, where up until now there was only a recorded carrillon, the gift of the Pilgrim Fellowship members in 1954.

Since 1933 the following ministers have served the church:

Rev. G. Gerald Parker, 1933-1939.

Rev. Levering Reynolds, Jr., 1939-1945.

Rev. Richard Stoughton, Jr., 1945-1956.

Rev. Byron Higgon, 1956-1961.

Rev. Mario Cestaro, 1963-1969.

Rev. Franklin L. Irvine, 1969-

The present fine relations between the Protestant and the Catholic churches began during the pastorship of Rev. Byron Higgon, which were continued by his successors, Rev. Cestaro and the present pastor, Rev. Irvine.

ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH

The early history of the Roman Catholic Church in Jaffrey is told in Volume I, pp. 234-5. With the influx of the Irish immigrants and French-Canadians during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the number of persons of the Roman Catholic faith grew rapidly, and after the turn of the century was followed by an even faster growth. The little white church on

the hill was built in 1887-8, but was soon outgrown though it continued to be the church of the parish until 1917. That year the present stone church was completed and the first Mass was said inside its walls in June, 1917, during the pastorate of the Reverend Herbert A. Hennon. Thereafter the former church edifice was continued in use as a Parish Hall until 1962, when it was taken down and the lot converted into additional parking area.

Four years after the completion and dedication of the new church, Father Hennon was transferred to Littleton, New Hampshire, a move that brought disappointment to many Jaffrey residents. His successor, the Reverend William J. Cavanaugh, was a happy choice for Jaffrey and the Church and his pastorate continued from 1921 to 1933. He is still well remembered by Catholics and Protestants alike for his great interest in the town itself, as well as for his performance of his pastoral duties.

Since 1933 the following pastors have served St. Patrick's Church:

- Rev. Peter J. McDonough, 1933-1945.
- Rev. John A. McSweeney, 1945-1956.
- Rt. Rev. Lawrence R. Gardner, 1956-1960.
- Rev. Lionel W. Boulay, 1960-1967.
- Rev. James F. Quinn, 1967-1969.
- Rev. Robert E. Barnea, 1969-

MONADNOCK CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE CENTER, INC.

The old "Ark property" was purchased by the Monadnock Christian Conference Center, Inc., in the fall of 1965 for the purpose of running winter retreats for teenagers and operating a summer family Bible conference. Along with the full range of both winter and summer sports, the Conference's primary purpose is to help people to find the answers to life through their relationship with God and Jesus Christ. The Conference can take up to 175 on a weekend basis and usually takes 70 to 80 family-type guests during the summertime. It is operated as a non-profit, non-denominational, independent Bible Conference and is completely dependent on the tuition charged, plus the gifts of those interested in the objectives of the Conference.