Some Meetinghouses & Historic Churches *of* New England

An Exhibit by Robert Stephenson

Some Meetinghouses & Historic Churches of New England

MUCH HAS BEEN written about what makes for an aesthetically pleasing and culturally rich village. What are considered to be some of the essential ingredients? Often mentioned: a post office, 'general store,' inn and similar gathering spots where residents are able naturally to come together, converse, trade news and gossip, all with the feeling, often unconsciously, of being part of a community. A common or green, a burying ground, some 'street furniture' such as a Civil War statue, a bandstand, a watering trough, a flagpole, all help as well to give some identity to a place.

But perhaps the strongest ingredient of all is a church or meetinghouse, particularly, again, if it is historic and has a certain architectural merit, and, because of this or its setting, is the visual focus of the village, something that one immediately thinks of as the community's identifying image.

The Monadnock Region is particularly rich in its collection of historic churches, meetinghouses and church-like buildings; many of them immediately come to mind when a particular village is mentioned.

True meetinghouses are less common and therefore all the more to be treasured. In the settlement of the region, the usual stipulation laid down by the proprietors was that a suitable meetinghouse be built within so many years of the town's establishment. These were to serve as the religious center for the community and as the place for town meetings and civic community events and often as a refuge in time of danger or disaster.

A church-building spree occurred in the region and throughout New England in the 1820s and 30s, largely as a consequence of various Toleration Acts that had the effect of separating church from state and ending taxation in support of religion. You will notice that many of the structures included in this exhibit date from this period.

Meetinghouses are often consigned to periods as far as design and layout are concerned. The earliest are FIRST PERIOD meetinghouses. There is only one now extant in the country: The Old Ship in Hingham, Massachusetts (No. 1, 1681). The defining characteristics: boxy in shape with a hipped roof.

SECOND PERIOD meetinghouses came next in the 18th and early 19th centuries. These were barn-like in shape, rectangular, two-stories and often with a porch at either end which included stairs to the gallery. The main door was on the south, long-side with the raised pulpit opposite on the north side. Typically there were box pews. In some instances a tower was later added at one end. Nearby examples of this design are the Jaffrey Meetinghouse (No. 8 & 9, 1775) and the Washington Meeting House/Town Hall (No. 12, 1787).

THIRD PERIOD meetinghouses and churches followed from the early 19th century onward. The typical design features of this period include placing the entrance at one short end with the pulpit at the opposite end and the addition of a built-in steeple and usually a front pediment supported by two or four columns. Examples of this period abound in the region.

One also comes upon TRANSITIONAL designs where elements from more than one period are combined. And architectural styles and details apply to each period: Georgian, Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Romanesque Revival, Italianate. 🍎

Some Meetinghouses & Historic Churches of New England

uu = Unitarian Universalist; ucc = United Church of Christ
The following Meetinghouses and Churches are included in the Exhibit.

CONNECTICUT

19. Brooklyn *Old Trinity Church* (1771)
29. Norfolk *Church of Christ* (1814)
20. Pomfret *Abington Congregational Church* (1751)

MAINE

13, 14. Alna *Meetinghouse* (1789)
7. Bristol *Harrington Meetinghouse* (1772)
4. Harpswell *Meetinghouse* (1758)
5. Waldoboro *The Old German Meeting House* (1772)

MASSACHUSETTS

10. Amesbury *Rocky Hill Meetinghouse* (1785)
21. Ashby *First Parish Church* (1809)
32. Berlin *First Parish Church* (1826)
51. Brimfield *First Congregational Church* (1848)
2. Cohasset *First Parish Meetinghouse* (1747)
39. Cohasset *Second Congregational Church* (1825)
68. Deerfield *The First Church of Deerfield* (1824)
52. Groton *First Parish Church* (1755)
1. Hingham *Old Ship Meetinghouse* (1681)
22. Hingham *Second Parish Meetinghouse* (1742)
74. Lancaster *First Church of Christ* (1816)
37. Manchester-by-the-Sea *First Parish Church* (1809)
34. Medway *Community Church* (1814)
55. Petersham *First Congregational Parish* (1910)
56. Shutesbury *Community Church* (1827)
36. Sudbury *First Parish Church* (1797)
24. Templeton *First Church* (1811)
75. Uxbridge *Friends Meetinghouse* (1770)
23. Wayland *First Parish Church* (1815)
54. Winchendon *First Congregational Church* (1850)

NEW HAMPSHIRE

27. Acworth *Congregational Church* (1821)
35. Amherst *Congregational Church* (1771)
57. Bennington *Congregational Church* (1839)
17. Canaan *Meetinghouse* (1794)
73. Charlestown *South Parish Unitarian Church* (1842)
79. Claremont *Old St. Mary's Catholic Church* (1823)
80. Claremont *Union Episcopal Church* (1773)
3. Danville *Meetinghouse* (c.1755)
53. Dublin *Community Church* (1853)
58. Dunbarton *First Congregational Church* (1836)
25. Fitzwilliam *Third Fitzwilliam Meetinghouse* (1817)

41. Francestown *Old Meeting House* (1803)
18. Fremont *Meeting House* (1800)
42. Greenfield *Meetinghouse* (1795)
26. Hancock *Meetinghouse* (1820)
64. Harrisville *Community Church of Harrisville & Chesham* (1840)
70. Haverhill *Pearson Hall* (1816)
38. Hillsborough *Smith Memorial Congregational Church* (1836)
76. Hopkinton *St. Andrews Episcopal Church* (1828)
8, 9. Jaffrey *Meetinghouse* (1775)
65. Jaffrey *First Church* (1832)
31. Keene *United Church of Christ* (1786)
43. Langdon *Meetinghouse* (1803)
16. Lempster *Meetinghouse* (1794)
44, 45. Lyndeborough *United Church* (1837)
72. Marlborough *The Federated Church* (1834)
46. Nelson *First Congregational Church* (1841)
33. New London *First Baptist Church* (1826)
28. Newport *South Congregational Church* (1823)
62. Orford *Congregational Church (West Church)* (1855)
77. Peterborough *All Saints' Church* (1923)
67. Peterborough *Unitarian Church* (1825)
71. Plainfield *Blow-Me-Down Grange* (1839
69. Portsmouth *North Church* (1854)
47. Rindge *Second Meetinghouse* (1796)
6. Sandown *Old Meeting House* (1773)
59. Springfield *Meetinghouse & Town House* (1797)
48. Stoddard *Congregational Church* (1836)
66. Swanzey *First Congregational Church* (1836)
60. Temple *Congregational Church* (1842)
12. Washington *Meeting House / Town Hall* (1787)
15. Webster *Old Meetinghouse* (1791)
40. Wentworth *Congregational Church* (1829)
30. Westmoreland *Park Hill Meetinghouse* (1764)
61. Wilton *First Unitarian Congregational Society* (1861)

VERMONT

63. Richmond *Round Church* (1813)
11. Rockingham *Meeting House* (1787-1801)
49. Strafford *Strafford Town House* (1799)
50. Sudbury *Congregational Church* (1807)

ENGLAND

78. Iffley *Church of St. Mary the Virgin* (c.1170)

You can view an on-line version of this exhibit at https://www.rs41.org/meetinghouses.pdf

Old Ship Meetinghouse, UU (1681)
90 Main Street, Hingham, Massachusetts

1

The First Parish Meetinghouse is the only surviving 17th century Puritan meetinghouse in the United States and oldest church building in continuous ecclesiastical use in the country. "The ceiling, made of great oak beams, looks like the inverted frame of a ship," hence its name Old Ship. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1966). Designated a National Historic Landmark (1960). 🍎

First Parish Meetinghouse, UU (1747)
23 North Main Street, Cohasset, Massachusetts

The First Parish Meetinghouse retains its original appearance better than any other example in Massachusetts that is still in regular use. It measures 58 by 48 feet. The two-story porch dates to 1768. The raised pulpit and sounding board on the long northeasterly side is original. In 1746, John Stephenson (my great[5] grandfather) and two others were appointed to draw up plans for the new meetinghouse.

Danville Meetinghouse (c.1755)
470 Main Street, Danville, New Hampshire

This is the oldest meetinghouse of original construction and least-altered in New Hampshire. (It is also known as the Hawke Meetinghouse; Hawke being the earlier name of Danville.) It is owned by the Town and maintained by a local non-profit, the Olde Meeting House Association. It retains its raised pulpit, sounding board and the chambered pews. Note the 'pulpit window' on the back. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1982).

Harpswell Meetinghouse, CONGREGATIONAL (1758)
Route 123, Harpswell, Maine

The Harpswell Meetinghouse was built to provide space for town meetings and religious services and is the oldest of this type of building in the state of Maine. It was taken over by the Town in the 1840s and active religious services moved across the road to the present-day Kellogg Church. Note the 'pulpit window' on the back. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1969). Designated a National Historic Landmark (1968). ❧

The Old German Meeting House (1772)
235 Bremen Road, Waldoboro, Maine

Built by a group of Reformed Lutherans in 1772, the church is now maintained as a local memorial by the German Protestant Society. An annual service in German and English is held on the first Sunday in August. The interior has a raised pulpit, box pews and a three-sided gallery. It stands within the 24-acre German Protestant Cemetery. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1970). 🍒

Sandown Old Meeting House (1773)
Fremont Road, Sandown, New Hampshire

6

Sandown is credited by many with possessing the finest second period meetinghouse in New Hampshire. The interior features a raised pulpit, sounding board, box pews and a three-sided gallery. It served a religious congregation until 1834, and was used for town meetings until 1929. It is now owned by a non-profit organization, the Sandown Old Meetinghouse Association. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1978). 🍎

Harrington Meetinghouse (1772)
## 278 Harrington Road, Bristol, Maine

Built in 1772 and moved to its present site in 1775. About 1851, the meetinghouse became a Universalist Church, and suffered its first physical changes. The Pemaquid Historical Association today provides funds for the maintenance and operation of the meetinghouse, while the actual ownership remains vested in the Town of Bristol. Note the 'pulpit window' on the back. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1970). ❧

Jaffrey Meetinghouse (1775)
15 Laban Ainsworth Way, Jaffrey, New Hampshire

The frame was raised on June 17, 1775, the day of the Battle of Bunker Hill. Tradition has it that those doing the work could hear distant cannonading. It is still owned by the Town and is used during the warmer months for lectures, concerts, weddings. Around 1870 a second floor replaced the gallery to accommodate Town offices with the high school on the ground floor. Its present interior dates to 1922. Horesheds stand behind. 🍒
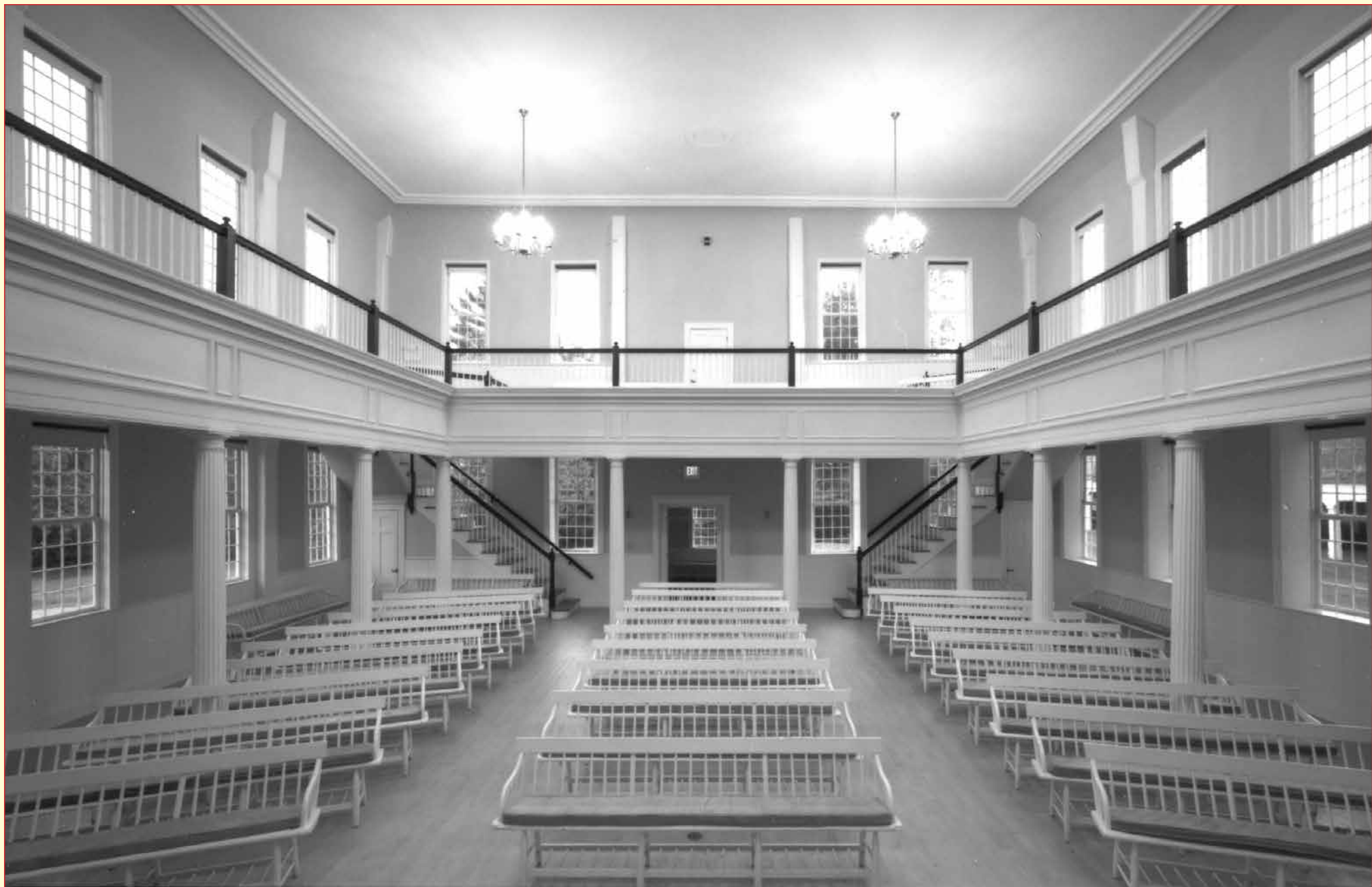
Jaffrey Meetinghouse (1775)
### 15 Laban Ainsworth Way, Jaffrey, New Hampshire

The upper photograph shows the interior from the stage. Originally the entrance door was on the left (and still is) facing the raised pulpit that stood on the right. The door at the rear leads to the Tower which was added in 1822. The lower photograph shows the attic framing which a structural engineer assessing the building in the 1990s observed as "remarkable." Black & white large format photographs by Paul Wainwright. 🍎

Rocky Hill Meetinghouse (1785)
Old Portsmouth Road, Amesbury, Massachusetts

The Rocky Hill Meetinghouse was built to replace a c. 1715 meeting house for the west parish of Salisbury. It is one of the best-preserved examples of an original 18th-century meetinghouse interior in New England. George Washington paused here to greet the townspeople on his northward journey in 1789. It has been owned by Historic New England since 1941. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1972). ❦
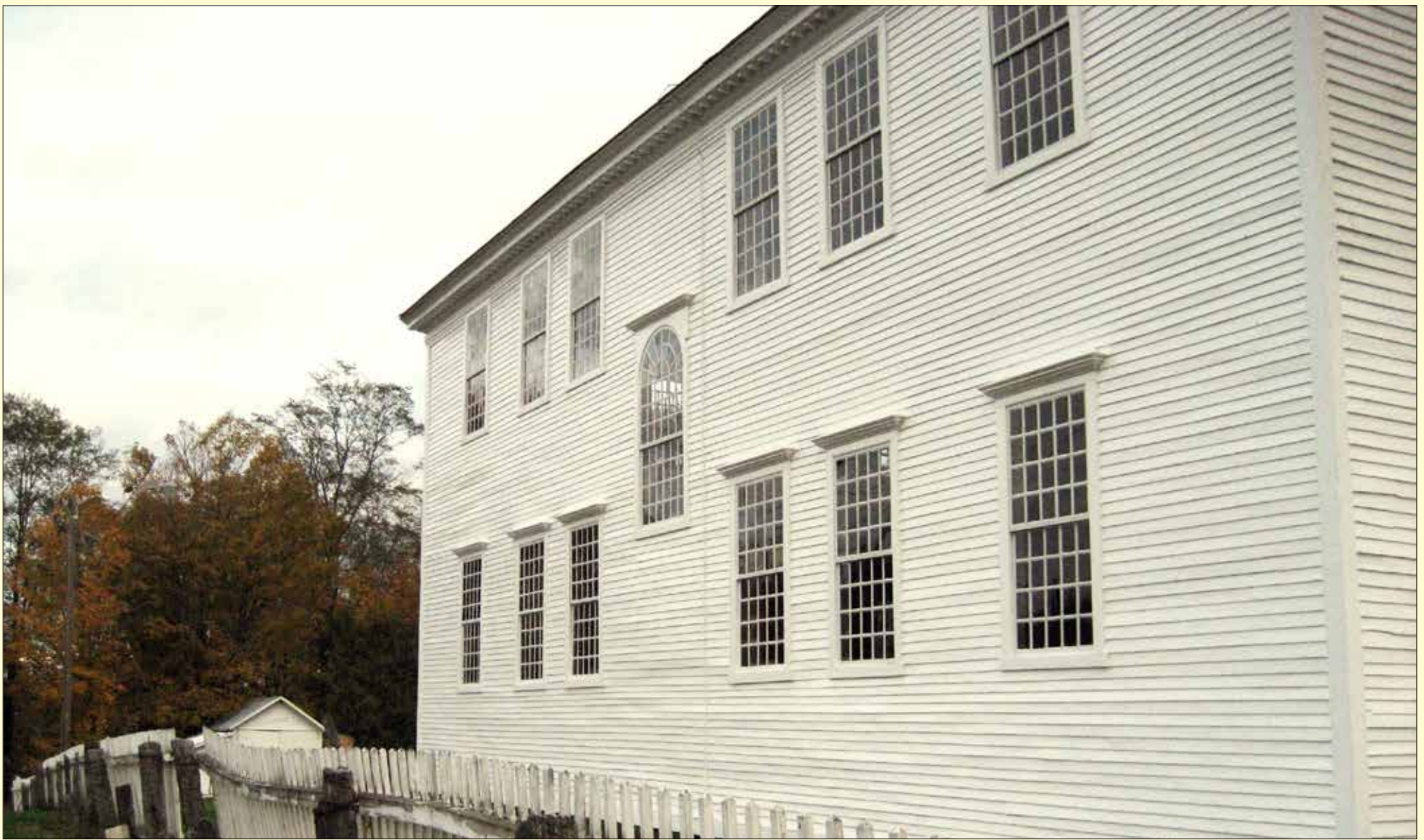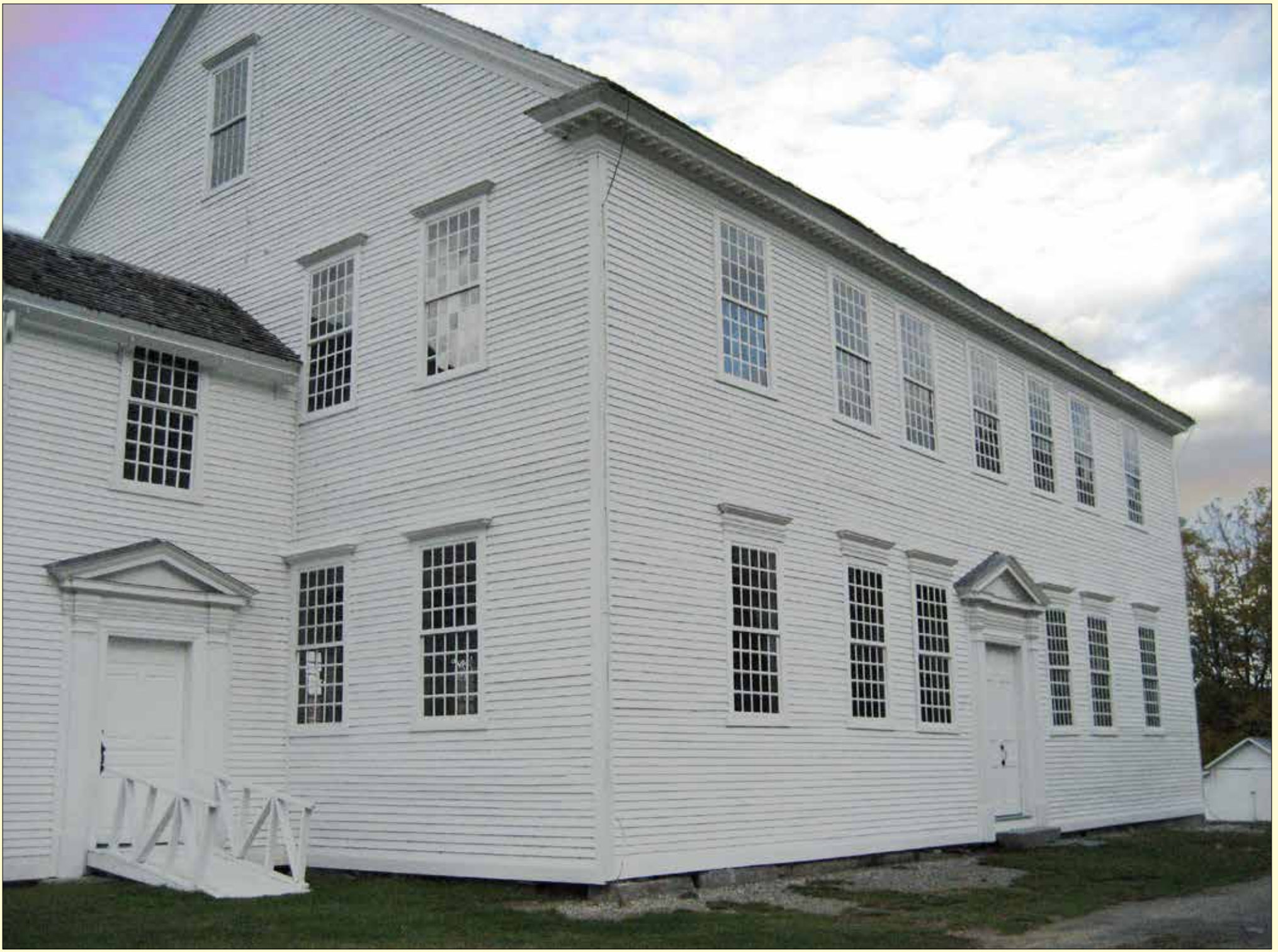
(11) Rockingham Meeting House (1787-1801)
11 Meeting House Road, Rockingham, Vermont

Situated atop a hill beside the original town burial ground, the Rockingham Meeting House was built by General John Fuller and is now owned by the Town. It is presently open daily in the spring into the fall. The interior features a raised pulpit, box pews and a gallery. It resembles closely the Rocky Hill meetinghouse in Amesbury. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1979). Designated a National Historic Landmark (1977). ❦

12   Washington Meeting House / Town Hall (1787)
7 Halfmoon Road, Washington, New Hampshire

Now referred to as the Town Hall, it was built as a meetinghouse for church and state. Town meeting was held here until the 1990s. The Tower was added in 1820, replacing one of the porches. It is believed to be one of the oldest meetinghouses in the state to still be in active civic use. The pleasing assemblage of buildings on the common include this building as well as the school and the Congregational church. 🍒

Alna Meetinghouse (1789)
Route 218, Alna, Maine

The 40 by 52 foot Alna Meetinghouse is one of the finest examples of a traditional New England meetinghouse in the state of Maine. Unlike many of the other meetinghouses of this period, the Alna meetinghouse has only one door. It incorporates a raised pulpit and box pews. It is owned by the Town of Alna and no longer has a religious connection. It is available for event rental. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1970). 🍎

Alna Meetinghouse (1789)
Route 218, Alna, Maine

Interior of the Alna Meetinghouse with raised pulpit in the center and the pulpit window behind (which illuminated the preacher's notes.) Note also the box pews and gallery. *Photo courtesy of Paul Wainwright.* 🍎

(15) Old Meeting House (1791)
1220 Battle Street, Webster, New Hampshire

Originally known as the Westerly Meeting House, it is now owned by the Society for the Preservation of the Old Meeting House. In 1941 the building was slated for demolition as part of a flood control project. A local group was formed to preserve the building, and it was moved to its present location in 1942. It now serves as a local history museum. Much original interior woodwork has been removed. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1985). 🍎

Lempster Meetinghouse (1794)
11 Lempster Street, Lempster, New Hampshire

16

The Lempster Meetinghouse was built to serve as both a town hall and church. In 1822 it was divested of its religious functions and moved about 1 mile to its present location. A bell tower was added (with a Revere bell hung in 1824). Over the years it has housed Grange activities, the local library, the high school and a local theatrical company. Town Meeting was last held here in 1994. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1980).

Canaan Meetinghouse (1794)
Canaan Street, Canaan, New Hampshire

(17)

Originally built with projecting stairwells on the short sides, one of the stairwells was mounted on top of the other to create the tower after the town bought the building. In 1841 the upper gallery was converted to a full second floor, intended for use as a church space by the local Baptist congregation. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1972). 🍎

Fremont Meeting House (1800)
## 464 Main Street, Fremont, New Hampshire

The Fremont Meeting House is owned by the Town of Fremont. It has twin porches, a raised pulpit, some of the original box pews and a three-sided gallery. The pulpit retains some of its original marblelized paint finish. Sadly, the sounding board was removed at some time. It's similar to other second-period meetinghouses in New Hampshire including at Webster and Sandown. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1993). 🍎

(19) **Old Trinity Church, EPISCOPAL (1771)**
Church Street, Brooklyn, Connecticut

Trinity Church Brooklyn is the oldest surviving Anglican church building in Connecticut and one of the oldest in the Nation. The congregation now meets mainly in a newer church in Brooklyn Center, but still uses this building for special events. The building is perfectly plain, save for the ornamental doorway. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1970). ❧
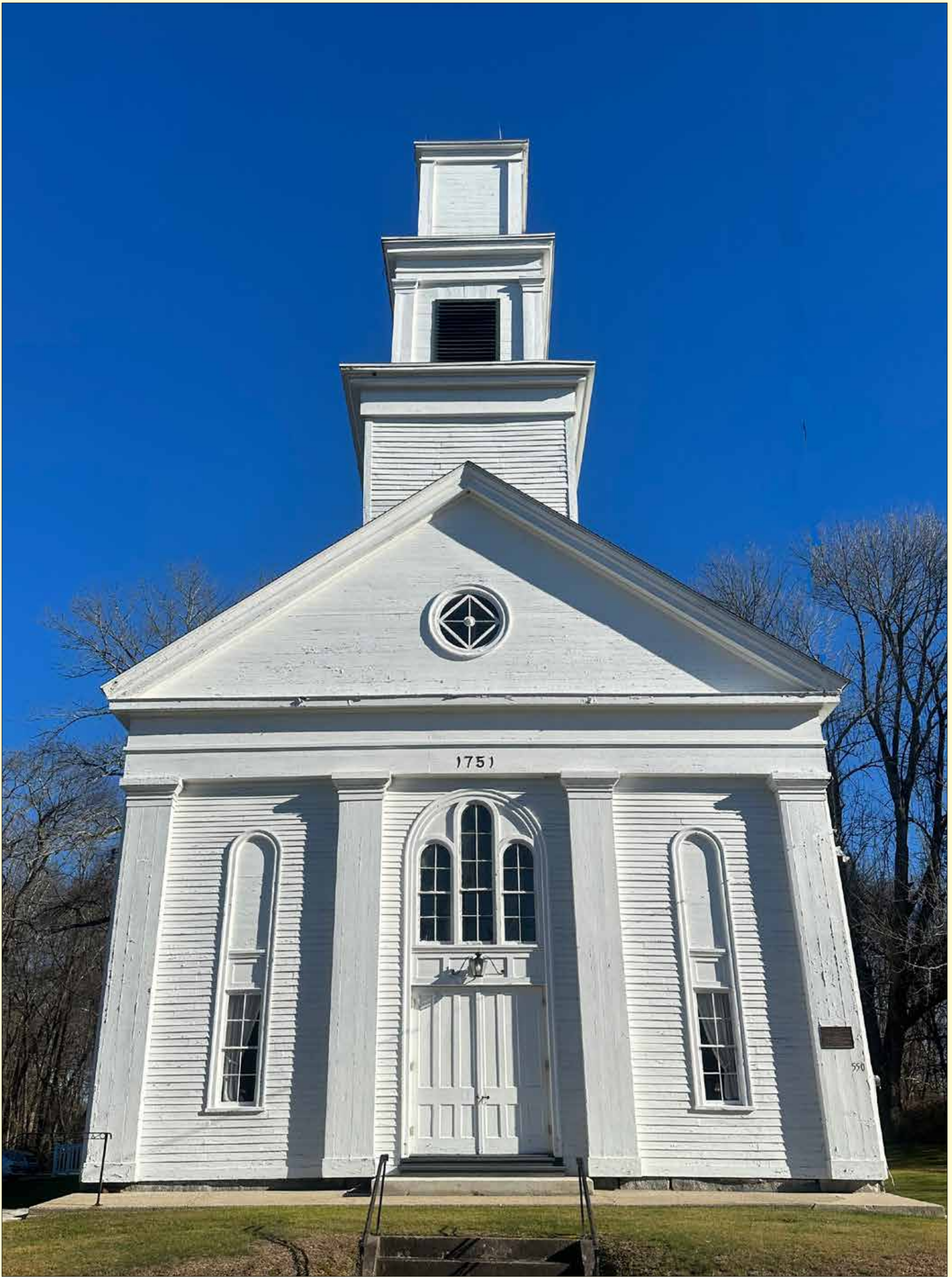
(20) **Abington Congregational Church (1751)**
Route 97, Pomfret, Connecticut

The Abington Congregational Church is the oldest ecclesiastical building in Connecticut that has been continuously used for its original religious purpose. Overcrowding at the Pomfret meetinghouse, as well as the great distance residents from the Abington section of town had to travel to attend services there, led to the creation of a separate ecclesiastical society in Abington. The new congregation erected its own meetinghouse in 1751. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1977). 🍎

First Parish Church, UU (1809)
20 Common Road, Ashby, Massachusetts

This is a large building, erected when the countryside was more populated. It replaced an earlier one built in 1771 on the same site on the town common. Its steeple is one of the best of the Asher Benjamin type. The clock was installed in 1846. There is indication of a pulpit window in the clapboards at the rear. 🍎

Second Parish Church, UU (1742)
685 Main Street, Hingham, Massachusetts

The meetinghouse was, at first, a simple rectangular structure with an entrance on the south side. The pulpit was on the north side. There were galleries on the west, south and east sides. Square box pews were on the first floor. In 1792, a bell tower was added at the east end. In 1829, the pulpit was transferred to the west end, and the box pews were replaced with bench pews. The galleries were reoriented, and the entrance was moved to the Main Street side. 🍎

First Parish Church, UU (1815)
225 Boston Post Road, Wayland, Massachusetts

The building conforms largely to a Federal model of the architect Asher Benjamin. It was built by Andrews Palmer of Newburyport. The original interior had a raised pulpit and side galleries. Interior modifications resulting in the present two-story arrangement were made in 1850. The church bell was cast by the foundry of Paul Revere and Son. The bell weighs 1019 lbs. A long run of horse sheds are sited to the east. 🫀

First Church, UCC (1811)
1 Wellington Road, Templeton, Massachusetts

Designed by Elias Carter, a country carpenter and builder. He built many houses and at least a dozen churches. The design was very influential, referred to in more recent times as the "Templeton Run" as its influence migrated north. The church design was often copied, with minor modifications, including at Fitzwilliam (1817), Dublin (no longer standing), Hancock (1820), Acworth (1820) and Newport (1823), New Hampshire. ❦

Third Fitzwilliam Meetinghouse (1817)
Village Green, Fitzwilliam, New Hampshire

Built in 1817 it is believed to be faithful replica of a church designed by Elias Carter and built in Templeton, Massachusetts. A four-stage tower rises above the front facade, with a clock (1861) in the first stage and a Paul Revere bell in the second stage belfry. It was converted to entirely secular uses in 1858, at which time the gallery level became a full second story. It presently serves as the Fitzwilliam Town Hall. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1977).

26 Hancock Meetinghouse, CONGREGATIONAL (1820)
47 Main Street, Hancock, New Hampshire

The Hancock Meetinghouse is just one of the three remaining New Hampshire meetinghouses that is shared by both Town and Church (the others are Greenfield and Rindge). It replaced the previous meetinghouse (1789) which stood across the common and succumbed to fire in 1819. The Howard clock was installed in 1872. The design was heavily influenced by the Templeton, Fitzwilliam and Dublin—no longer standing—Meetinghouses. Note the Horsesheds behind. 🍎

United Church of Acworth (1821)
16 Town Hall Road, Acworth, New Hampshire

(27)

Its design is clearly inspired by the Congregational Church of Templeton, Massachusetts, the work of Elias Carter. The town's first meetinghouse was built in 1784 but torn down in 1821, the same year the present "Church on the Hill" was built by the Congregationalists. The bell was cast at the Paul Revere foundry. Today, it's known as the United Church of Acworth. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1975). 🍎

(28) South Congregational Church (1823)
20 Church Street, Newport, New Hampshire

The Federal style brick meetinghouse was dedicated in March 1823. It owes its design to the prior work of two Massachusetts architects, whose buildings were replicated throughout central New Hampshire and converged at Newport, which blended Isaac Damon's brick arcades with Elias Carter's double-octagon steeples. John Leach, a noted builder, famed it. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1989). 💝

(29) Church of Christ, CONGREGATIONAL (1814)
12 Litchfield Road, Norfolk, Connecticut

Norfolk is a lovely village in northwestern Connecticut. The first church structure was raised and roofed in 1760 and included an exterior coat of peach pink paint. In 1814 the second Meeting House, built by David Hoadley, was finished, 60 by 45 feet in dimensions, and with a steeple and bell. This was built near the site of the original. The interior was renovated in 1846 and the present portico with four columns was added in 1927. ❦

(30) Park Hill Meetinghouse (1764)
Route 63, Westmoreland, New Hampshire

This meetinghouse is a fine example of Federal and Greek Revival architecture, influenced by the work of regionally prominent architect Elias Carter. It was originally built without a steeple, and was moved once in 1779 and again in 1824 to its present location. The portico and tower were added then. It is now owned by the Westmoreland Park Hill Meetinghouse and Historical Society. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1980). 🍎

United Church of Christ (1786)
## 23 Central Square, Keene, New Hampshire

The highly eclectic church we see today was built as the fourth meetinghouse in Keene. 1826 was the last year the Town of Keene paid the salary for the minister. In 1828 the building was turned to face south and moved on rollers 70 feet to its current location to make room for Central Square, and was renovated with a new front and steeple. And in 1860 the building was raised one story. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1982). ❧

First Parish Church, FEDERATED (1826)
24 Central Street, Berlin, Massachusetts

This building replaced an earlier meetinghouse that was built in 1794. It was remodelled in 1860 and a full second floor was constructed at the level of the former galleries. The original church organization became Unitarian in 1829, and the orthodox minority withdrew to found their own church. The two united in 1843, separated again in 1871, and finally came together as the Federated Church in 1947. ❧
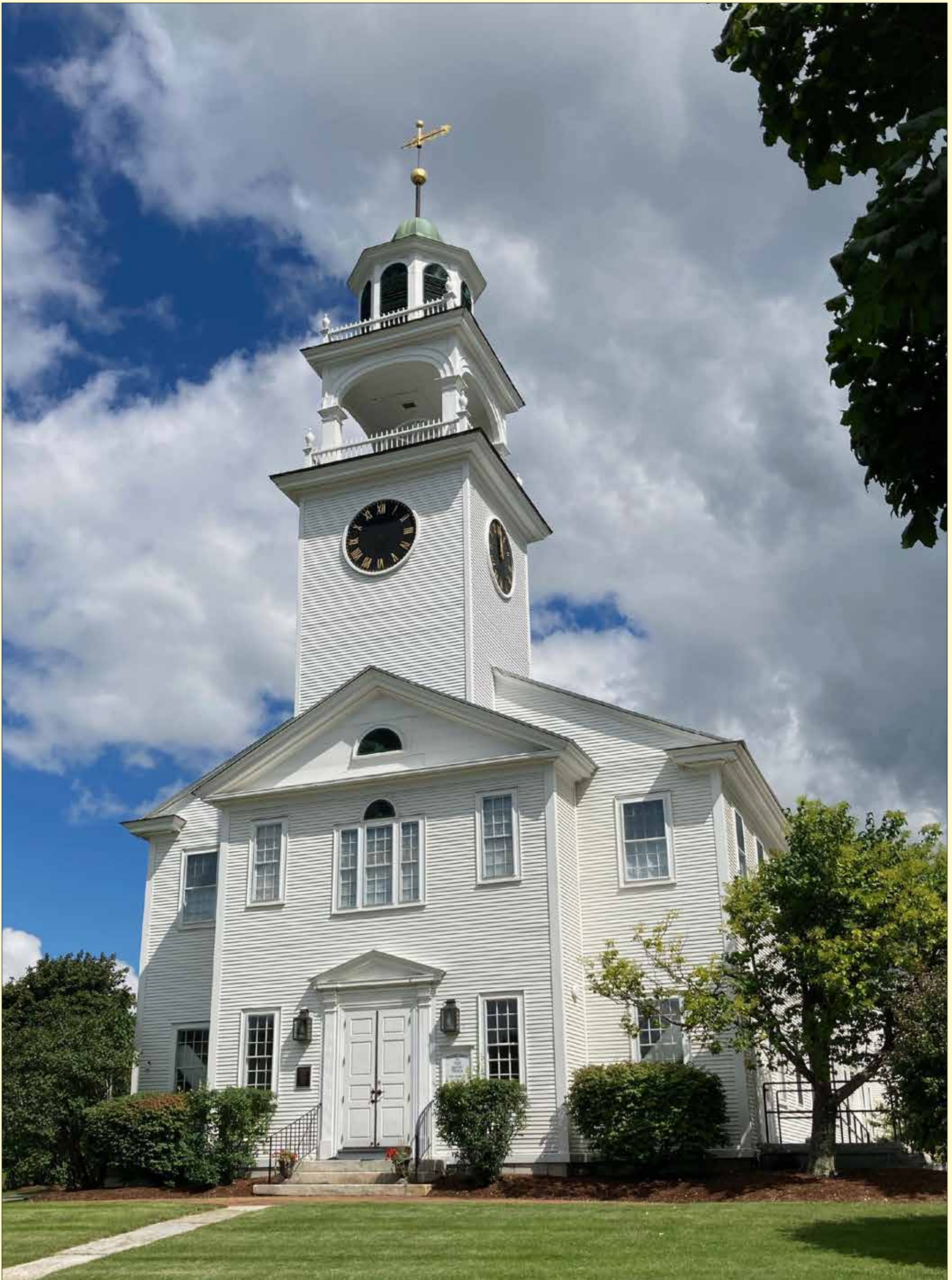
First Baptist Church (1826)
461 Main Street, New London, New Hampshire

In 1826, after an unsuccessful effort to secure exclusive use of the meeting house, the Baptist Society, formally incorporated in 1801, built its own church. It was lengthened in 1853 when a new section was inserted. It features an entrance bay with one door and a wide, square, open-arched belfry with octagonal lantern and a Revere bell. 🍒

34

Medway Community Church (1814)
196 Main Street, Medway, Massachusetts

Medway's first meetinghouse was raised in 1749. It was replaced in 1814 by the present building. The steeple was added in 1846. During the 1938 Hurricane the steeple ripped its way through the roof, crashing into the sanctuary. A similar occurrence happened to the Dublin Community Church. In 1995 the Congregational, Baptist, and Community Churches merged to form the Medway Community Church. 🍎

Congregational Church of Amherst (1771)
11 Church Street, Amherst, New Hampshire

(35)

In 1832 the Amherst town church separated from the local government. The Town retained ownership of the clock tower, the bell, and thus the steeple and weathercock, but the meetinghouse was sold at auction to the Congregational Church. The new church owners had to move the entire structure off the town common onto private land. It was miraculously pivoted and moved by oxen from the common to its present site in 1836. 🍎

First Parish Church, UU (1797)
327 Concord Road, Sudbury, Massachusetts

(36) The present meetinghouse replaced an earlier one built in 1723. It was designed by Captain Thomson and cost $6,025.93, paid for by the Town of Sudbury for both Town Meetings and parish worship. It continued to be used for both Town meetings and worship until the Town built the Town House in 1846. On April 19, 1775, Sudbury Minutemen mustered at First Parish. The Howard tower clock dates to 1873. 🍎

37 First Parish Church, CONGREGATIONAL (1809)
10 Central Street, Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts

Inspired by a design in an Asher Benjamin pattern book and built in 1809 for $8,500, this is Manchester's fourth meetinghouse. In 1847, the town sold it to the Orthodox Congregational Church. In 1882, the Town installed the clock. The weather cock, acquired in 1754, first stood atop the third meetinghouse. 🍎

(38) Smith Memorial Congregational Church (1836)
### 30 West Main Street, Hillsborough, New Hampshire

A new church was built on Church Street in 1836 "…with a good bell and all at the cost of some $3,300." But only 30 years later it was moved to nearby Main Street where it remains. A vestry was added then and a clock in 1907. A major remodelling was undertaken that same year, $30,000 of the cost being donated by Hillsborough native, Hon. John B. Smith, the Governor. As a consequence the church changed its name to honor him. 🌹

(39) Second Congregational Church (1825)
42 Highland Avenue, Cohasset, Massachusetts

The Greek Revival style church building has undergone many changes over the years. In 1855 it was lengthened twelve feet. And in 1878 it was raised one story and the vestry was added beneath and the projection in front. A fire ravished the building in 1928 after which it was remodelled and enlarged. Next door is the Town Hall and across the street the First Parish Meetinghouse. 🍎
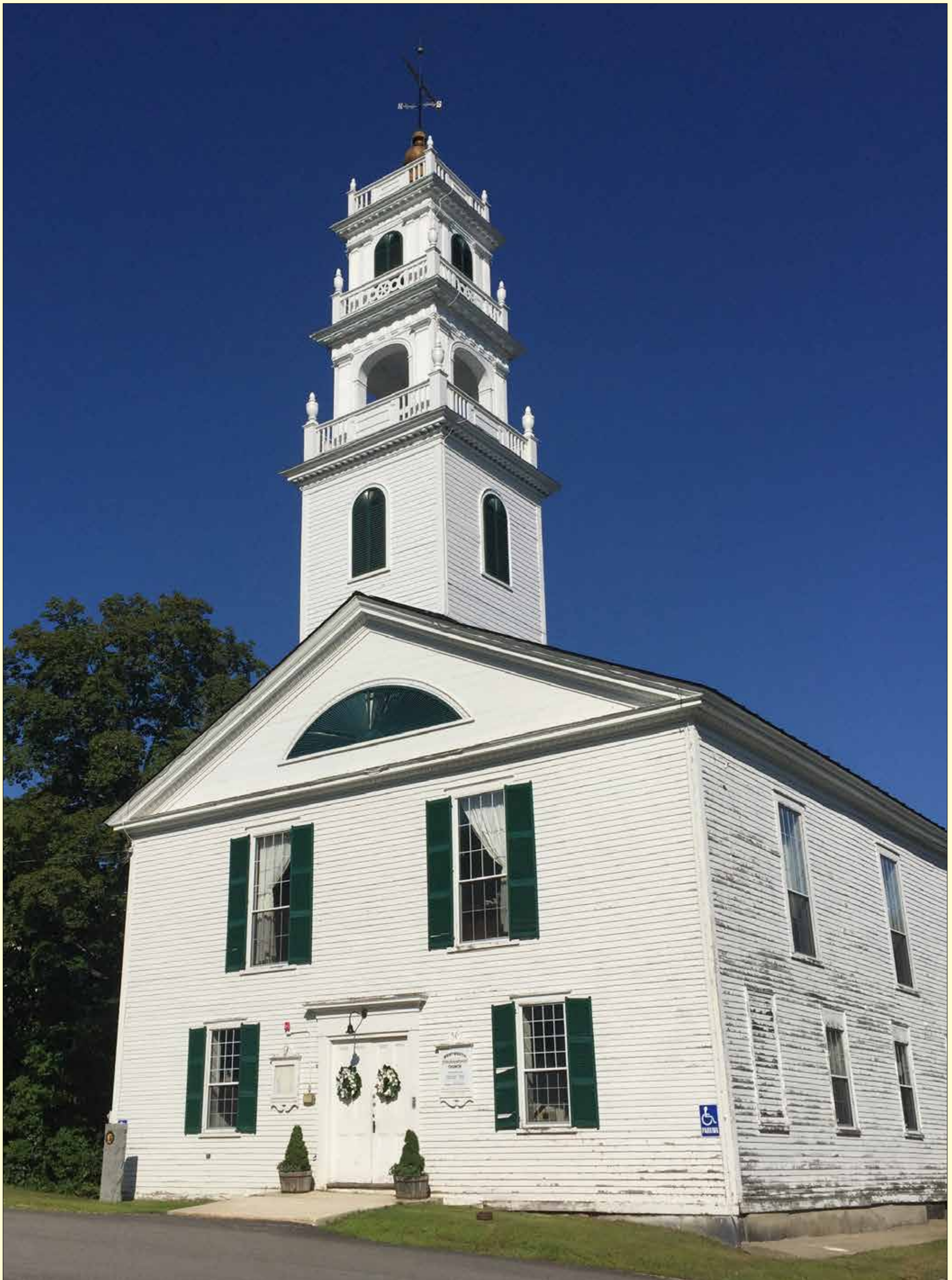
Wentworth Congregational Church (1829)
39 Wentworth Village Road, Wentworth, New Hampshire

The original Wentworth meetinghouse was consumed by fire. The Town was unable to replace it because of the Toleration Act of 1819, so a Meetinghouse Association was formed which issued stock totalling $3,000. Townspeople bought shares that they could afford and the money was raised as was the new meetinghouse which stands today. Ministers of various denominations have filled its pulpit as pastors for the entire town. 🍎

Old Meeting House (1803)
1 New Boston Road, Francestown, New Hampshire

A major restoration was undertaken in 1835 when the building was modernized in the Greek Revival style. A new front and steeple were added in 1837 and the building was turned to face the crossroads at the village center. The Howard tower clock was added in 1911. Since 1987 the building has been maintained and managed by the Old Meetinghouse of Francestown, Inc. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1999). ❦

Greenfield Meetinghouse (1795)
776 Forest Road, Greenfield, New Hampshire

(42)

The building started its life as a simple Federal-style, second-period meetinghouse with twin porches on either end. It is the oldest meetinghouse in New Hampshire to continually serve both church and town. The first major alteration to the Greenfield Meetinghouse came in 1825, when a bell tower was added. The bell, since recast twice, was purchased in 1825. The Howard clock was installed in 1895. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1983). ❦

Langdon Meetinghouse (1803)
5 Walker Hill Road, Langdon, New Hampshire

Built in 1801-1803 in simplified Georgian style, the Langdon Meetinghouse was originally a single two-story building that served both town and church functions. A 1851 renovation partitioned the spaces and added a three-stage Greek Revival steeple over the church entrance. Langdon citizens have held their annual town meeting on the first floor from 1803 to the present, the longest-running record in the country. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (2020). 🍎

United Church of Lyndeborough (1837)
1139 Center Road, Lyndborough, New Hampshire

(44)

The Lyndeborough Historical Society is presently in the process of raising money to purchase the church which then would be used for music programs, weddings and other events. Situated beside the church is the restored stone town pound which dates to 1774. 🍎

(45) United Church of Lyndeborough (1837)
1139 Center Road, Lyndborough, New Hampshire

The interior features three murals behind the altar, hand painted in the 1890s by an unknown artist. 🍎

46 First Congregational Church (1841)
80 Nelson Road, Nelson, New Hampshire

The church stands in the compact center of Nelson. It combines both Greek and Gothic Revival details. The 800 lb bell was added in 1858. Ecclesiastically, it replaced the meetinghouse across the common as a result of New Hampshire's Toleration Act of 1819 which mandated the separation of church and state. The frame of the meetinghouse was then taken down and reconstructed as a smaller Town Hall which still stands. 🍎

Second Rindge Meetinghouse, UCC (1796)
### 6 Payson Hill Road, Rindge, New Hampshire

The building—one of the largest meetinghouses in New England—replaced the first meetinghouse which was built in 1766 on nearly the same site. It is owned by the Town while the sanctuary is leased to the First Congregational Church. Though two stories, given the windows it may have once been three stories. The town's first cemetery (1764), lies just north and the original horse sheds to the east. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1979). 🍎

Stoddard Congregational Church (1836)
1549 Route 123 N, Stoddard, New Hampshire

This Gothic Revival country church was erected by and for the Congregational Society in 1836. Funds were raised to build the present building by selling the pews at $15.00 each. Total cost of the building was $2,010.70 with the bell adding to the total cost at $289.69. One of the oldest pipe organs in New Hampshire, built in 1851, was installed in 1932. 🍎
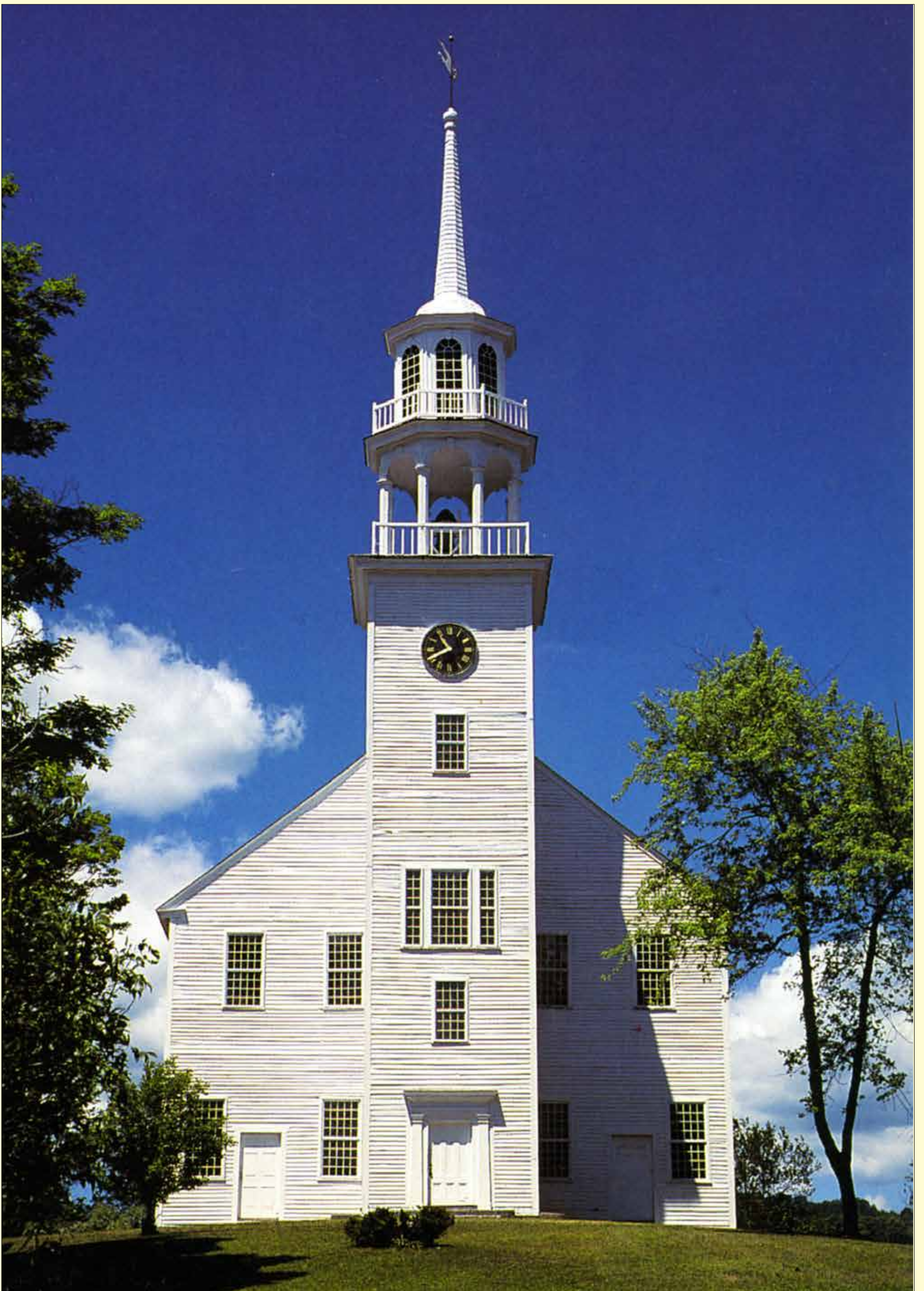
Strafford Town House (1799)
On the Green, Strafford, Vermont

The building is one of the oldest meetinghouses in Vermont and was one of the first to put the entrance at the tower-end and the pulpit at the other end of the building. The change from a side-entrance orientation reflected a time when New Englanders were clearly deciding to separate their political business from their ecclesiastical affairs. Strafford's annual Town Meeting has been held in this building every year since 1801. ❦

(50) Sudbury Meetinghouse, CONGREGATIONAL (1807)
2702 Route 30, Sudbury, Vermont

Without question the most distinguishing feature of this building is its Gothic tower which replaced an earlier taller one. It was built by Charles C. Stewart and is a nearly exact replica of Plate 33 in Asher Benjamin's 1805 *Country Builders Assistant*. It is still used for both municipal and religious functions. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1977). 🍎
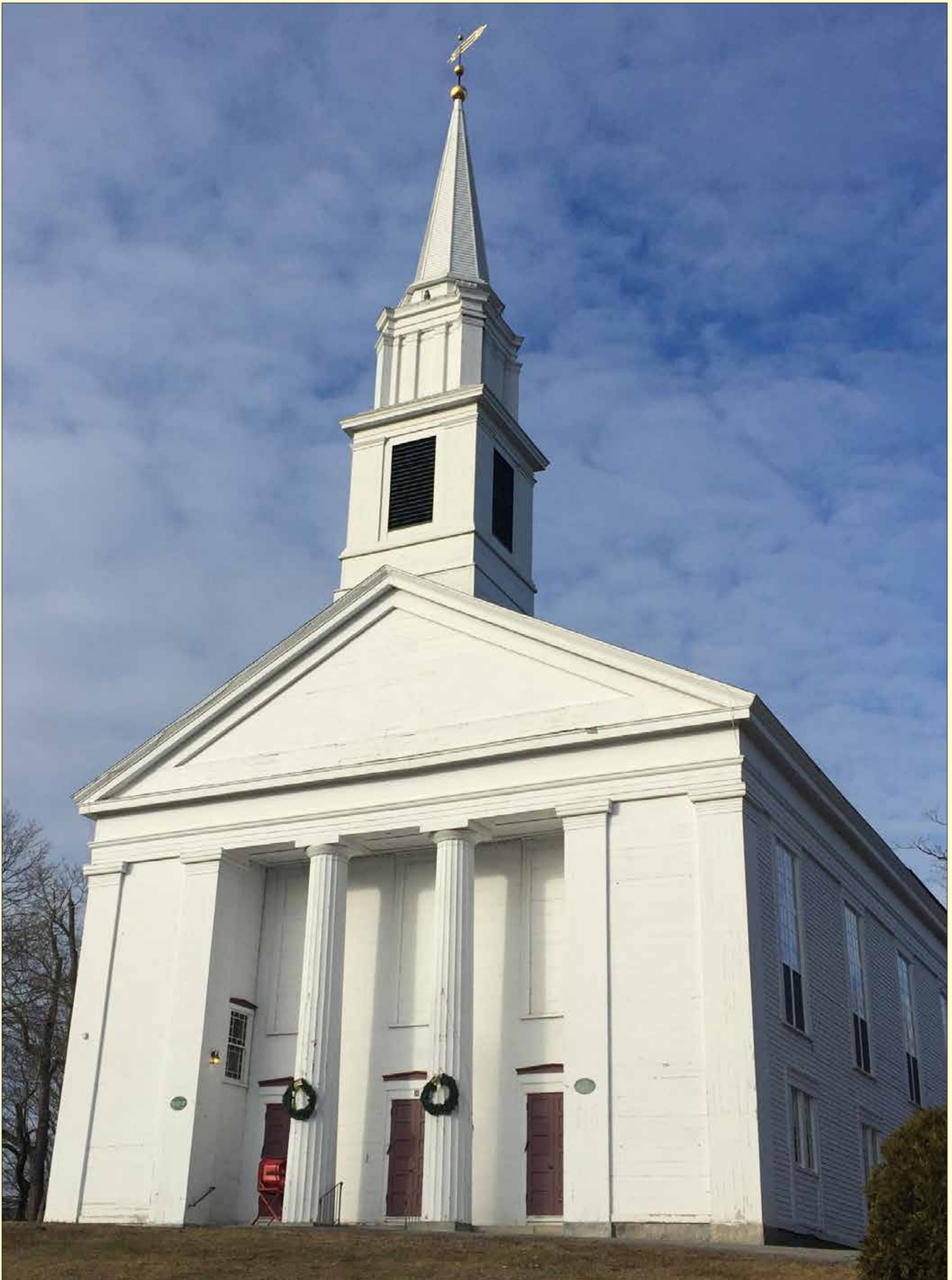
First Congregational Church (1848)
20 Main Street, Brimfield, Massachusetts

A fine example of high style Greek Revival, the church was designed by Princeton, Massachusetts, architect Captain William Lamb. Its two-column, three-door recessed entry is similar to those seen in the Dublin, Winchendon and Groton churches. It is within the Brimfield Center Historic District, National Register of Historic Places (2006) 🍎

First Parish Church of Groton, UU (1755)
1 Powderhouse Road, Groton, Massachusetts

The congregation was formed in 1666. This is the second church on this site. It was damaged by lightning in 1795, and underwent a major Greek Revival restyling in 1839. The church bell, added about 1819, is from Revere and Sons. The green space in front of the church was where the local militia company gathered in April 1775 to join the Battles of Lexington and Concord. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (2021). ❧

Dublin Community Church, UCC (1853)
1125 Main Street, Dublin, New Hampshire

In the center of Dublin, across from the Town Hall and Library. During the 1938 hurricane the steeple was blown off and plunged top down into the sanctuary. Its Greek Revival two-column recessed entry is similar to those seen in the Brimfield, Winchendon and Groton churches. 🍎

First Congregational Church (1850)
20 Old Center, Winchendon, Massachusetts

The church is situated in the historic town center of Winchendon which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1987). Its Greek Revival two-column recessed entry is similar to those seen in the Brimfield, Dublin and Groton churches. It was built as the parish's third meetinghouse; the two previous ones were also located on the Common. 🍎

First Congregational Parish, UU (1910)
On the Common, Petersham, Massachusetts

Petersham has had a string of meetinghouses over the years: The first meetinghouse was built in 1735. It was replaced by the second meetinghouse in 1783. In 1842 the Unitarians built their own church, which became the third meetinghouse. It burned in 1908. The cornerstone of the fourth and present meetinghouse was laid in 1909. ❧

Shutesbury Community Church (1827)
### 6 Town Common Road, Shutesbury, Massachusetts

56

The present building was built as the Baptist church by Isaac Damon, responsible for several other nearby churches. It became the Federated Church in 1911 and the Community Church in 1985. Possibly its most noticeable architectural feature today are the front doors. The church was shuttered for a few years in the early 2000s, after dwindling to just two parishioners, and had its building condemned after the church closed for a time in 2006. ❧

Bennington Congregational Church (1839)
9 Main Street, Bennington, New Hampshire

In 1853, a subscription was held to buy a bell for the steeple. In 1896, the small vestry building across the street was abandoned in favor of a set of attached rooms at the back of the church: kitchen, ladies' parlor, wash room, small chapel. In 1899, a reed organ was installed. In 1917, a clock was donated for the steeple. The church interior was changed in the 1970s. ❧
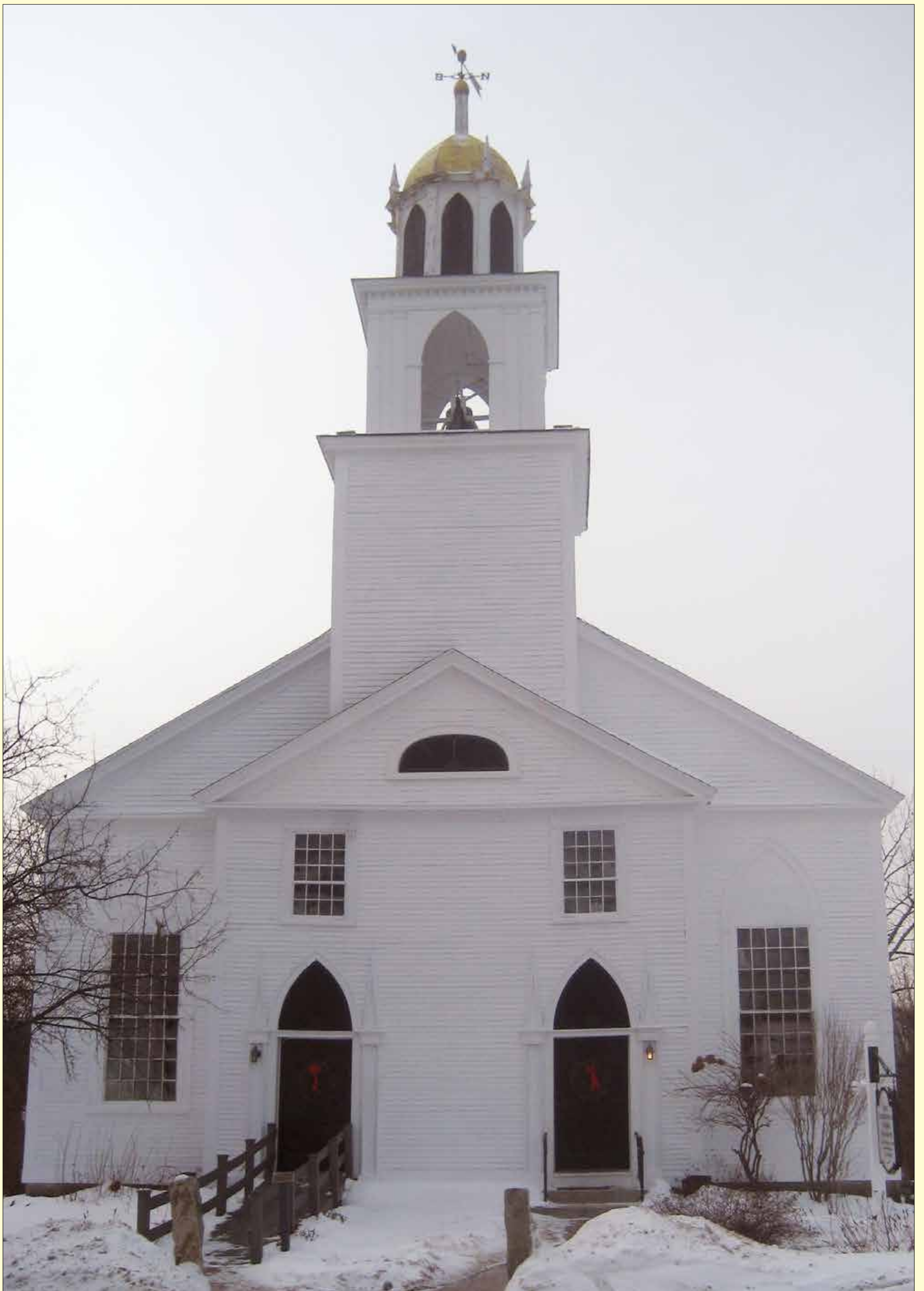
First Congregational Church (1836)
6 Stark Highway North, Dunbarton, New Hampshire

The church replaced a 1789 meetinghouse that had been converted to town use. It displays an imaginative combination of Federal, Gothic Revival and Greek Revival elements. The Congregational Church in Chichester is nearly identical except for the tower. 💘

Springfield Meetinghouse & Town House (1797)
Four Corners Road, Springfield, New Hampshire

Dedicated in 1799, it underwent major alterations after being moved to its present location in 1851, at which time it was given its present Greek Revival and Gothic features. It is also now known as the Howard Memorial Methodist Church. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1986). 🍎

(60) Congregational Church of Temple (1842)
17 Main Street, Temple, New Hampshire

The church is a Federal-Greek Revival transitional structure built by James Killam, probably from carpenters' handbooks of the time. It's part of a pleasing assemblage of buildings forming the center of Temple. 🍎

61 First Unitarian Congregational Society (1861)
### 586 Isaac Frye Highway, Wilton Center, New Hampshire

Wilton Center was originally the business and social center of Wilton. Then the railroad and the mills came and the Center became somewhat of a backwater. (Jaffrey is another example of this.) The town's original 1775 meetinghouse burned in 1859 which led to the building of this church. In about 1885 it united with the Liberal Christian Church and in 1897 the church voted to change its legal name to add 'Unitarian.' 🍎

Orford Congregational Church (1855)
69 Main Street, Orford, New Hampshire

This fine mid-Victorian Gothic Revival church, from the designs of Orford native Moses Woodward, features such architectural details as Gothic diamond paned windows, pinnacles, trefoil banding, an octagonal spire, and one of only seven tower clocks made by Boscawen clock maker Benjamin Morrill. The square buttresses and tall finials at each corner and on the tower are unique in New Hampshire. 🍎
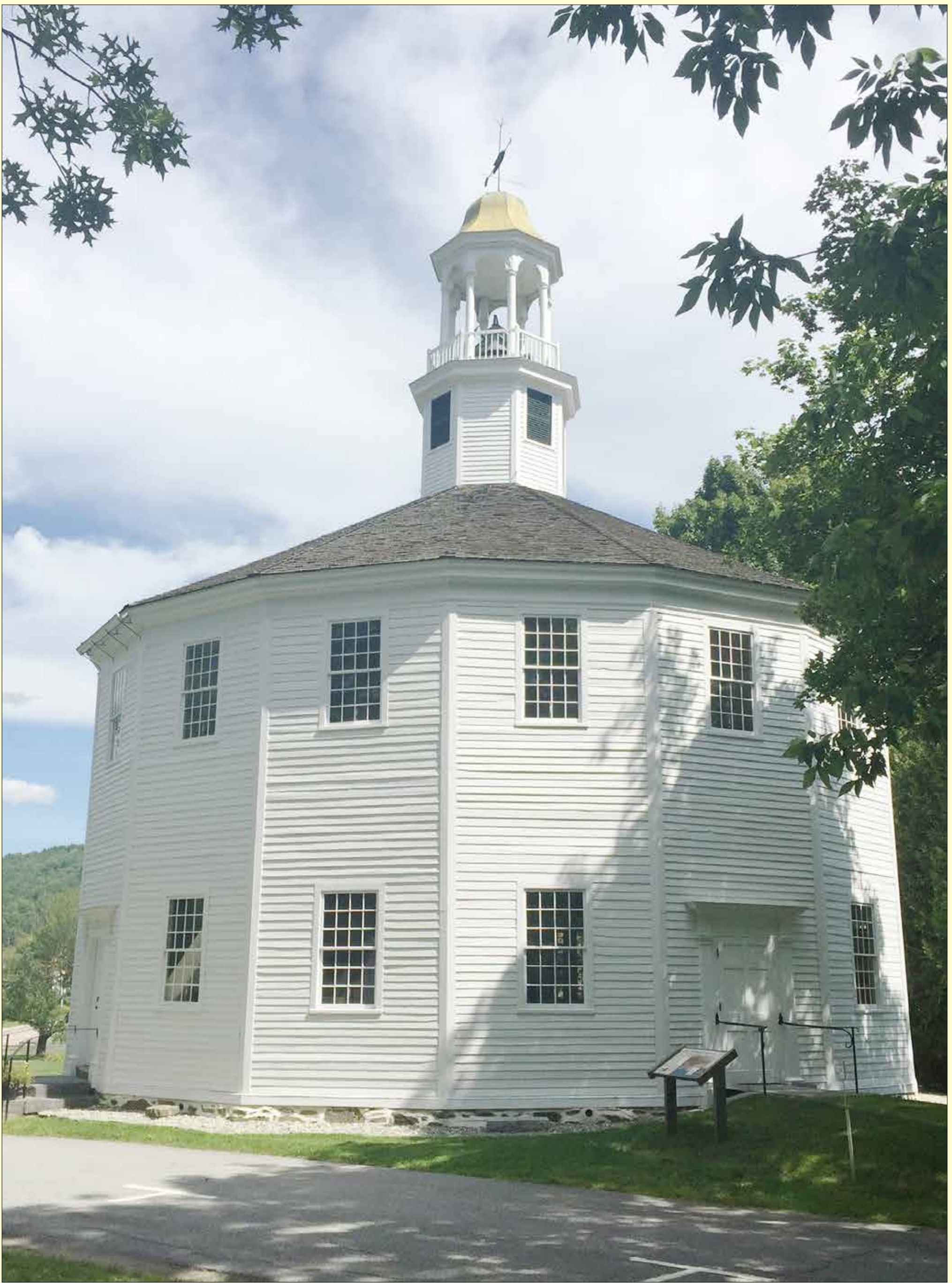
Round Church (1813)
Round Church Road, Richmond, Vermont

A rare, well-preserved example of a sixteen-sided meeting house, likely the only remaining example of its kind in North America. It was built to serve as the meeting place for the town as well as five Protestant congregations. Today it is maintained by the Richmond Historical Society and is open to the public during the summer and early fall. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1974). Designated a National Historic Landmark (1996). 🍎

(64) Community Church of Harrisville & Chesham (1840)
13 Canal Street, Harrisville, New Hampshire

The brick building is Greek Revival in style, with heavy granite lintels over twin entrances, a large white pediment, and a graceful spire. The robust, eight-panel doors with wrought iron latches and surrounding sidelights are probably original, as are the very large fixed windows on the lateral sides of the building. In the 1990s, new granite steps replaced the original ones. 🍎
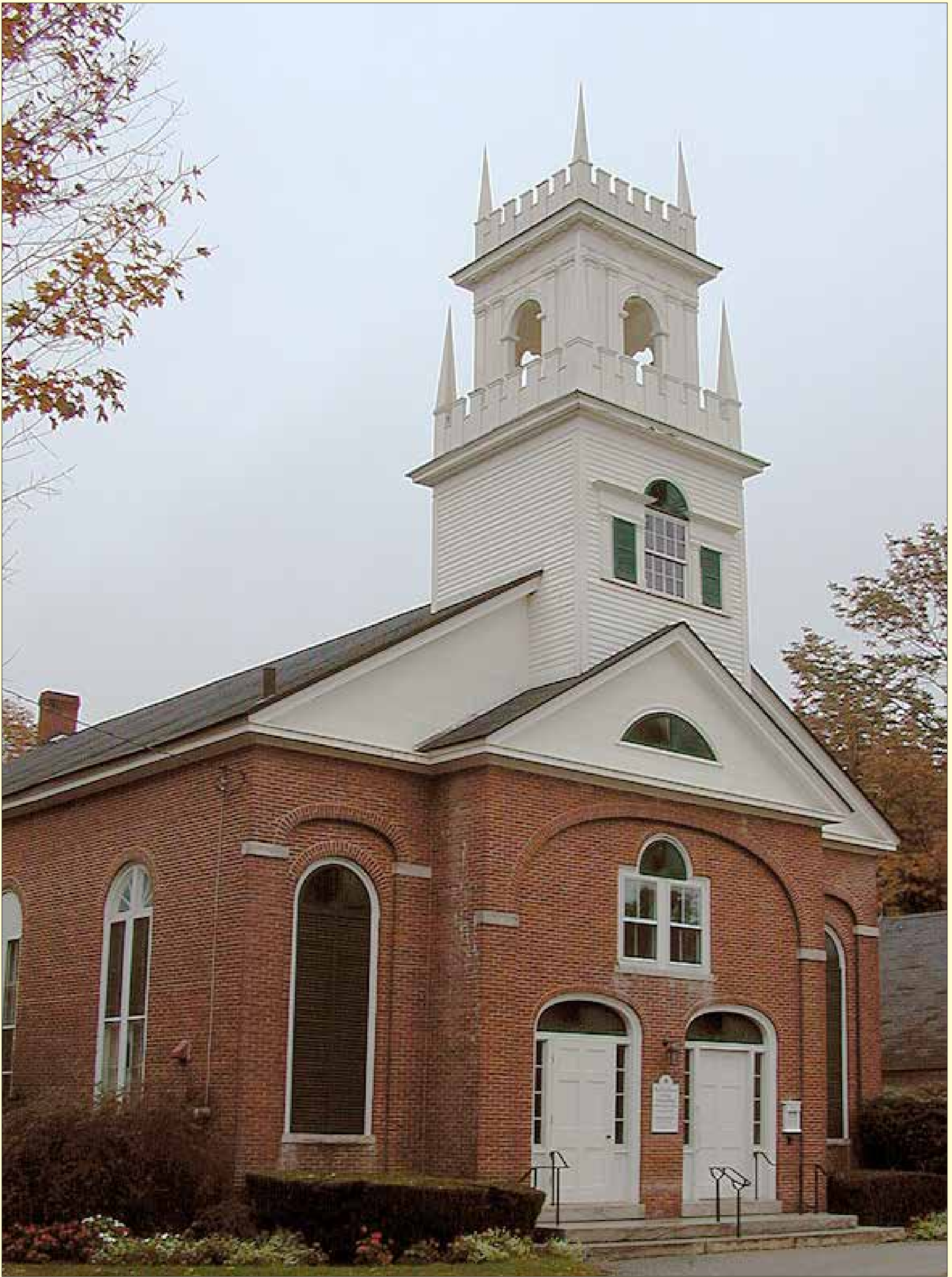
First Church in Jaffrey, UCC (1832)
14 Laban Ainsworth Way, Jaffrey, New Hampshire

65

This fine brick church—incorporating Federal, Greek & Gothic Revival details—stands a stone's throw from the Jaffrey Meetinghouse which had been its home since 1775. A church-building spree was prompted by the Toleration Act of 1819 which explains why this church came about and its location close to its stately parent. The builder was Aaron P. Howland of Walpole. Adjoining it to the north is the Parsonage. ❧

First Congregational Church (1836)
66 679 Old Homestead Highway, Swanzey Center, New Hampshire

The third meetinghouse of the Congregational Society of Swanzey was built by local builder Virgil Woodcock. It combines elements from the Federal, Greek & Gothic Revival styles. The building is similar to the Congregational Church in Troy and to churches in Jaffrey Center, Richmond and Westmoreland. 🍎
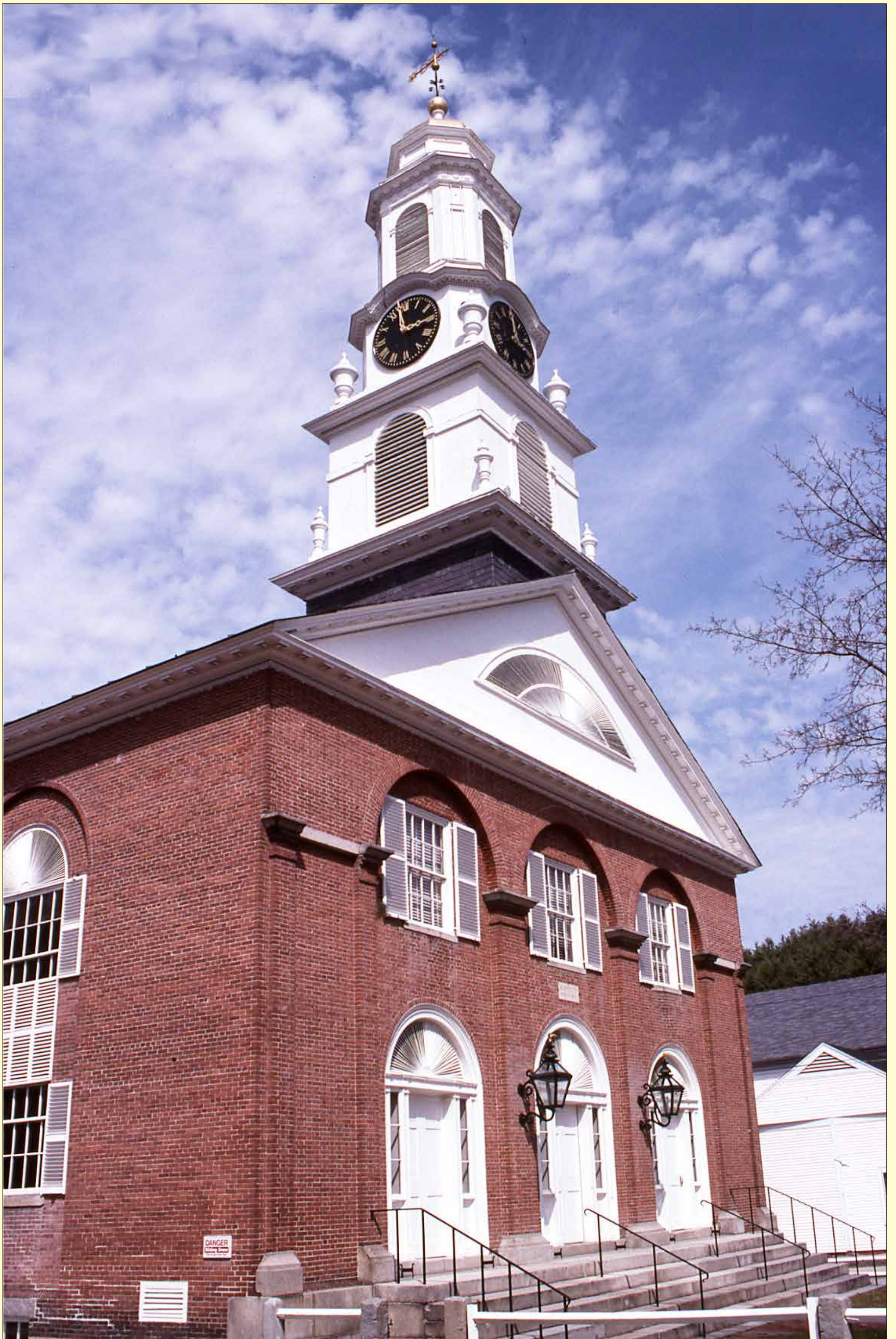
(67) Peterborough Unitarian Church (1825)
25 Main Street, Peterborough, New Hampshire

The building's design was at one time attributed to Charles Bulfinch, but there is no documentary evidence that supports this connection, but the building clearly has Federal-style elements inspired by the publications of Asher Benjamin. In 1856, the women of the town purchased the clock, replaced in 1947. The bell was installed in 1828. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1973). 🍎

68. The First Church of Deerfield, UCC & UU (1824)
71 Old Main Street, Deerfield, Massachusetts

The church was designed by architect Winthrop Clapp, although it was virtually a copy of the Second Congregational Church in Greenfield, which had been built in 1819 about three miles away. Also, note the similarities of the brickwork of this church with the South Congregational Church in Newport, New Hampshire. 🍎

North Church, UCC (1854)
2 Congress Street, Portsmouth, New Hampshire

The present building is the fourth one, replacing the third built in 1835. It was designed by Towle & Fister of Boston and features an Italianate edifice and a steeple visible from most of the city. President George Washington attended a service in the second church during his visit to New Hampshire in 1789. 🍎

Pearson Hall (1816)
School Street, Haverhill, New Hampshire

Although not a church or meetinghouse Pearson Hall shares many architectural features of both. It was built to house Haverhill Academy (downstairs) and the Grafton County Courthouse (upstairs). Over time it has also served as a library, village hall and Masonic meeting place. Since 1992 the building has stood vacant. Efforts are now underway to develop it as a regional history museum. 🍎

Blow-Me-Down Grange (1839)
1071 Route 12a, Plainfield, New Hampshire

Built as a union church, it was purchased in 1899 by the local Grange chapter. The second-story hall's stage is decorated with a large oil painting, originally made by Lucia Fairchild Fuller for the Woman's Building of the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (2001). 🍎

(72) The Federated Church of Marlborough (1834)
### 16 Pleasant Street, Marlborough, New Hampshire

Built by the Trinitarian Congregational Society which had been using the meetinghouse for its services. The bricks were made at a brick yard about two miles away on the Dublin road (Rt. 101). In 1927 the Congregationalists, Methodists and Universalists merged to form the present-day Federated Church. Among its features are a pipe organ and stained glass windows which date to 1841.

(73)

South Parish Unitarian Church (1842)
252 Main Street, Charlestown, New Hampshire

This fine example of the Gothic Revival style was built to replace an old church (c. 1819) that had burned. The delicate tracery above the entrance and on the belfry are among its best features. It is attributed to the local builder Stephen Hassam. It's included in the Charlestown Main Street Historic District which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1987). 🍎
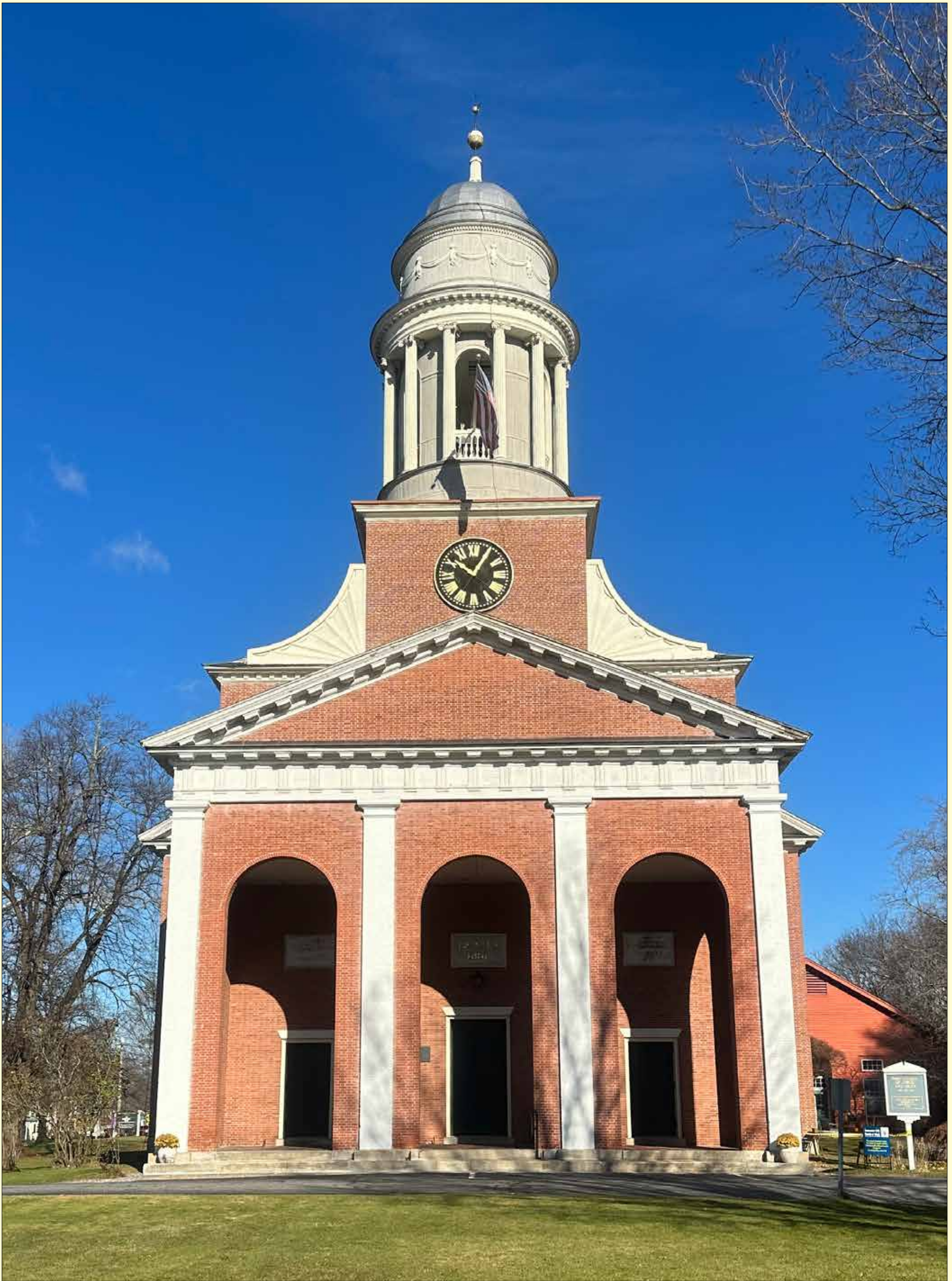
First Church of Christ, UU (1816)
## 725 Main Street, Lancaster, Massachusetts

Designed by Boston architect Charles Bulfinch and greatly admired. Architectural historian G. E. Kidder Smith has called it "one of the great Federal style churches in the country." Founded in 1653, this is Lancaster's fifth meetinghouse, the first two were destroyed in Indian raids in 1676 and 1704. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1970). Designated a National Historic Landmark (1977). 🍒

Friends Meetinghouse (1770)
Routes 146a and 98, Uxbridge, Massachusetts

75

The Friends Meeting House is one of the last crude brick church structures remaining in America. It was built by Quakers from the Quaker Community in Smithfield, Rhode Island. The earliest Quakers who settled here from Smithfield and Providence, Rhode Island, were among the first in America who personally renounced slavery and freed slaves. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1974). 🍎
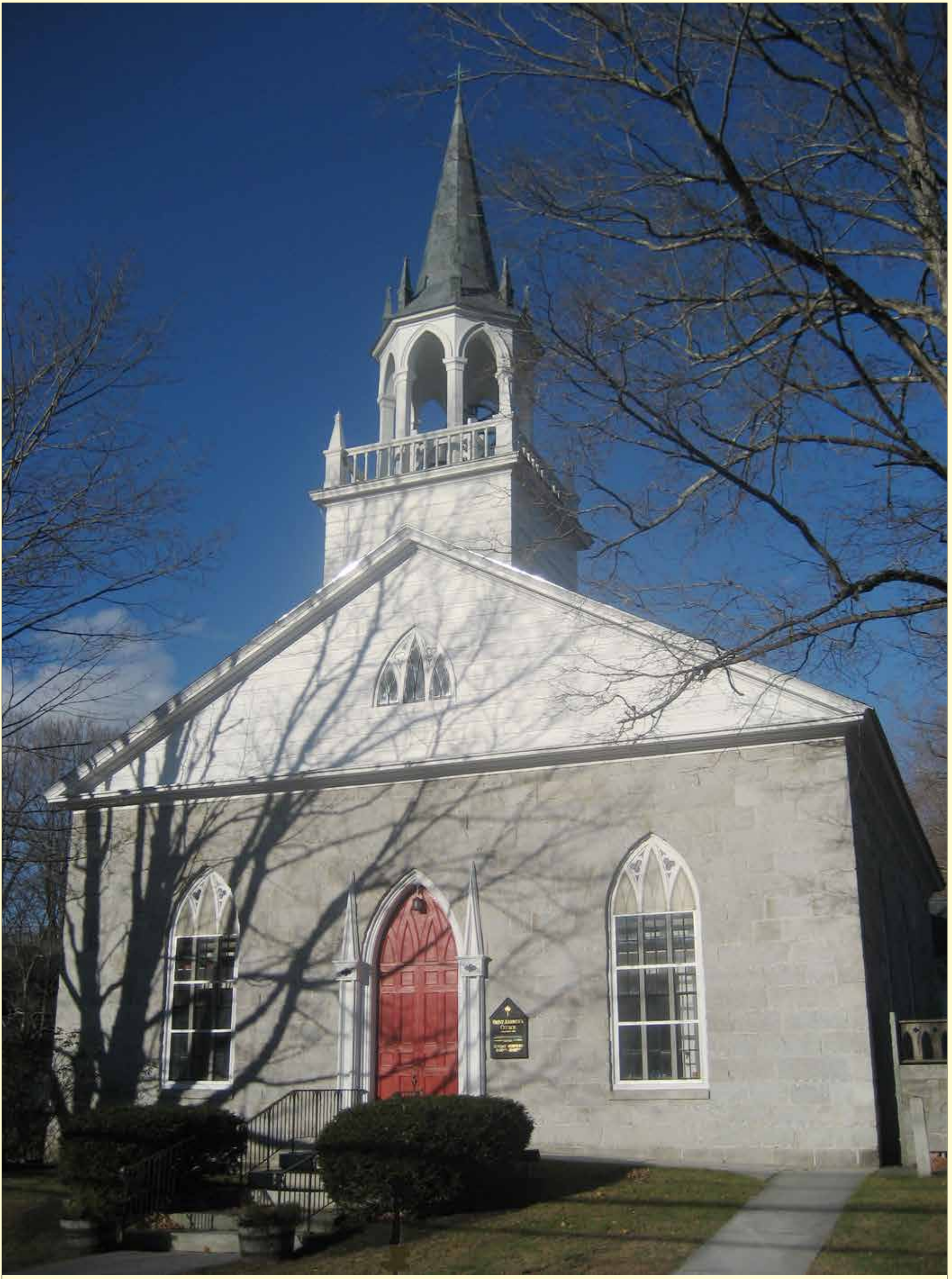
(76) St. Andrews Episcopal Church (1828)
354 Main Street, Hopkinton, New Hampshire

St. Andrews' gray ashlar walls are of locally quarried granite. It's had more than one steeple over the years. The present bell tower (1920) was designed by Boston architect Ralph Adams Cram, who also designed Peterborough's All Saints church. The interior, though not brilliant architecturally, is very much a member of the well-known family of 19th century "gothick" Episcopal churches. A Memorial Garden and Great Hall were later added to the site. ❦

(77) **All Saints' Church, EPISCOPAL (1923)**
51-53 Concord Street, Peterborough, New Hampshire

All Saints was designed by Boston architects Ralph Adams Cram and Frank W. Ferguson. It was built in memory of Charles Paine Cheney by William H. and Mary Lyons Cheney Schofield and "is nationally acknowledged for its successful orchestration of the Norman style of English parish church architecture." All Saints was fashioned after Iffley Church near Oxford. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1980). 💕

Church of St Mary the Virgin (c. 1170)
### Church Way, Iffley, Oxfordshire, UK

(78)

This is one of the finest unaltered Norman churches in England, a triumph of Romanesque style. The church was built around 1170 by the Norman lord of the manor, Robert de St Remy, and his wife. It inspired the design of All Saints in Peterborough. Iffley is a charming village, a suburb of Oxford. Frank Bickerton, Antarctic explorer, was christened in the church. He served on Douglas Mawson's Australasian Antarctic Expedition (1911-14) 🦐

(79) Old St. Mary's Catholic Church (1823)
Old Church Road, West Claremont, New Hampshire

St. Mary's is the first Roman Catholic Church in New Hampshire, built for the Rev. Virgil Barber whose father was the rector of the Union Episcopal Church across the street. Virgil became a Catholic and his wife became a Nun! Old St. Mary's is the second oldest Catholic structure standing in New England. The church was regularly used until 1866. The ground floor was the chapel; the second floor a high school. 🍎
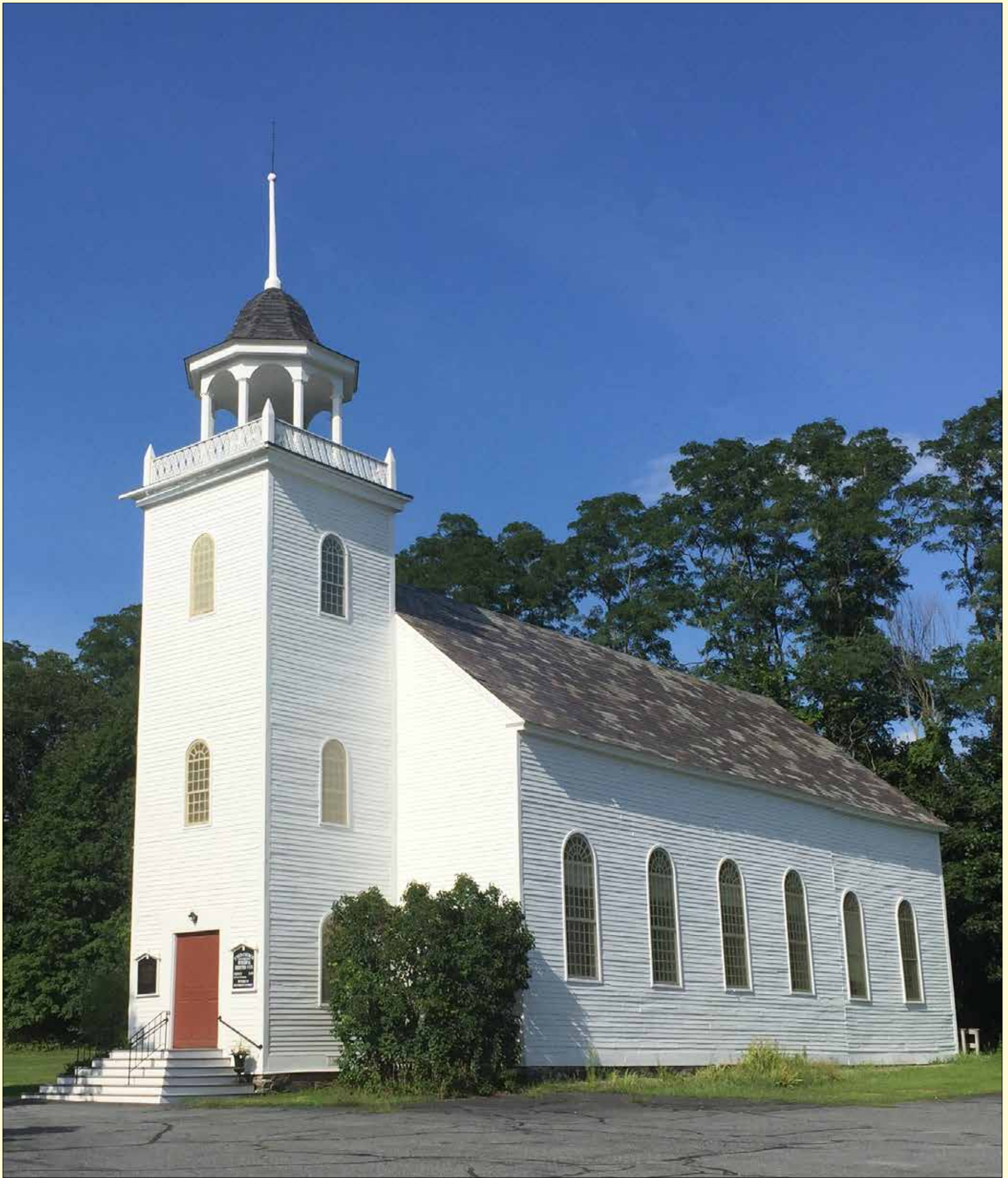
(80) Union Episcopal Church (1773)
133 Old Church Road, West Claremont, New Hampshire

Also known as the English Church, it is the oldest surviving Episcopal church building in New Hampshire and is also the state's oldest surviving building built exclusively for religious purposes. The tower and belfry were added in 1801, and the building was lengthened by some 25 feet in 1820, which can be easily seen in the photograph. The exterior was painted gray for many years. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1980). ❦

Notes

I'M RESPONSIBLE for all the photographs in the exhibit with the exception of Numbers 9 and 14 which are the work of Paul Wainwright whose book *A Space for Faith; The Colonial Meetinghouses of New England* (Portsmouth: Jetty House, an imprint of Peter E. Randall, Publisher, 2009) is well worth seeking out. Paul's photographs were taken with a traditional large format film camera whereas mine were nearly all shot with an iPhone.

I never set out to photograph meetinghouses and churches in an organized fashion. It was mostly a case of as I traveled here or there in New England and came upon an attractive or interesting structure, I would stop and take some photos. The collection grew over time and now has far more examples than appear here. And there are still more to come. I must focus on Rhode Island soon as that is the only New England state not included in the exhibit.

My interest in meetinghouses and historic churches is mostly architectural and historical versus ecclesiastical. Not long after I came to Jaffrey in 1977, I became involved with the Jaffrey Meetinghouse and eventually became what amounts to the caretaker of the building. (I retired at the end of last year.) In 1996, I organized a state-wide conference held in Jaffrey on *Meetinghouses, Steeples, Tower Clocks and Weathervanes*. That's about when I started taking photographs. One hand-out at the conference was a poster of *Historic Churches and Meetinghouses of the Monadnock Region*, a framed version of which hangs in the front reception area of The Mead.

Please note that in preparing the captions I have borrowed extensively from the various sources included in the Bibliography.

Further note: The term 'meetinghouse' appears thusly and also as 'meeting house.' I prefer the former but have used the latter in this exhibit if that is the local spelling.

Robert Stephenson

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