



Jaffrey Meetinghouse

An Historical Summary

In 1775, the frame of the Meetinghouse was raised, the first important civic event in Jaffrey's history. Tradition has it that the raising occurred on the day of the Battle of Bunker Hill (June 17th) and that the sounds of the Charlestown cannonade could be heard by those toiling on the Common. The builder/contractor was Captain Samuel Adams, twenty-four years of age and then of Rindge, assisted by his brother-in-law, Jeremiah Spofford. In 1822, the bell tower was added, paid for by donations on the condition that the Town would buy the bell, which it did the following year. It was cast by the Paul Revere Foundry. At the same time, the building was painted and new clapboards were installed.

The Meetinghouse served both as church and as a site for Town Meetings. In time, other church denominations were accommodated. With the building of the nearby Brick Church and other churches, the Meetinghouse was seldom put to use for other than Town Meetings until after the Civil War when, in 1870, the interior was totally rebuilt to provide town offices and schoolrooms. The tower clock was added about 1906.

The present layout, appearance and use of the Meetinghouse dates from a major remodeling undertaken in 1922 by the Village Improvement Society in cooperation with the Town. The Horsesheds to the north [at the rear], adjoining the Old Burying Ground, were built in 1810 and restored between 1949 and 1954. There were originally twelve stalls, now nine.

In recent years, the Meetinghouse has been the venue for the Amos Fortune Forum, a summer lecture series established in 1947, Monadnock Music concerts since 1968, and beginning in 2000, the tradition of the Fourth of July reading of the Declaration of Independence.

Referred to in the Town History as Jaffrey's 'dearest possession,' the Meetinghouse certainly has over its long life stood as the town's most important building, historically, architecturally and symbolically.