



First Baptist Church of Lower Gilmanton

July 15 2019



History and Significance of Church continued from March 2019

Changes over time: The exterior of the church has seen few changes since its construction in 1842. The chimneys or at least their tops have probably been replaced or rebuilt. The exterior retains its original appearance and its architectural integrity for the period of its construction.

The interior was more extensively remodeled in the late 19th century and early 20th century. During this period, the interiors acquired their present appearance. The vestry was originally a gallery for the choir that opened into the auditorium. The opening between the auditorium and the vestry is said to have been closed in the late 19th century, before 1890. Pressed metal walls and ceilings were installed in the auditorium and the vestibule were apparently between 1900 and 1915 thus replacing the original plaster interior.

Originally, the pressed metal was unpainted exposed metal but was later painted and deteriorated portions of the auditorium ceiling replaced, probably in the 1920's or 1930's. The auditorium also received new pews, the present platform, a chandelier; interior shutters on the windows were in place by 1915.

The late 1920's saw the installation of the metal posts in the auditorium to support the overhang of the vestry, which had begun to sag under the weight of the belfry tower, and the installation of the kitchen, complete with wood burning cook stove in the vestry and counters, sink and shelves in a small room off the vestry.

Electric lights at the entries were installed after the December 1948 vote of the Society to wire the building for electricity. The window screens were installed since World War II. Carpets were inlaid in the auditorium in 1979. The interior therefore retains its architectural integrity for the early 20th century.

In 2004, the front landing and steps were replaced and augmented by railings and an ADA ramp as an Eagle Scout project. In 2006, fundraising allowed the windows to be restored and to have new storm windows installed that included screens to preserve the original windows. In addition, in 2006, the interior of the auditorium was painted a soft yellow/cream to replace the old blue-green paint.

In 2009, there were several panels of pressed metal in the ceiling by the vestry end that were replaced and painted. In 2012, the old wood burning cook stove in the kitchen area of vestry was removed due to its excessive weight contributing to the bowing of the vestry as seen from the auditorium, and the pews were repainted. In 2013, the ceiling





The belfry was empty for over six decades, as it was not until July 29, 1909 a bell was purchased and installed. The belfry was originally open, the present louvers not being placed in the belfry openings until the early 1930's.

The grounds of the church have not changed greatly although there has been growth of trees and shrubs in recent years. The street front of the lot changed when Route 107 was improved and slightly relocated in 1941 - 1942.

The only other building on the property are the horse sheds. At the annual meetings in December 1882 and December 1884, the Society voted to allow the erection of horse sheds on the church lot by private individuals for the housing of their horses and vehicles during church services. Most likely, in the 1883 – 1885 period, two horse sheds were erected in an L-shaped plan to the southeast of the church. One horse shed was torn down in 1969 after its roof collapsed under the snow. The remaining horse shed building seems apparently little changed since the 1880's except for the metal roof and possibly the privy, which might be a later addition. The horse sheds at the First Baptist Church, are in fact, the only horse sheds in Belknap County that retain their original appearance. While this horse shed is a relatively modest building, it is important as the best example of this now rare building type in the county.

On June 13, 1880, a Sunday afternoon at 7:15 pm, a tornado passed over Lower Gilmanston and moved the church with ribs of oak, two feet from its foundation with no damage except to stop the clock. In addition, it did much damage to a number of buildings in Lower Gilmanston.

A Place in the Community: This Church is vital to the residents of Lower Gilmanston many of whom have been here for several generations. The Church has been the meeting place for services, weddings, christenings, funerals, Christmas gatherings and suppers in the past. It is the Cornerstone of Lower Gilmanston the First Village .

Summarized past maintenance, rehabilitation or preservation work undertaken for this building. There are annual one day 'work bees' in June where the church members and local volunteers work to maintain the Church, horse shed, privy and grounds. This includes, new roofs when needed, painting interior and exterior and putting metal roof on the horse shed. In addition, grounds keeping with trimming and mowing. Replacing the wooden posts for the guardrails and painting them. For generations this has been an annual event and everything has been donated – supplies and labor.



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