

CAMBRIDGE HARKENER

CELEBRATING THE HERITAGE OF CAMBRIDGE, VERMONT

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THE SECOND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF JEFFERSONVILLE

Melody Tobin

Since the CHS April meeting was canceled, I was asked to share a little about the presentation I had planned - namely the Jeffersonville church.

It was 1887 when a number of Christian residents in the vicinity believed it would be to the Glory of God to establish a Second Congregational Church in Jeffersonville. They met in January 1887, which was followed by a meeting on February 13th. There were 24 charter members, 11 of whom came from the First Congregational Church at Cambridge Borough (now Village), If you ever wondered why this was the Second Congregational, you now know. The First Congregational later changed to the United, closed for some time, and is now the Christian Fellowship.

At first they met at the Brick Meeting House, which we now call the Town Hall, but in 1889 a new church was built on the site of the former Chadwick House, which is where it stands today. The cost of the lot and building was a whopping \$3,600 (no I did not leave out any zeros). It was completely paid for by donations, referred to as subscriptions, which are actually listed in the Town records, dollar amounts included. It was dedicated on October 22nd, 1889 with an afternoon service of over 300, followed by an evening service. In 1891 the first parsonage was built on Main Street, with land donated by the Varnum family.

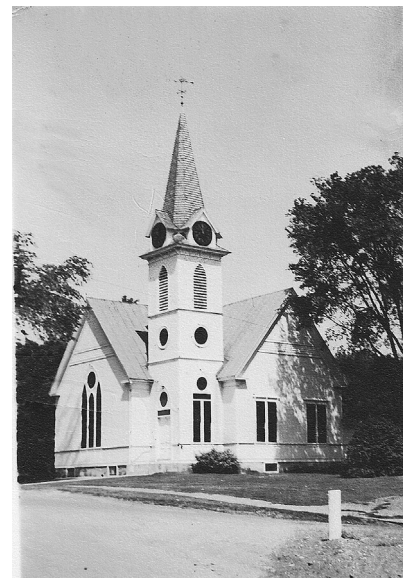
As you can imagine, attending services was not an easy task. You could walk, ride your horse, or hopefully have a buggy. The first automobile in Vermont appeared in 1898 in Burlington. It was a one seat Stanley Steamer. By 1902 there were only 373 registered vehicles in the state and only 9% of state roads were paved. The 1920s brought a boom to the industry which may attribute to the 100 members the church claimed in 1935.

For many years the two churches worked in tandem, sharing events, pastors and the like, but in 1966 the churches ended that relationship. Each church stood alone and hired their own pastors and ran their own affairs.

In 1971 construction began on an addition to house classrooms and office space, as well as additional room for receptions. This was all due to the generous bequeathing of funds from Dorothy Smith who was a very community minded individual and is famous for her many roles in the community.

The food shelf, which is of extreme importance in these trying times, was established in 1986. It has become a very efficient, well run organization and the church is happy to host it in the basement location.

At 5:00 am, March 27th, 1993 the cry went out "The church is on fire." A devastating time for our community. It was determined that young people, who had come by the open church to pray, left lit candles on the altar which caused the blaze. The new church held its first service on June 27, 1994, but the official dedication was held on October 9th 1994. Many changes were made. Some mandated by the regulations of the time and others suggested by the community. A town wide salvage project enabled the reuse of many artifacts.



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Early History of Cambridge

by Ida Morgan Anderson

Beginning in 1935, Ida Morgan Anderson began serializing a column on the History of Cambridge in the *Cambridge Town Crier*. Many of our readers may remember the series of 27 Installments. The Harkener continues publishing the installments for a new audience on the assumption that the copyright (if it ever existed) has long since expired. We hope you will enjoy this "blast from the past."

Installation Four

The Revolutionary soldiers brought the military and patriotic spirit with them and infused it into the public sentiment of the people. "June trainings" were more than mere pastimes. Brigade musters were frequently held at the Boro which brought the people together and fired the young men with patriotic zeal. There were independent companies of artillery and light infantry which paraded on Independence Day and kept alive the heroic spirit of the fathers.

When the Rebellion broke out, Cambridge furnished 170 men and paid \$33,000 in bounties to enlist them. Eli Ellinwood, one of the most respected citizens, was forty-six years old at the time and was the first to enlist. Of the forty-five enlisted men, thirty-eight were killed, or died of wounds or disease contracted while in service.

The first religious services were held in barns. Communion day, or "quarterly meeting" as it was called, was a great day. People came with ox teams, the whole family riding on sleds or in carts. Some came on horseback or on foot, even coming twelve miles over poor roads. Far from home or supplies, with dangers on every side, knowing that a crop failure might mean starvation, it is no wonder that they sang with the spirit and the understanding,

"Lead me O thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak but thou art mighty,
Holf me with Thy powerful hand.
Bread of heaven! Bread of heaven!
Feed me till I want no more."

Their fields of grain were truly the bread of heaven to them, and they needed a strength outside themselves.

The congregational society was organized by Ithimar Hibbard of Bennington, Feb. 18, 1792 with twelve members. In 1805 they built a church at Cambridge Boro and filled it with worshippers. There was no way of heating it, and in the coldest winter weather they had no fire.

Some women carried little footstoves which added much to their comfort. These footstoves had an elaborately turned framework and bottom of wood, and were about a foot square, and nearly a

foot high. The top and sides were of perforated tin, as full of holes as a tin lantern. A tin or sheet iron basin was placed inside and filled with hardwood coals with a thick layer of ashes at top and bottom to keep them alive. Some of these quaint little stoves may be found in attics of old farmhouses.

From 1800 to 1807 there was a continuous revival of religion and large additions were made to the membership. It was said that a word spoken of the church filled a circle twenty miles in diameter.

They had such ministers as Rev. Mr. Dorman, a man of culture and fine sensibility, Rev. John Truair, a preacher of persuasive eloquence, Rev. Simeon Parmelee, D.D., who drew large audiences, Rev. Calvin Granger, who taught by example as well as precept. He was succeeded by Rev. Edwin Wheelock, who began his pastorate in 1855.



The brick congregational church at Jeffersonville was built in 1827. Rev. Alvah Sabin and others like him preached there.

Methodism began at North Cambridge, where at first, services were held in private houses and quarterly meetings were held in barns. Until recently there were those who remembered the meetings in Jesse Mudgett's and Ezekiel Fullington's barns.

Sometime there were not seats enough for all, and then the younger and nimbler ones climbed to the high beams where they sat with their feet dangling down and were not always as quiet and decorous as the occasion required. Later meetings were held at the schoolhouse. It was a "four weeks circuit," with two preachers alternating once in two weeks.

One of the early preachers, Rev. C.P. Clark, a large, portly man, found it more comfortable for himself and his horse to drive about in a two-wheeled gig instead of going on horseback. Unfortunately the wheels were painted yellow, which savored so strongly of the pomps and vanities of the world that the congregation was scandalized. However, instead of being worldly minded as they feared, he proved to be so humble and devout that he was highly esteemed. It was never known that the yellow wheels placed a "stumbling block or an occasion to fall" in any ones way.

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Today, well prior to the pandemic, the church was a hub of activity. Sunday worship and the children's Sunday school, The Cambridge Food Shelf & Clothing bank (open Mon. 6-7 pm and Tues. 1-4pm). The Cub Scout meeting, three AA weekly meetings, monthly community luncheons,

two weekly RSVP bone builder exercise classes, and Tuesday's sermon talk back. We share a pastor (Rev. Devon Thomas) with Waterville and the Bakersfield / Fairfield churches.

I hope you will join us when the program is re-scheduled so I can share some of the more interesting tidbits of the church history, as well as a short film of the fire, and hopefully, you will have some stories of your own to share.

Madison (Matt) Safford

The Cambridge Historical Society has lost one of its most important and well-loved members. Matt Safford was a fount of knowledge about Cambridge history. Born in Cambridge in 1936, he shared his memories of those years with stories and anecdotes. Whenever someone was unsure of the location shown in a photo, you would turn to Matt - and inevitably he knew where it had been taken. Occasionally, someone would challenge his opinion - they lost.

In the last several years he led the Cambridge Elementary School's 3rd grade on a bus trip of the town, pointing out important locations and telling stories of a life the children could not even imagine. Those trips were special and remembered by the students long after they left CES.

Along with his friend and fellow history enthusiast Roberta Marsh, Matt co-authored a book, *From the Lens of a Camera...To a Postcard*, published by the historical society. The book included postcards of Cambridge, but also short stories and descriptions related to those postcards.

We will all miss Matt. He was part of our community, our family, and his passing leaves a hole in our lives that cannot be filled.



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Because of the Coronavirus and the orders to stay in place, the monthly meetings of the Cambridge Historical Society are canceled for the foreseeable future. Our first page story is a teaser for what would have been our first program of the year on the History of the 2nd Congregational Church in Jeffersonville. Other planned meetings include(d) a visit from members of the Johnson Historical Society, Linda Radkte's program on the women's suffrage movement in Vermont, an update on construction in the Notch, Jane Williamson of Rokeby Museum on the underground railroad, a history of Cambridge High School, and a History of the other (1st) Congregational Church.

Hopefully, many of these programs will still be able to be presented, once this emergency passes. We will welcome everyone back to our meetings when we can.

Stay Safe!

This Newsletter is one of the perks of membership, so to continue receiving The Harkener renew your membership, and THANK YOU.