

West Granville Congregational Church

In the center of West Granville, facing the Green, stands the Second Church of Christ. It is a very old structure having been built during the Revolution.

For over thirty years the people of this village attended services at the First Church which was near the Great Rock in the vicinity of Reagan Road. This was a distance of four or five miles over rough and mountainous terrain. As the parish grew larger the people were anxious to have a house of worship nearer home.

Belcher Noyes, the last surviving clerk for the Proprietors (early land owners) deeded to Timothy Robinson, Titus Fowler, John Hamilton and Benjamin Olds 519 acres of "Public Lands" with the instructions that the land be sold and the proceeds be used to erect a Meeting-House in Middle Parish, as West Granville was then called.

In 1774 Abijah Babcock of Rhode Island purchased these lands and the money for the building was then realized. In 1778 the Meeting-House was erected on the Green. The parish already owned this area, it having been given them by Captain Aaron Coe, one of the first settlers from Durham, Connecticut.

Three years later on November 19, 1781 twenty-eight persons signed the Covenant at the Meeting-House and after "mature consideration and solemn prayer entered into its solemn engagements and became embodied in Church Order and Communion."

The first acting minister was Lemuel Haynes, a local young man who had just returned from army duty at Lexington and Ticonderoga. He was given a unanimous call and served faithfully for five years.

Many ministers have been settled here caring for the spiritual needs of the congregation, but none served as long as the beloved Reverend Joel Baker, who remained pastor for thirty-six years. It is said of him that he

was very effective in prayer although not a powerful preacher.

From time to time changes have been made to the building. In 1833 a tower was built, and a bell hung in the belfry. At the death Of Reverend T. O. Rice a beautiful Cathedral glass window seven by eight feet with an oval top was placed in the front of the Church.

The edifice was greatly changed when two flanking towers were placed on the front of the building, as did the twenty small windows of unique design. These are of colored and ground glass, with blue figured borders red corners, and figured ground glass in the center. These were given by friends as memorials. Some have inscriptions cut in the glass.

In 1903 extensive repairs and alterations were made to the interior, the side galleries were removed, and the floor level raised. It is understood that the original seats or pews were of the boxed in type.

At that time pews were called slips. Every year the slips were auctioed off and the money used to defray Church expenses. In 1966 some beautiful chimes were presented to the Church by Mrs. Hill, given in memory of her mother. Later they were amplified, and now on Sunday afternoons one may hear hymns being played while travelling through West Granville.

The old record books reveal many interesting facts such as 1846, To see if the Parish will vote to cause the four north windows to be closed; 1839 Voted to insure the Church and the Academy, and to raise \$38 for that purpose; Voted to bid the wood off at \$1.95 a cord; Voted that hereafter the slip rents are payable one half of the amount on or before the first of July and the other half by the first of December.

At the present time the upkeep on the building is taken care of by the efforts of the Ladies Aid Society, and from interest from funds given by former parishoners. The parish is small, but all members are very active. There are no services held during the winter except on special occasions.

Bibliography

Primary Source

Original Church Book

Building erected 1778

Church Society Organized 1781