



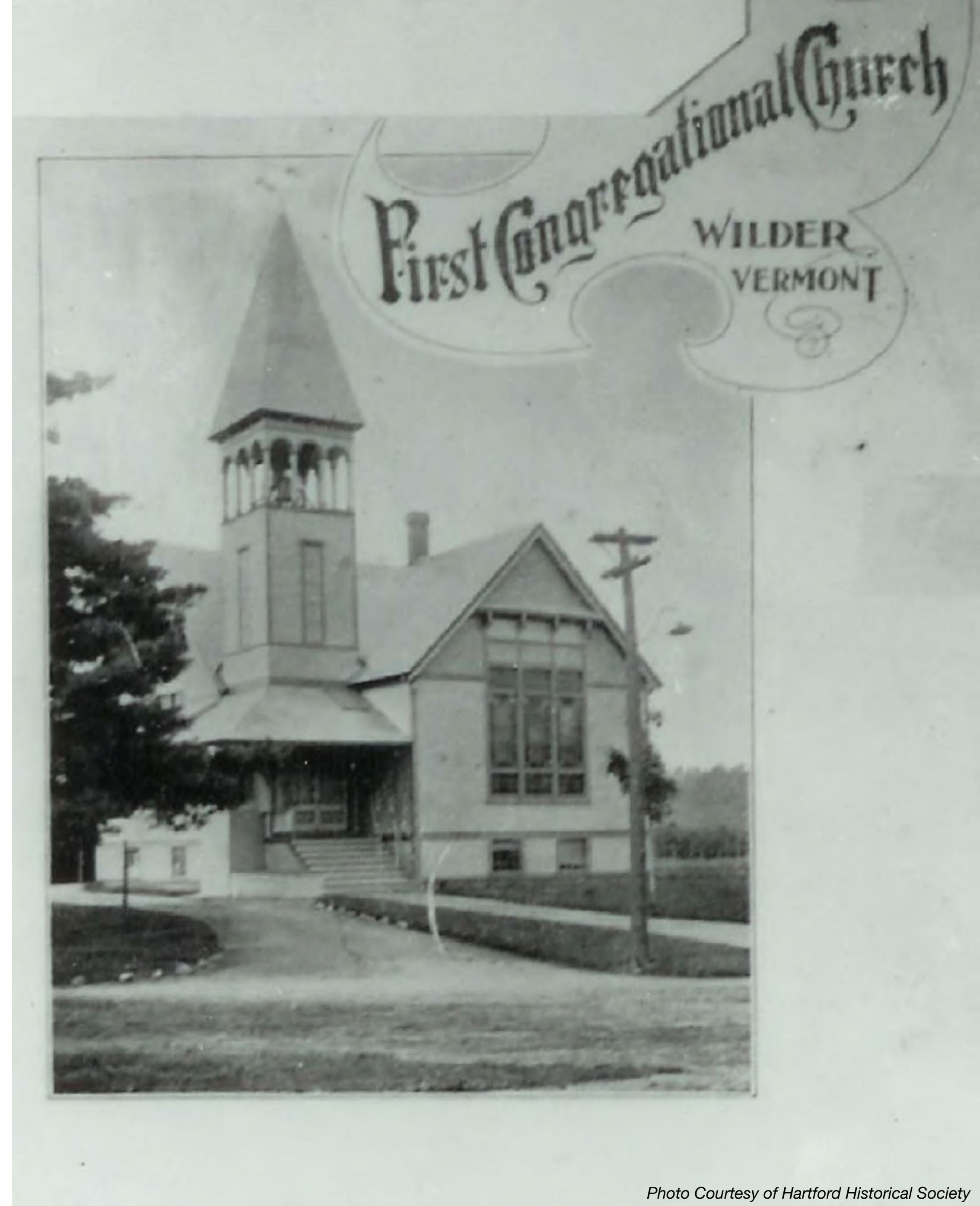
The Charles T. Wilder Center

Grand Opening Ceremony
October 16, 2010

Circa 1900

Originally known as “The United Church of Christ in Olcott”, it was renamed “The First Congregational Church of Wilder, Vermont” when town’s name was changed in 1898.

Note the open belfry and lack of a tower clock.



Circa 1915

A subsequent photograph of the building, looking across what is now Hartford Avenue. This image shows the modified paint scheme that we matched during the renovation.



Photo Courtesy of Frank J. Barrett Jr.



North End of Wilder, Vermont. The steeple is seen prior to the enclosing of the belfry or the addition of the tower clock.

c.1915

Circa 1920

A later photograph shows the addition of the shutters to the belfry, and the growth of the trees in front of the building.

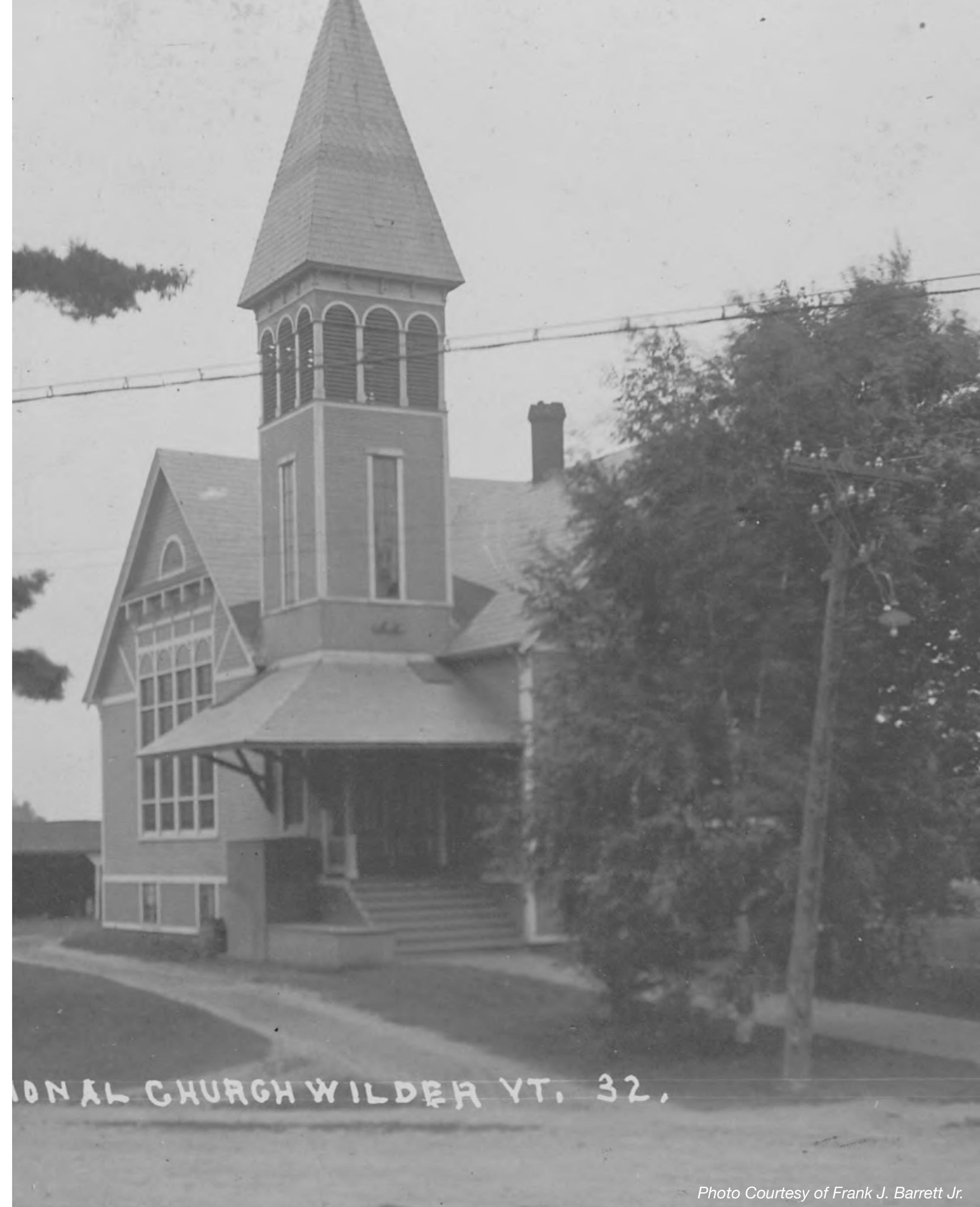


Photo Courtesy of Frank J. Barrett Jr.

2009

A photograph of the church building when Lyme Properties purchased the property in August 2009. The Assembly of God denomination discontinued services in 2008.





Restoring a Neighborhood Icon

Lyme's Renovation Process

The Neighborhood Planning Process

- Lyme Properties held two meetings in the Fall of 2009 with members of the Wilder neighborhood to discuss the future of the building.
- The meetings served as an opportunity to learn more about the history of the building, and for Lyme to gain valuable input from members of the community about how they wanted to see the building used.
- The results were quite interesting and lead to the proposed new uses being approved by the Hartford Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Adjustment in December 2009.



Neighborhood Planning Process Participants

Meeting 1: September 14th, 2009:

88%

Had lived, owned, or worked in Wilder, Vt. for **more than 15 years.**

35%

Had **never been inside** the building prior to the meeting.

Meeting 2: October 6th, 2009:

77%

Had lived, owned, or worked in Wilder, Vt. for **more than 15 years.**

44%

Had **never been inside** the building prior to the meeting.

Wilder Neighborhood Feedback

50%

Felt that Wilder's "**village feeling**" was the biggest asset of Wilder.

57%

Thought that some type of **Public Assembly** space would make the neighborhood better.

63%

Thought that a **Community Center/Cultural Institution** or a **Cultural Center/Performance Center/Museum** would make the neighborhood better.

9%

Thought that a **Place of Worship** would be the best use of the building.

Programming

100%

Supported the building being used for **Cultural Events** (music recitals, art shows, choir groups, poetry readings, etc.).

100%

Supported the building being used for **Educational Programs** (music lessons, art classes, continuing education, etc.).

91%

Supported the building being used for **Recreational Programs** (yoga classes, dance lessons, etc.).

83%

Supported the building being used for **Private Social Functions** (weddings, reunions, birthday parties, etc.).

The Future of a Landmark

91%

Wanted to see the clock operational and backlit at night.

85%

Wanted to see the clock operational and have the bell ring on the hour.

72%

Wanted to see the church painted something other than all white.

Hours of Operation

94%

Thought that **Day and Evening Events** would be appropriate.

95%

Thought that **Weekend Events** would be appropriate.

Working With The Town

- In order to achieve the re-use plan for the building, Lyme applied to the City of Hartford for a conditional use that would allow the intended uses: public assembly, education, and office.
- The application was filed on October 26, 2009.
- The Hartford Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Adjustment approved the application expeditiously and the renovation process began in December 2009 with the stabilization of the steeple and the repair of the slate roof.



The Architectural Design Process



UK ARCHITECTS, PC

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HANOVER NH 03755
P: 603 643 8868 F: 603 643 5958
WWW.UKARCH.COM

- Lyme selected UK Architects of Hanover, N.H. to prepare construction plans that preserved the original architectural character of the structure, while bringing the building up to modern building codes.
- An addition to the east side of the building was added to provide handicapped accessibility, ADA compliant restrooms, and two means of legal egress for both floors of the building.
- Additionally, new mechanical, electrical, plumbing, fire sprinkler, heating and air-conditioning systems were installed to comply with modern building and energy codes.



The Steeple Restoration

The building's steeple, including the purple-faced clock, dormers, and enclosed belfry, required a major structural repair after years of limited maintenance and harsh New England winters.





The resulting water damage was so significant that a few columns and beams had rotted through entirely, leaving the steeple dangerously close to structural failure.



Photo Courtesy of Frank J. Barrett Jr.

c.1915



Photo Courtesy of Frank J. Barrett Jr.

c. 1920



2009

Originally, the Meneely bell was housed in an open belfry. Shutters were subsequently added to protect the space from pigeons and bees. Dormers were added for the 1928 addition of the Seth Thomas tower clock.



Brian Gardner Carpentry of Etna, N.H, completed the steeple restoration during the winter of 2009–2010. The original slate roof pattern was matched and restored by Hayward Roofing of Chelsea, Vt.



The Seth Thomas Clock

Re-starting An American Masterpiece

A 1928 Addition

The tower clock was a gift of the Palmer family. Mr. Palmer left \$500 in his will “to beautify the village as seemed fitting.” Mrs. Palmer and the Church committee decided the town needed a clock, and that the church steeple was the right place for it.





Seth Thomas

The clock was built by The Seth Thomas Clock Co. of Thomaston, Connecticut, famous 19th century clockmakers who also built the iconic clock in New York's Grand Central Station.



Clock No. 2708

This clock (No. 2708), was completed in the factory on September 24th, 1928. The clock was repaired in the 1980s, but ceased to operate in the mid 1990s. When Lyme took possession of the building, the clock mechanism was covered in decades of accumulated dust and grease, but was otherwise in operable condition. In September of 2010 the clock was cleaned, repaired and made ready for full-time operation.

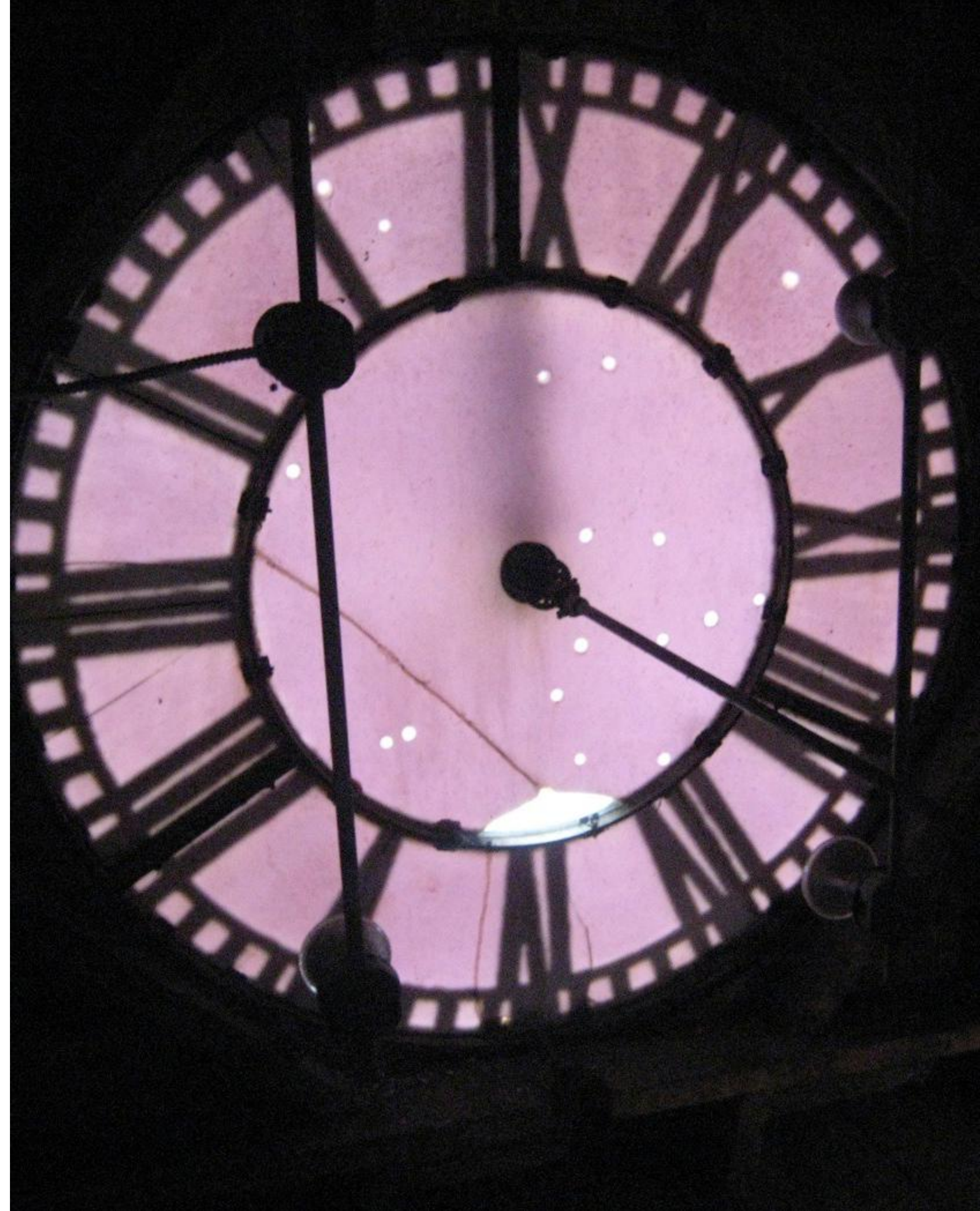




The clock mechanism is located below the belfry, and turns the hands on all four clock faces through a series of gears located just behind the clock dormers. Back-lighting behind the purple glass faces has been added and is controlled by a photo cell, lighting the clock at night.

The Clock Face

- The clock faces were originally white, but the ultraviolet exposure from the sun turned them purple over time.
- According to local lore, the police are partially responsible for shooting holes in the glass while trying to rid the tower of pigeons!
- The police were initially unable to reach the belfry because of numerous bees in the steeple. The belfry was subsequently enclosed and screened to keep out the bees and pigeons.
- The clock faces and numerals were repainted as one step in restoring the function of the clock, but if you look closely, you can still see the bullet holes.





The internal mechanism has been restored to operation, and will once again keep time for the village of Wilder.

The Meneely Bell

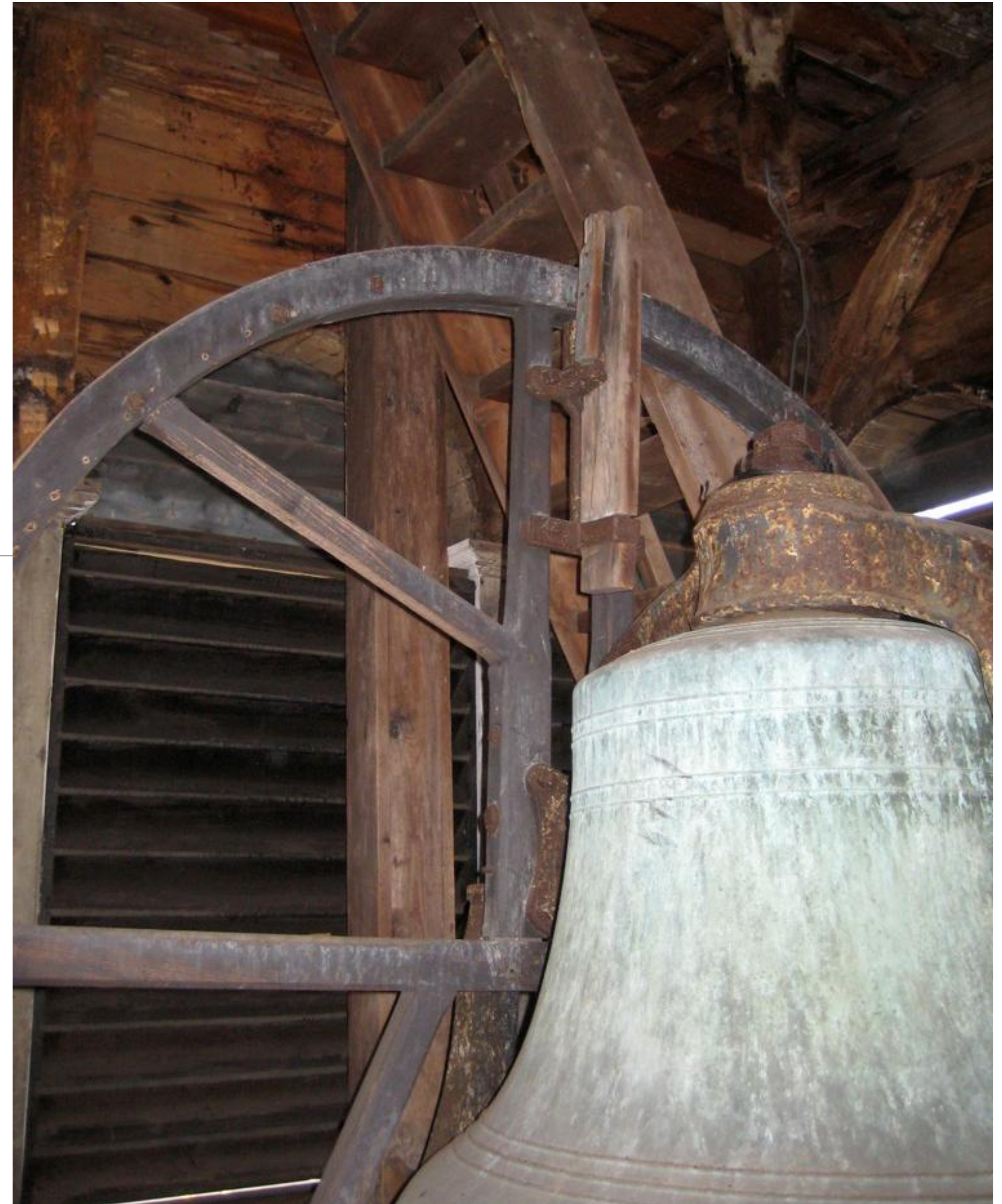
The original bell and striking mechanism have been cleaned and repaired, and will ring on-the-hour as approved by the neighbors.





The Meneely Bell Company

The bell is from the Meneely Bell Company of Troy, New York, a well-regarded bell foundry that also cast the replacement bell for Philadelphia's Independence Hall, which originally held the Liberty Bell.



The Original Paint Colors

At the neighborhood meetings, strong sentiment was expressed to restore the building to the original color scheme. While repairing the 1901 extension at the rear of the building– added to accommodate the pipe organ– a small section of the original clapboard and trim colors was discovered, and this allowed Lyme to match the original paint colors.





Photo Courtesy of Hartford Historical Society

c.1900



Photo Courtesy of Frank J. Barrett Jr.

c.1915



2009

The paint scheme changed throughout the years, becoming the “white church” in the early-20th century, probably around the addition of the tower clock in 1928.



The team from Home Partners Painting of White River Junction, Vt. safely removed years of paint and then matched the original colors. The multi-color scheme accentuates some of the interesting architectural details of this historic building.

The Pipe Organ

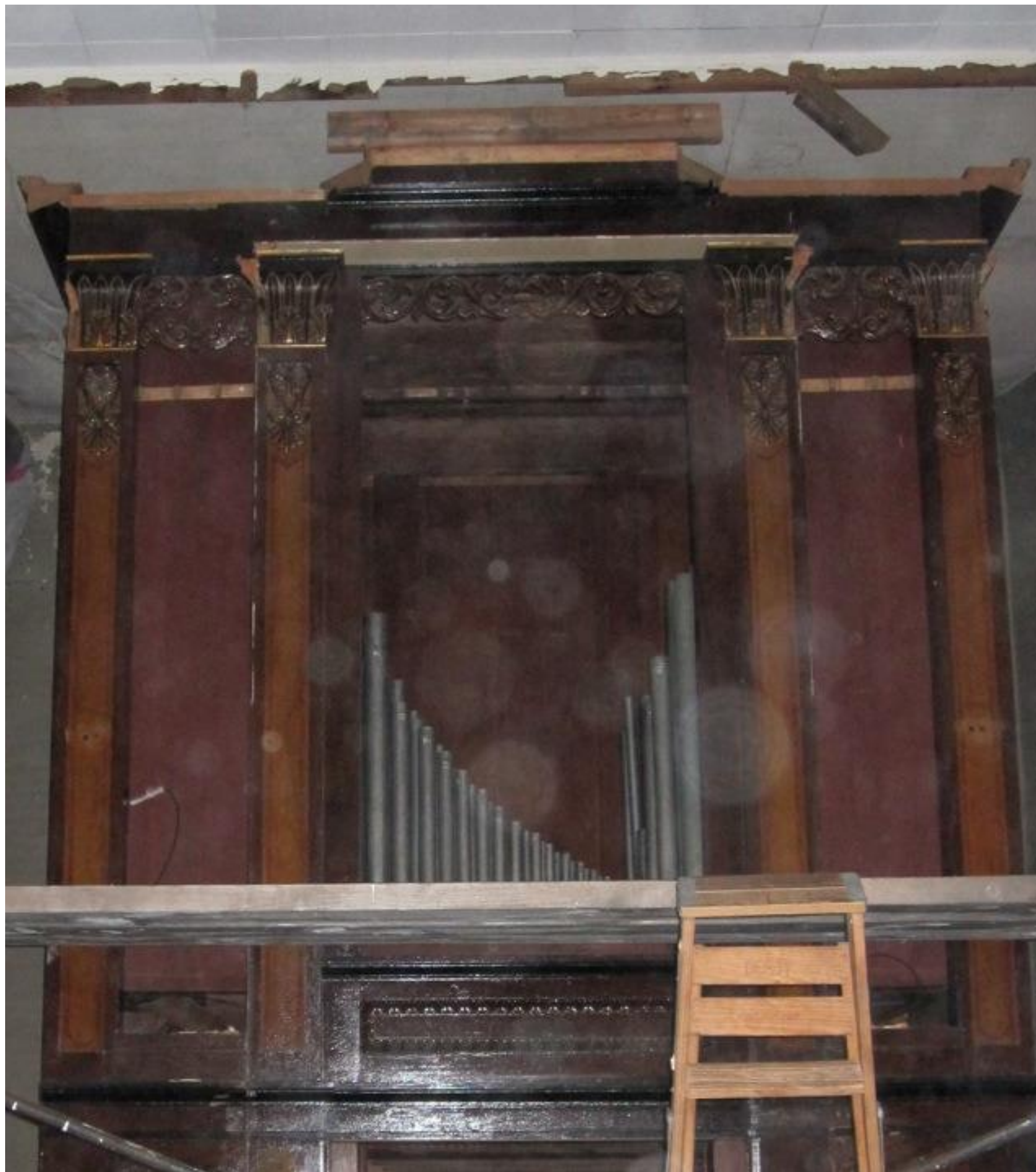
Restoring a musical instrument that predates the building itself.



Photo Courtesy of Hartford Historical Society



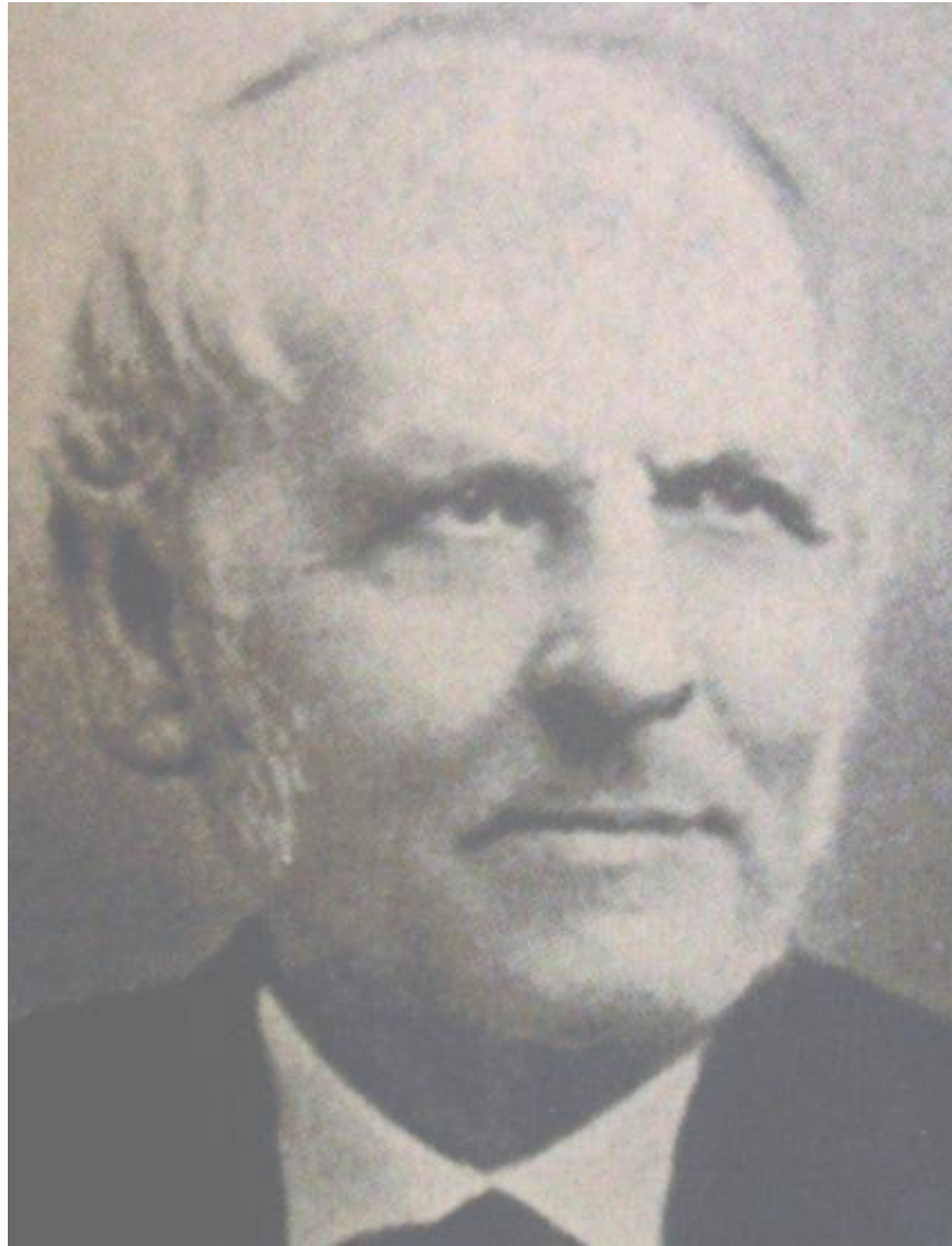
When Lyme purchased the property in 2009, the pipe organ had been abandoned and walled-off from the sanctuary. Lyme carefully removed the wall and discovered that the organ was largely intact, but damaged where the partition was installed.



Note the front cornice, sawn off during the installation of the partition! After years of neglect the pipes were full of dust and the bellows were taped together.



A. David Moore of Pomfret, Vt. dismantled the aged instrument and moved it to his shop for a meticulous restoration. Ed Boadway, director of Vermont Organ research, continues his extensive “sleuthing” to learn the history of the organ.



The pipe organ was built in the 1840s by George Stevens (1803–1894) of Cambridge, Mass., a leading organ builder of the era, who went on to become a City Councilor and the third Mayor of Cambridge. David Clem of Lyme Properties was a Cambridge City Councilor while attending the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the 1970s.



Photo Courtesy of Hartford Historical Society



Believed to have first been installed in a church in the Boston area, the organ was shipped by train in 1901 to Wilder. The shipping tags are still attached to the organ, and bears the name of A.R. Brooks, the manager of the Wilder Mill at the time.



A signature found on the pedal mechanism revealed that Samuel Bates (brother of Katharine Lee Bates, author of *America The Beautiful*) modified the organ's pedal division in 1876.



A. David Moore removed six layers of paint and varnish, much of it faux-graining, including stenciling, Bible verses, and gilded accents. During the restoration process, the original imitation dark wood-graining was reproduced. Missing portions of the case front were fabricated and antique ivory stop labels replaced nine missing originals.



The one-manual organ has nine sets of pipes. The entire instrument including the leather bellows and all mechanical connections were completely restored. A modern electric blower was added in the basement of the Wilder Center to power the bellows, which were originally hand-pumped. Collamer Abbott, who was born in Wilder, Vt. in 1919, remembers pumping the organ for Mrs. Owens, the church organist, as a child.



As the sanctuary remodeling was finished, the organ was reinstalled, a month-long process that included regulating and tuning the pipes. The refurbished George Stevens organ is one of the oldest functioning organs in Vermont, and one of only four remaining one-manual Stevens organs of the 1840s.



Before and After

The Rehabilitation









A Neighborhood Icon, Restored

October 16, 2010

Special Thanks

- Our Wilder Neighbors
 - A. David Moore Inc.
 - Collamer Abbott
 - Accessibility Systems, Inc.
 - Ace Blueprint
 - Alliance Mechanical
 - Ken Alton
 - Barden's Concrete, Inc.
 - Frank J. Barrett Jr.
 - Bath-Boule General Contractors, Inc.
 - Bluehouse Group
 - Ed Boadway
 - Bonardi Steel LLC
 - Jack Candon
 - John L. Carter Sprinkler Co., Inc.
 - Centurion Insurance Group
 - Sean Clauson
 - Kathy Clem
 - John Clerkin
 - Co-op Food Stores
 - Comcast, Andy Thornburn
 - Cramer Electric Company
 - Daddy's Sound Solutions
 - Datamann
 - Dayco, Inc.
 - Dickinson & Son, Inc.
 - DMS Machining & Fabrication
 - Downeast Structural Consulting
 - Matt Doyle
 - DuBois & King, Inc.
 - East Coast Flooring, LLC
 - Jon Gilbert Fox
 - Brian Gardner Carpentry, LLC
 - Geotechnical Services
 - Gnomon Copy
 - Granite State Glass
 - Green Mountain Power
 - Hartford Historical Society
 - Hartford Planning Board
 - Hartford ZBA
 - Hayward Slate & Copper Roofing
 - Beth Hinchliffe of Wellesley, Mass.
 - Henniker Directional Drilling
 - HOME Partners, Inc.
 - Kamco Supply Corp. of Boston
 - King Arthur Flour Co.
 - James LaMontagne Landscape Co., Inc.
 - Donn Haven Lathrop
 - W.B. Mason
 - Peggy McDerment
 - M&W Soils Engineering, Inc.
 - Buff McLaughry
 - New England Kitchen Depot
 - Nott's Excavating, Inc.
 - r. k. Miles, Inc.
 - Rice Tree Service
 - Rule Signs & Graphics
 - Sound Solutions
 - Springfield Fence Co., Inc.
 - Pat Stark
 - TF Moran Inc.
 - The Studio
 - The Town of Hartford
 - Trumbull-Nelson Construction Co., Inc.
 - UK Architects, P.C.
 - Upper Valley Drywall Systems, Inc.
 - Upper Valley Food Co-op
 - Valley News
 - Bill Wittik
 - Young's Propane
- The Lyme Properties Team**
- John Billings
 - Chet Clem
 - David Clem
 - Angela McCanna
 - Michael Schwarz