

First Parish Federated Church – Main & Academy Streets



In 1929 the First Parish Congregational Church, originally organized in 1702 in the Old Fields part of South Berwick, merged with the Methodist Episcopal Church, organized in 1836 at Main and Park Streets, to form the First Parish Federated Church. The Methodist meetinghouse across Main Street was torn down.

The current meetinghouse was built in 1826 and was originally one story tall, with three front doors, and situated much closer to Main Street. It was remodeled in 1880, 1963 and 1993. It was the place of worship of the family of author Sarah Orne Jewett and many other South Berwick citizens. This building is part of the South Berwick Village District on the National Register of Historic Places.



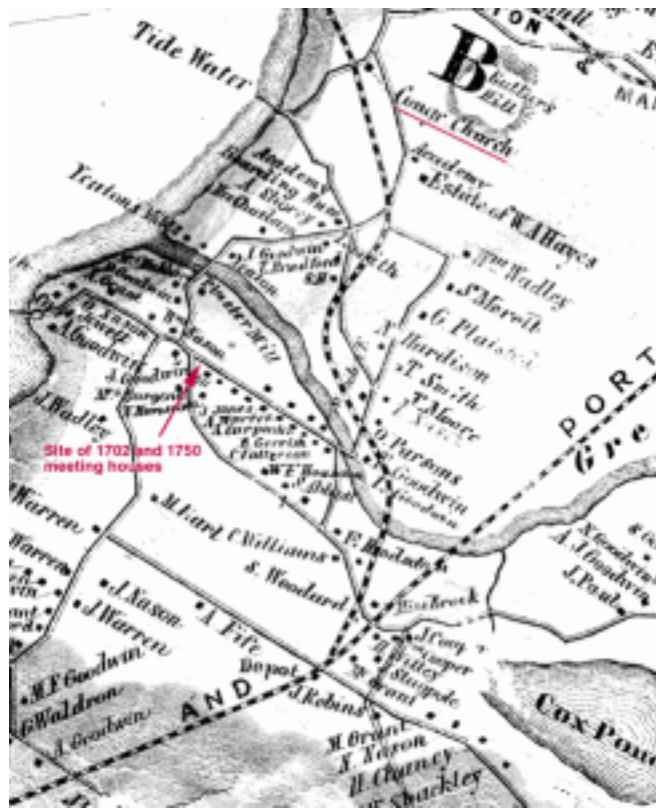
Read a Jewett children's story about a mouse in a village church.

Below are histories of South Berwick's Congregational and Methodist churches from *The History of York County*, 1880, and a map of about 1850.

Congregationalist

This parish was organized under the name of Unity, in 1693. The first church organized within the limits of Berwick was at Quamphegan Landing, now South Berwick village. This church was formed by the Rev. John Wade, a native of Ipswich, Mass, and graduate of Harvard, in 1693, who had been employed as the minister of the town.

Considerable religious interest was awakened during 1701, and June 4, 1702, an organization was effected with 17 members. The Revs. John Pike, of Dover, Samuel Emery, and Samuel Moody officiated as counsel. Daniel Goodwin was one of the most active members at its organization.



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The first meeting-house was built south of Great Works River, opposite William Nason's, near the school-house. [Note: Location of this meetinghouse was on the south side of Brattle Street at Old South Road—ed.] Rev. Mr. Wade was ordained Nov. 18, 1702, and died Nov. 13, 1703. He received a call, but died before his settlement. Sept. 23, 1706, Capt. Ichabod Plaisted, Capt. John Hill, and Deacon Emery were selected in behalf of the church and parish to give Mr. Jeremiah Wise a call for settlement, and £80

were voted for his yearly salary. One hundred pounds were voted for settlement. The offer was accepted, and Benona Hodsdon, Nathan Lord, and Humphrey Spencer were appointed to get the ministry land near the meeting-house sufficiently well fenced by the month of March next.

In March, a new meeting-house, 36 feet square, was commenced. Rev. Jeremiah Wise, a son of John wise, of Ipswich, Mass., who was connected with the "Salem Witchcraft," graduated at Harvard, and was ordained Nov. 26, 1707. He remained pastor of this church until his death, Jan. 20, 1756, at the age of seventy years. A man eminent for his learning and piety, his memory is still cherished in the parish. His parish was divided in 1751, and a second parish formed with a meeting-house at Blackberry Hill. He was succeeded by Rev. Jacob Foster, Sept. 1, 1756.

Rev. Mr. Foster, a graduate of Harvard in 1754, was a lover of learning and pure religion, and entirely devoted to the work of his Master, but, finding it difficult to support his family during the Revolutionary war, he was dismissed at his own request in 1777. Being warmly devoted to the Whig cause, he entered as chaplain in the army. He died in 1798. He was succeeded by Rev. John Thompson, from May 7, 1783, to Nov. 17, 1824. [Note: Thompson served as president of Berwick Academy from 1803-1825, and had been a founder. His son was William Tompson, preceptor of Berwick Academy.-- ed.] Mr. Thompson was a graduate of Harvard College in 1760. He died Dec. 21, 1828. Rev. George W. Campbell was ordained at that date, and remained to Dec. 24, 1848 [sic]. During his pastorate the meeting-house now used was built at South Berwick village. Rev. Seth H. Keeler was ordained Oct. 15, 1829, and was pastor to April 18, 1836; Rev. Andrew Rankin from March 1, 1837, to April 14, 1840; Rev. William B. Homer, who was ordained Nov. 11, 1840, died March 22, 1841, aged twenty-one; Rev. Benjamin R. Allen was pastor from Oct. 12, 1842, to Oct 19, 1854; Rev. Alfred Emerson from Feb. 18, 1857 to May 12, 1858; Rev. Ephraim W. Allen from Dec. 30, 1858, to May 10, 1866; Silvanus Hayward was installed May 10, 1866, and was succeeded by Rev. George Lewis, the present pastor, in 1876.

The deacons of this church have been as follows: Daniel Emery, Nathan Lord, May 20, 1703; Daniel Goodwin, 1721; Job Emery, April 30, 1721; John Hupper, May 15, 1721; Benjamin Libby, Sept. 16, 1725; Daniel Emery, Feb. 25, 1735; Ichabod Goodwin, June 30, 1754; Humphrey Chadbourne, Jr., June 30, 1754; Richard Shackley, Jr., June 25, 1761; John Hill, Jr., Dec. 10, 1767; Dominicus Goodwin, Nov. 11, 1773; Gen Ichabod Goodwin and Dr. Richard Hazeltine, May 16, 1811; James S. Goodwin, April 6, 1826; Asa Hunting, Nov. 19, 1829; John Plummer; Andrew Goodwin, June 2, 1837; Charles Edward Norton, Jan. 5, 1844; N. C. Hobbs, July 2, 1869; Isaac P. Yeaton, Sept. 1, 1871; John H. Plummer, June 30, 1876. Messrs Hobbs, Yeaton and Plummer are the present deacons.

The Methodist Episcopal Church

Was formed by Rev. Paul C. Richmond, from the Maine Conference, in 1829. Meetings were first held in the vicinity of the old Congregational church. Mr. Richmond was succeeded by appointments from the Conference of E. C. Ewins, Joseph Gerry, A. Hatch, and W. H. Pillsbury. In 1836, Rev. George D. Strout was sent to this charge, and commenced to hold meetings in a hall at the village. A meeting-house was dedicated June, 1838; sermon by G. F. Cox. [Note: Location of this meetinghouse was Main Street at Park Street—ed.] In March, 1849, it was destroyed by fire, but was rebuilt and dedicated 1850; sermon by Thomas Carver. In 1867 the house was enlarged by the addition of twenty pews, raised two feet from foundation, and a convenient vestry finished in the basement. Among the ministers who have been appointed to this society since were L. S. Stockman, H. Butler, J. W. Atkins, F. Yates, J.

Cushing, P. Jaques, W. MacDonald, P. C. Richmond, John Moore, T. Greenhalgh, N. Hobart, J. Armstrong, J. Hooper, U. Rideout, A. Green, E. Smith, P. E. Brown to 1860. Since,--- [sic] E. Martin, U. Rideout, C. W. Moore, O. W. Scott, W. B. Bartlett, Roscoe L. Green, G. F. Cobb. Membership about 120. [Note: In 1886 this building was moved to property near the present site of South Berwick Central School. It was demolished after 1929 when the Methodist Church joined the Congregationalist Church to form the First Parish Federated Church.]

From the Berwick Historical Society (www.