



THE RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMUNITY

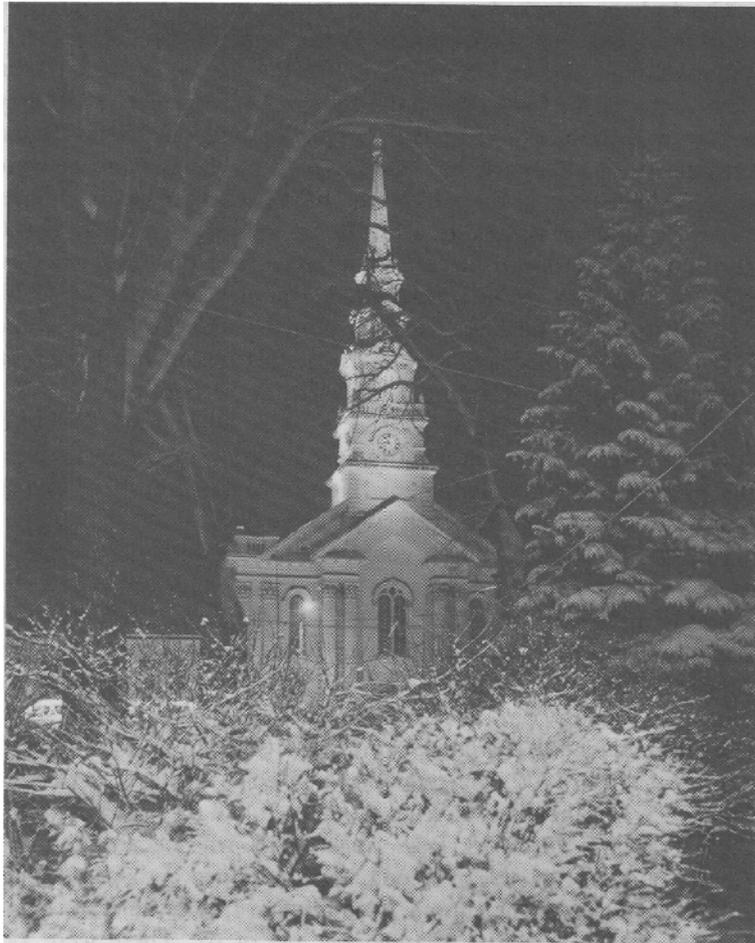
by John C. Perry

Keene was first settled by people from “Ye Godly, God fearing and God serving Province of Massachusetts”; therefore, the settlement of a minister and the location and erection of a meetinghouse were of prime importance to the inhabitants. Grants and charters to the several townships required that the proprietors “support an orthodox minister” by assessment from time to time on themselves. The early church and community affairs were somewhat interlocked as the church building was also used as the central meeting place for town affairs and special events. All inhabitants who desired to attend religious services worshiped in the one church. Today in the city of Keene the worshiper has a choice of some 19 churches, representing most of the leading denominations in the United States.

The United Church of Christ in Keene

When Keene was first settled in 1736 and the land divided among the proprietors, a lot was set aside for a future meetinghouse. The location of the meetinghouse and the accompanying cemetery was on the rise of ground just north of the Branch River, at the south end of the Town Street, about where the house of Howard B. Lane now

stands. When only one dwelling house had been erected the settlers were resolved to record God's name among them; therefore, on September 30, 1736, it was voted that they build a meetinghouse 40 feet long, 20 feet stud and 35 feet wide; to underpin, cover and inclose the same, and lay down boards for the lower floor; and to set the same at the south end of the Town Street at the place appointed by the General Courts Committee. The meetinghouse was to be finished by June 26, 1737. Records indicate that it was a very crude building. On May 12, 1737, it was voted to assess 60 pounds on the proprietors



The United Church of Christ-----1960's

in order to support a minister. Again on February 7, 1738, it was voted to raise 240 pounds to support the preaching of the gospel. A call to Jacob Bacon to be the first minister was given in May 1738, and he accepted on August 5, 1738. The first church was formally organized with 19 male members on October 19, 1738, and Rev. Jacob Bacon, a graduate of Harvard College, ordained as minister.

Apparently the meetinghouse was not finished on schedule, for it was voted on December 4 of that year to finish the meetinghouse, and in 1742 another vote was taken to shingle the meetinghouse and to install glass in wood frames.

The Indians attacked and burned Keene in 1747. In March or April of that year, "on the common, in the haste of their departure," the inhabitants passed an informal vote for the release of Rev. Bacon as the minister of the town. When the settlers returned after 1750 they soon turned their attention to the "affairs of religion." They found that their first meetinghouse had been burned by the Indians, as were most of the dwellings in the village. In 1753 a second meetinghouse, a temporary affair of slabs with a dirt floor, was built on Main Street, nearly opposite Marlboro Street. That same year the town was incorporated, and Rev. Ezra Carpenter, a Harvard graduate of 1720, was called to be the minister over the united parishes of Keene and Swanzey. Although the membership list of this period has been lost, it is recorded that Rev. Carpenter officiated at 52 baptisms.

In 1754 the third meetinghouse, a more substantial structure, was started farther north, on what is now Central Square, in the area of the present Soldiers' Monument. However, as a result of Indian difficulties it was not finished until some years later.

In 1760 the Keene church voted not to join with the people of Swanzey in maintaining and carrying on worship, and Rev. Carpenter became the minister in Swanzey. Rev. Clement Sumner, a Yale graduate in 1758, was called as the minister of the Keene church. He was ordained on June 11, 1761, and arrangements for his salary included payments in wheat, pork, beef, corn, and other supplies at stated prices. He remained at the church until his dismissal, by his own consent, on April 30, 1772. He remained in Keene, however, where he died in 1795. For the next six years the church had no settled minister.

On February 18, 1778, Rev. Aaron Hall, who became the "beloved and popular minister of Keene," was ordained and spent almost 37 years in service to this church. A graduate of both Yale and Dartmouth, he died in Keene in 1814 at the age of 62. There were 211 members received and 871 baptisms recorded during his pastorate.

In 1786 work was begun on the present (fourth) meetinghouse. The third church building was sold to the county and moved to the northwest corner of the Common, where it served as the first court house in Keene. In 1771 Keene had been made the shire town of Cheshire County, and sessions of both the Inferior and Superior Courts were held in the building while it was still a place of worship. In 1788 the "center pews and seats were moved and a bench and table, called a bar, substituted for the use of the judges and lawyers." The building was continued as a court house until 1796, when it was moved to 256 Washington Street and used as a two tenement house. Years later this building was cut in half by John Fuller and one half was moved to Railroad Square, where it was used by J. Cushing Co. as a retail grain store. The other half is a house now located at 26 Maple Street. The fourth church building, like the third, was on the south side of the Square. The steeple, some 60-70 feet high, faced west. The church was handsomely built with box pews, a wine glass pulpit, and galleries on three sides. It had a belfry, and the exterior of the building was painted white and yellow; the large outside door was painted green, and faced south, with a flat stone for a doorstep. It was dedicated in October 1788, 50 years after the church had been organized.

In 1792 the town voted to purchase its first bell, and 80 pounds was raised for the purpose. Two years later the town voted 90 pounds to purchase a larger bell weighing 1,000 pounds, and records indicate that this bell and a clock were installed in the Meetinghouse.

In 1797 Dr. Ziba Hall refused to be taxed for the support of the gospel, and sued the town to recover back taxes, paid under protest.

Rev. Hall was succeeded by Rev. David Oliphant, who remained until his dismissal in 1817. He was a graduate of Union College in 1809 and Andover Seminary in 1814, and was ordained on May 24, 1815. He received 91 persons into the church and baptised 129. He was dismissed because his beliefs were somewhat anti-temperance.

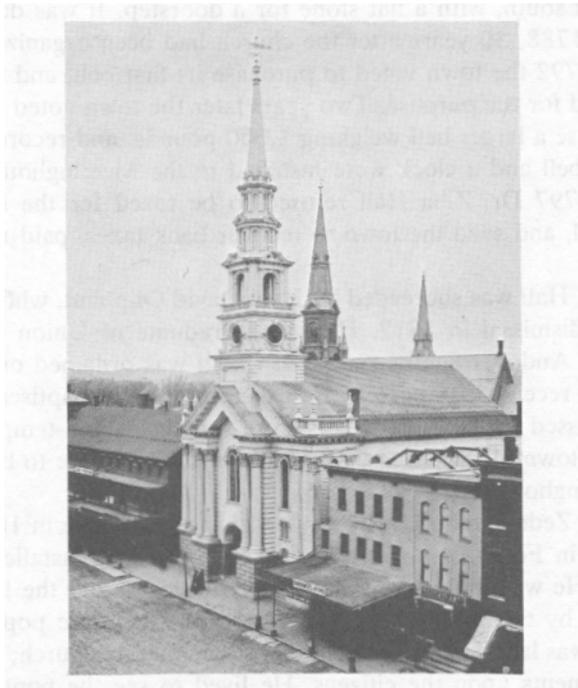
The townfolk voted in 1815 "not to suffer a stove to be put into the meetinghouse."

Rev. Zedekiah Smith Barstow, a graduate of Yale in 1812, came to Keene in February 1818 and was ordained and installed on July 1, 1818. He was the active minister for 50 years, and the last one to be settled by the town. When he arrived in Keene the population of the town was less than 2,000, and there was but one church, supported by assessments upon the citizens. He lived to see the population increase to 6,000, and five other churches organized on a self-sustaining

basis, each one drawing members from his church.

In the first decade of Dr. Barstow's ministry the controversy with the Unitarians was bitter, affecting the affairs of the whole town. Though a doctrinal controversy, it entered into practical aspects in the use of the Meetinghouse. In 1826 the town voted the Keene Congregational (Unitarian) Society use of the Meetinghouse 13 Sundays a year. Beginning on June 1, 1827, the town delegated the selectmen to choose 83 Sundays of the next four years for similar use. However, the next year the town voted to convey all the right, title and interest to the First Congregational Society. The town reserved the right to use the bell and belfry except on the Sabbath. The First Congregational Society agreed to pay the Keene Congregational (Unitarian) Society \$750, and procured a release to the town from that society of its claims to the Meetinghouse.

A movement to enlarge and improve the Common was begun in 1820. In 1828 or 1829 the Meetinghouse was moved from its location on the south side of the Square, turned so that the spire faced south instead of west, and placed almost exactly where it now stands. The



First Congregational Church late 19th century

land on which the Meetinghouse was placed had been owned by Abijah and Azel Wilder and deeded by them in 1830 to the First Congregational Society, which had been organized in 1823.

At this time members paid for their pews with cattle. When the market price of cattle fell, a hardship resulted for the church.

Prior to the opening of the Cheshire Railroad in 1848 the bell in the First Church tower was rung at 12 Noon and 9 P.M. each day.

In 1860 the building was remodeled to its present form, and the renovated church was rededicated in January 1861.

When Rev. Barstow had been minister for 43 years, Rev. John A. Hamilton was called as assistant pastor in 1861. Part of Rev. Hamilton's term of service was spent away from Keene as chaplain in the army. Dr. Hamilton was dismissed in 1865, and Rev. Joseph A. Leach became Dr. Barstow's assistant.

Dr. Barstow retired from the ministry at the end of 50 years and was made pastor emeritus. On July 1, 1868, he delivered a semi-centennial discourse in Town Hall, and this event was followed by a well-attended public dinner. Dr. Barstow died the first Sunday in March 1873, age 83, just 55 years from the day he preached his first sermon in Keene.

As a result of a disagreement among some of the church members a meeting had been held in October 1867 and the following resolution was voted: "Resolved that it is expedient for this church to colonize and form a second orthodox Congregational Church in Keene." Immediately 121 members withdrew to form the new church, and Rev. Joseph A. Leach became its first pastor.

The old town bell on the First Congregational Church having cracked, an effort was made to procure a new one. At the annual meeting in 1873 the town voted, as it had in 1840, to relinquish all its rights in the bell and belfry of the church. The First Congregational Society purchased a new bell, which was used for the first time in June 1873. The bell was tuned in the key of A and, when rung with the Unitarian bell keyed in F sharp and the Episcopal in D. produced a perfect major chord. A minor chord resulted when the Baptist bell, keyed in C sharp, was rung with the Congregational and Unitarian bells.

In April 1901 Nelson P. Coffin became choir master and was the leader of a large chorus for over 20 years. The church was also fortunate at this time in having the services of Edward F. Holbrook as organist; from 1897 he gave freely of his time and talent for over 45 years.

During Rev. Rodney W. Roundy's pastorate the church observed its 175th anniversary on October 18, 1913. In the period when Rev. Edward H. Newcomb was pastor, the First Congregational Church expanded its physical plant and built a two-story parish house which was dedicated on December 6, 1925.

Rev. Willis E. Smith was called to the church in 1931 and remained until 1942. During this period the church building suffered a major disaster from the hurricane of 1938. The steeple was tossed upside down and driven through the roof, barely missing the organ. Under the leadership of Rev. Smith and others funds were collected to repair the damage. The work was completed on November 8, 1939, and a new steeple, an exact duplicate of the one destroyed, lifted its white beauty to the sky.

Rev. Edward W. Meury preached his first sermon as pastor on January 7, 1951. He remained until June 1956, and during his pastorate the work of the church was greatly increased, which necessitated an assistant pastor. Rev. Roy B. Chamberlain Jr. was called as associate pastor with special responsibility for the work of the church school and youth program. Rev. Chamberlain resigned in 1955.

Rev. Robert W. Little was called in 1957 and remained as pastor until June 26, 1963, when the First Church merged with the Court Street Congregational Church to form the United Church of Christ in Keene. During the ministry of Rev. Little, Rev. Philip Kelsey served as associate pastor until the end of 1961. In this period the physical plant of the church was remodeled. A third story was built on the parish house, the old vestry was changed to include a chapel in the center with offices and conference rooms on either side, and a room for the day nursery school was added to the northeast side.

For an interim period of six months after the merger both Rev. Robert W. Little and Rev. William A. Hartman remained as co-pastors. In January 1964 Rev. Hartman left to accept a position in the New York State Conference. Rev. Little remained until December 1964, when he accepted a call to a church in Holden, Mass. The Court Street property was sold and the new owners demolished the building.

In January 1965 Rev. Stephen V. Weaver was called as the first pastor of the United Church of Christ. Rev. Edward E. Pettis, called in the summer of 1967, is the present associate pastor. In 1967 a new organ replaced the one installed in 1903.

However, a part of the past has been preserved in the use of a few pipes from two older organs owned by the First Congregational

and Court Street Congregational Churches before the merger. The essentially new instrument has been described as the only one of its kind in this area, with 2,346 pipes of wooden and metal composition. Among the exclusive features, the organ has a ruck-positiv division, a group of pipes placed to the back of the organist. This arrangement, traditionally German, is popular among European instruments but rare in the United States. Exposed pipes allow the tones to "speak out to the room."

The "Ministry Lot"

In 1787 the proprietors of the undivided lands in Keene voted to lay out, from these lands, 50 acres to be kept for a wood lot for firewood for the minister of the town. To be used for no other purpose, it was to be kept under the care of the selectmen. The "Ministry Lot," still intact, is located about two miles north of Central Square and west of Beaver Brook.

In 1854 a large part of the heavy growth of wood and timber was blown down, and the selectmen were authorized to sell the marketable timber. Later the proceeds were deposited in a special fund known as the "Ministry Fund," the income from which is divided each year among the settled ministers in Keene in lieu of firewood. Rev. James F. Quimby, pastor of Grace Methodist Church, 1943-50, is the last known minister to have cut his firewood from this lot.

First Baptist Church

The parent of Keene's Baptist Church, the one at Westmoreland, was established in the eastern part of that town about 1771 by Baptist settlers from Middleboro, Mass. By 1815 the Westmoreland Church had almost 100 members. Their influence soon extended to Keene, where meetings were held in the western part of town, known as Ash Swamp.

Under the guidance of Rev. Charles Cummings of Sullivan and assisted by lay preachers, the meetings led to the formation of a Baptist Church in Keene on September 9, 1816. There were 13 members. The church was received into the Dublin Baptist Association in October of that same year. Rev. Charles Cummings continued to serve the congregation, the second religious denomination established in the community, until about 1818.

A small meetinghouse was built in Ash Swamp in 1816. It must

have been an austere meetinghouse, for it is described as having unpainted box pews, with plain board seats on three sides, and a gallery. The pew doors were paneled, carrying an oval piece of tin with yellow numerals. The pulpit was high, with a stairway leading up to it on the south side. The window panes were of clear glass in large frames. The Ash Swamp Meetinghouse was little used after the reorganization of the church in the village, and was moved about 1854 or 1855 by John J. Albce, who made of its parts both a steam mill and a dwelling. (The house is located at 37 Middle Street at the east corner of Summer Street. The mill, a two-story building which was located off Portland and Woodburn Streets near the Ashuelot River, burned on December 17, 1856.)

The Baptist bell remained in the old church until 1852, when it was moved to the church on Winter Street. It was later installed in the Court Street building, and is one of two Revere bells in the city, the other being in the Unitarian Church on Washington Street.

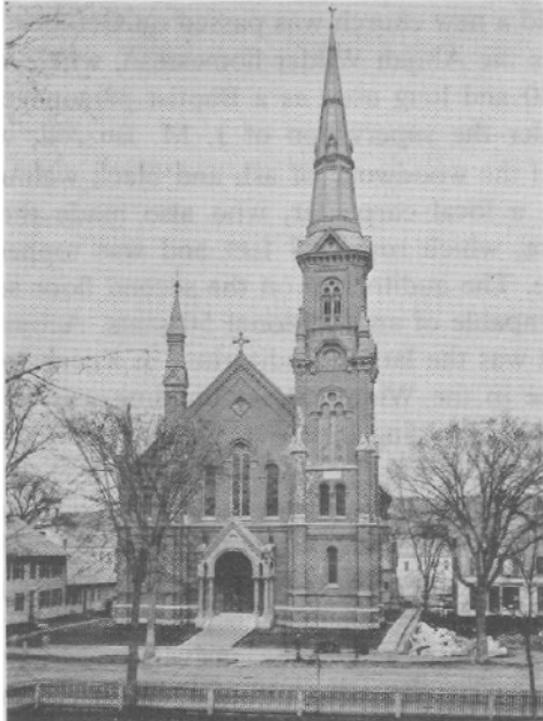
The first preacher called by the Keene Baptists was Ferris (or Forris) Moore who served from December 30, 1819, through March 1821. Membership remained at about 30 through the life of the Ash Swamp church organization, of which no written records have been preserved beyond brief notes in the annual Dublin Baptist Association minutes. For the greater part of this period there was no settled minister, and the church labored under discouragement and difficulties, held together only by the loyalty and will of a small band who maintained services to keep alive the Baptist faith in Keene.

As early as 1825 societies were organized to contribute to Indian mission work and to aid heathen children. On May 13, 1829, Rev. Edward Hale was ordained pastor of the Baptist Church in Keene and remained until 1831. He later founded the Baptist Church in Richmond in 1835. On July 22, 1832, the members reorganized as the Union Baptist Church. A Bible class of 21, as well as a Sabbath School of 25, was organized in 1835.

In 1838 Rev. John Peacock was called to help revive the faltering church. Under his vigorous leadership the membership grew to over 100, the largest in the Dublin Association.

Subscriptions to build a new brick church on Winter Street were honored, and the new edifice was dedicated in September 1839.

The name was changed on July 27, 1839, at which time "Union" was struck out, and the organization thereafter was known as the Keene Baptist Church. The new Baptist Society was organized in March 1839, its constitution signed by 29 persons.



Baptist Church Building—erected 1874, demolished 1968

During the pastorate of Rev. Gilbert Robbins (1846-57) the Baptist Society acquired its first parsonage, a house and small barn (now at 228 Court Street), purchased in 1853. The society began negotiations for the bell from the former Ash Swamp Meetinghouse in 1848, for which payments appear on the records as late as 1856.

In 1861 Joseph Foster, a deacon and strong Baptist layman, offered to install in the church a large pipe organ of his own manufacture, and the congregation voted to lower the gallery to accommodate the instrument. Deacon Foster and Charles Felt, another active church member, were in the reed organ and melodeon business, located at the rear of the church property, where they had purchased land from the society in 1853. Costs for the proposed alterations were met by subscription. The church annual accounts, begun after this date, list payments to choir director, organist, and a boy who pumped the organ. The Foster pipe organ was replaced in 1868 by an instrument which served the church until 1909, when the Eaton Memorial Organ was installed.

Upon taking the Keene pastorate, Dr. William H. Eaton (1872-89) agreed to lead in a much-needed building and expansion program.

The vote to build a new church was passed on October 17, 1872. The site selected was the Abijah Wilder homestead, where stood a house, built about 1820 and long used as a Baptist parsonage. The church, constructed under the supervision of J. M. Buzzell, was of Keene-made brick, and the woodwork of ash and black walnut was finished by Felix Snow, a local carpenter, who also made the porches and framed the spire, which rose 167 feet and was topped by a 5-foot gilt weathervane. The auditorium on the second floor seated 700 and had a balcony capable of an additional 50 seats. Acoustics in it were excellent, and it was the largest auditorium in Keene for many years. The final service in the Winter Street building was held on May 9, 1875, and the new building on Court Street was dedicated on May 12, 1875.

Rev. William H. Eaton resigned as minister on March 31, 1889, after nearly 17 years in Keene. During the pastorate of Rev. Ralph A. Sherwood (1909-17) a new Hook and Hastings pipe organ, named in honor of Dr. Eaton, was installed and became one of the most popular concert instruments in the region. Extensive repairs were made to the church building during the pastorate of Rev. C. Raymond Chappell (1926-35). During the pastorate of Rev. Lewis M. Blackmer Jr. (1952-59) a new parsonage at 315 Washington Street was acquired, and the old Sally Kingsbury parsonage at 25 Court Street became the Sally Kingsbury Parish House.

In September 1955 the First Baptist Church in Keene became the first of its denomination in the state to add a full-time director of religious education to its staff. The present pastor, Rev. Hugh Q. Morton, came to Keene in September 1960, and an assistant pastor, Rev. Richard E. Chorley, was added to the staff in the fall of 1961.

Plans for a modern worship and educational facility at a different location were approved in 1963. This building was designed by the architectural firm of Carter & Woodruff of Nashua, N. H. The organ was removed, rebuilt, and installed in the new building on Maple Avenue. Formal dedication of the new Baptist Church was held on January 12-16, 1966.

Keene Unitarian Universalist Church

In March 1824 seceders from the orthodox church met and formed the Unitarian Society, consisting of 12 active members and 70 associates. That summer Rev. Samuel Barrett was called to become their minister but he declined. Nearly two years later, in January 1826,



*Unitarian Church, corner Church and Main
Built 1829-30*

Rev. Thomas R. Sullivan preached his first sermon as the first minister of the society. It was during his ministry that the society erected its first meetinghouse, which was ready for occupancy in April 1830 at what is now the southeast corner of Main and Church Streets.

Money for the church was raised by a donation of \$1,500 from William Lamson, subscriptions, and sale of pews. The society started not only free from debt but with sufficient funds to purchase an organ, the first church organ in town. It was built by Henry Pratt of Winchester, N. H. A bell of 1,500 pounds was cast by Paul Revere & Son and dedicated with the church on April 28, 1830. It is still in use in the tower of the Unitarian-Universalist Church on Washington Street. A few years later a large clock (made by a Mr. Holbrook of East Medway, Mass.), a gift of John Elliot, was placed in the church steeple.

During the pastorate of Rev. William Orne White the demands of the society made it necessary to enlarge the church and by 1868 extensive additions and alterations were completed. Deemed unsafe, the spire was lowered in 1878.

In the fall of 1893 the lot where the church stood was sold to Elisha F. Lane, and the building was torn down in 1894. Land on



Unitarian Church—remodeled 1867-68

Washington Street, together with the house that later was used as a parsonage, was purchased and plans for a new church were drawn by Edwin J. Lewis Jr. of Boston. The cornerstone of the new church was laid on July 11, 1894, and dedication services were held on January 24, 1895. Rev. Charles B. Elder was the minister at this time. (As the organ was not ready for use, music was furnished by Beedle's String Quintet and the choir.)

In June 1900 the organ console was moved and new choir seats were installed. In the parish house the kitchen was enlarged, new wash rooms installed, a new recreation room built, a children's chapel constructed, and a new church office equipped. In 1945 the church acquired the property next door, known as the Gleason house, which was torn down to make a larger lawn.

Early in 1958 plans were made for a religious education building with offices for the minister, the superintendent of the church school, and the church secretary, and a church parlor for use of the Woman's Alliance and other organizations. This building was dedicated on October 16, 1960. A new parsonage, at 17 Wilder Street, had been purchased in 1957, and in 1960 it was decided to tear down the old parsonage on the corner of Washington and Taylor Streets.

The church name for many years had been First Congregational Society (Unitarian). When the Unitarians and Universalists decided, at the May meetings in Chicago in 1963, to join together, the name of the society was legally changed to Keene Unitarian-Universalist Church.

Throughout the years the Woman's Alliance has taken an active part in the maintenance of the church. In 1856 they bought a new organ. When the work of enlarging the church edifice was in progress in 1867, the society paid for the carpet and furnishings of the minister's study and library, Their interest in the church school has continued since its organization. The first May Festival was held in 1867. Under the auspices of the Unitarian Society, it was one of the most successful affairs of its kind ever held in Keene. According to a local newspaper, "During the afternoon a goodly number were in attendance and in the evening, although the weather was very rainy and unfavorable, the hall was crowded. Some forty people from Winchendon, Massachusetts were present. The Keene Brass Band, while the storm pelted, helped to keep up the spirits. The net receipts amounted to \$800.00. It was gratifying to notice all the religious societies in town were represented and a truly social spirit prevailed."

On May 1, 1873, a festival was held by the ladies of the Unitarian Sabbath Society, who for two years had been at work for the purpose of raising a fund for the establishment of an invalids' home in Keene. A booklet called the "May Flower" was published by the ladies of the Unitarian Society to aid the cause. A bequest from Charles F. Wilson, a farmer who had moved to Keene from Sullivan, was largely instrumental in organizing this project. A house on Beaver Street was purchased and the Invalid's Home was established. Mrs. Margaret E. White, wife of the minister, William Orne White, became the first president in 1874. It is thought that during these years the proceeds of the May Festival went for the benefit of the Invalid's Home. For many years the first Wednesday in May was the date for the Annual May Festival, and after a period of 94 years, the last one was held on May 6, 1961.

The first laymen's club of any church in the city was founded in 1889 under the name of the Unitarian Club, largely through the initiative of Rev. Charles B. Elder. Throughout the 34 years of its existence the club maintained a large membership and a sustained interest among the men not only of this church but of other denominations. Commencing with Rev. Dr. Edward Everett Hale, speakers at the monthly suppers included a long list of noted lecturers, embracing the leading Unitarian ministers of this period, as well as representative business and professional men from New England and New York. In April 1923 the club was merged with the local chapter of the Unitarian Laymen's League under the name of the Unitarian Club Chapter. The league became inactive locally in 1959.

Grace Methodist Church

The earliest available records show that in 1803 Keene was included with Chesterfield and eight other towns in the Ashburnham Circuit of the Methodist Church. Daniel Ostrander was the presiding elder, and John Gove and Luther Bishop were the preachers in charge. In 1804 the Ashburnham Circuit included Ashburnham, Rindge, Marlborough, Keene, Winchester, Westmoreland, Winchendon, Orange, Athol, and Fitchburg. From 1824-34 Keene was included in the Winchester Circuit. From 1834-51 it was connected with different towns such as Westmoreland, Chesterfield, Marlow, and Gilsum. In 1835 the Keene group organized as Grace Methodist Episcopal Church with 30 members.

In 1851 Keene became a "station" and Jonathan Hall was appointed to the "Keene Mission." A frame church building was dedicated in the pastorate of Rev. Silas Quimby in July 1852 with Bishop Baker preaching the sermon. The next year the building, located on the west side of Court Street where the present building now stands, was enlarged and a vestry placed underneath. Rev. William Butler, then of Westfield, Mass., and later founder of the mission in India, preached at the reopening service on November 9, 1853.

In 1867 or 1868 this frame building was sold and moved. The present brick structure was begun in 1868 under the leadership of Rev. Cadford Dinsmore. The cornerstone was laid on July 17, 1868. The cost of this new building was greater than the people were able to pay, but the work was carried through to completion and the house was dedicated on November 23, 1869. The debt at that time remained a crushing burden until June 28, 1896, when the indebtedness was finally lifted. Heroic efforts had been made over the years to reduce this financial load, and several men mortgaged their homes to help the cause.

The organ was built in 1869 in Westfield, Mass., and though old-fashioned in some respects, it has a splendid quality of tone and a reliable mechanical "tracker" action that is capable of serving the church for at least another century. The organ, originally installed in the balcony, was moved to the chancel in 1907. A large cast bell, the gift of several members of the church, was installed in the belfry, and for many years its heavy tone was struck in unison with the other church bells in the downtown area; however, some 35 years ago it lost its "temper" and has not been heard on a regular schedule since that time.

Shortly after the turn of the century (1901-03) the Norris Brotherhood sponsored a successful "Mission Endeavor" meeting which was set up in a tent on a vacant lot (just west of the old YMCA building on West Street) with guest speakers from the Northfield Bible School.

In 1939 the Methodist Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Methodist Church, South, united after many years of separation due to differences over the Civil War. At this time Grace Methodist Episcopal Church dropped the word "Episcopal" from its name.

On May 27, 1951, a set of chime bells was installed in the Keene church as a result of an original gift from Mrs. Elizabeth Harper, a member of the church, and with proceeds from the John Symonds Fund, held by the City of Keene. For many years these bells have been heard throughout the city of 6:45 P.M. each day. They are the first and only chime bells in the city.

Organizations within the church have been the Church School, the Epworth League, the Wesleyan Club, the Woman's Society of Christian Service, and the Men's Club.

In 1878 Mrs. Fanny Trip gave her property at 34 Elm Street to the church for a parsonage, and this remained the minister's home and study until 1954, when a new parsonage was purchased at 333 Washington Street. Rev. Philip A. Crane is the present minister.

The Millerites

History records that on December 25, 1842, a small group of people known as "The Millerites" closed a ten-day meeting here in Keene. These people, some of them substantial citizens, were the followers of William Miller who interpreted the scriptures as forecasting a certain day when the world would come to an end. It is told that on this certain day a few of his followers disposed of some of their worldly goods, clothed themselves in white robes, and gathered at "Sun Set Rock" on Beech Hill and waited patiently for this great event to occur. The following morning at daybreak, it is said, "they humbly and quietly walked back to their respective homes much dismayed." William Miller's followers were scattered throughout New England.

Saint Bernard's Roman Catholic Church

Rev. John Day offered the first local Mass in 1845 in the house of Patrick Burns, about four miles outside Keene. Mass was not offered within the town limits until 1852, when it was offered at the



First Catholic Church—Marlboro Street

home of Michael Riley on Marlboro Street. Services were then held in the Keene Town Hall, and Catholic marriages were performed in the front parlor of the Eagle Hotel.

Rev. John Brady of Claremont, N. H., purchased a frame building on Marlboro Street in 1856, which was converted into the first church of Saint Bernard's Parish. Father Brady became the first resident pastor in 1862. In 1866 Rev. William Hebert was appointed pastor and built an addition to the church.

Rev. John R. Power was appointed pastor in December 1882. His first enterprise was to purchase a lot on Main Street on which a school was built in 1885. Later adjacent land was purchased and work on the present church building was begun. Dedication exercises for the new church were held on November 20, 1892. Around 1900 a Steinert & Co. pipe organ was installed and a peal of bells was consecrated in 1910. The parish grounds consist of the church building, a rectory, a convent, and Saint Joseph's Parochial Grammar School. A mission church was established in Gilsum in 1967. The present parish boundaries include the townships of Roxbury, Sullivan, Marlow, and Gilsum. The present pastor of Saint Bernard's Parish is the Right Rev. Monsignor John J. Belluscio, and his assistants are Rev. Edward Duval and Rev. Joseph Sands.

St. James Episcopal Church

In Keene's charter Governor Benning Wentworth stipulated that "One Sixty-fourth Part" (3941/2 acres) be set aside for a glebe for the Church of England. There is no record that this tract was ever claimed and Keene's Episcopal parish was not established until more than a century later. However, the town contained citizens with Anglican or Episcopal backgrounds, and as early as 1800 occasional services were held by visiting clergymen in private homes, the Court House, and in the Congregational Church. During the first half of the 19th century one Episcopal clergyman who held several services in an effort to establish a permanent congregation was Rev. Nathaniel Sprague, who before his ordination had been one of the owners of the local flint glass factory.

In the summer of 1858 The Rt. Rev. Carlton Chase, Bishop of the Diocese, visited Keene and, encouraged by local interest, decided that a parish of the Episcopal Church could be established. He invited Rev. Dr. Edward A. Renouf, a Boston clergyman, to Keene for that purpose. Dr. Renouf accepted the call, and on May 7, 1859, a congregation was officially organized as St. James Parish. Ground was broken for a church building on May 14, 1863, and the first service was held in the present stone building at West and St. James Streets on August 21, 1864. The steeple was not erected until 1869.

Dr. Renouf resigned in May 1868 and 14 other clergymen have served as rector in the century since, the present rector being Rev. Chandler H. McCarty.

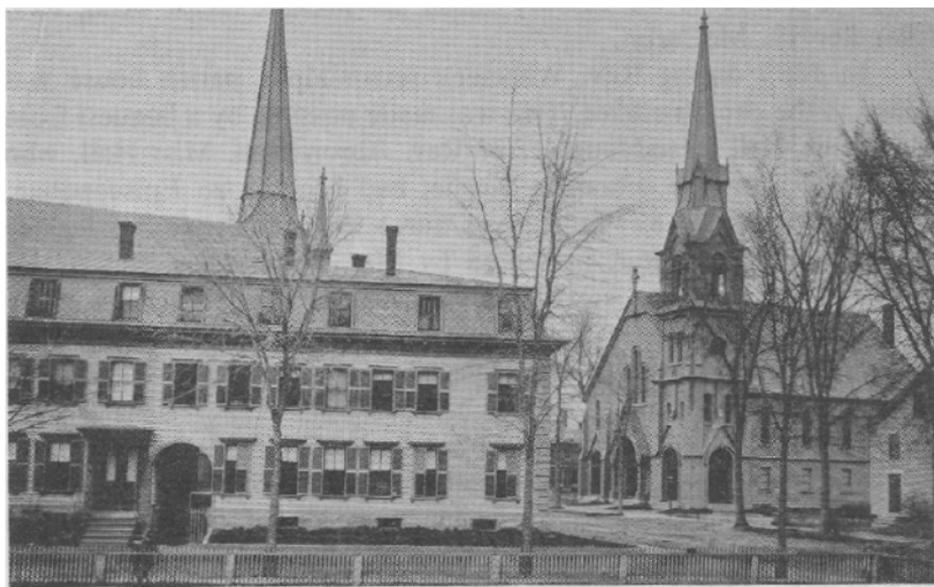
In 1899 during Rev. Wheeler's rectorship a parish house was added to the church edifice. This was made possible by a bequest from Miss Julia Hall, granddaughter of Rev. Aaron Hall. Miss Hall, who conducted a private school in Keene, had become an Episcopalian, and at her death in 1877 St. James Church was made residuary legatee of her estate. The altar, presented by Mrs. Susan King Perkins for the new building, was consecrated in February 1900. In the early 1960's the parish house was renovated through a bequest by Mrs. Elizabeth Griffin Bergh in memory of her grandparents, General and Mrs. Simon G. Griffin.

Julius N. Morse, editor and proprietor of the *Cheshire Republican* in the latter part of the 19th century, served St. James for many years as vestryman, treasurer, and junior warden. Upon his death in 1896 he left the church his home at 147 Washington Street to be used as a rectory, and this building has been the residence of the clergy of St. James throughout the present century.

During Rev. Pike's rectorship, 1953-59, the parish purchased the Nims Plumbing building on St. James Street. The property was renovated and for several years was used for church school classes. In 1966 this building was sold, and the parish purchased a three-story brick building on Lamson Street for church school and parish activities. This building was renovated for church use, and in May 1966 was dedicated by The Rt. Rev. Charles F. Hall, Bishop of New Hampshire, in memory of Jonathan M. Daniels, a young candidate for the ministry from St. James, who was shot and killed while engaged in civil rights work in Alabama.

Court Street Congregational Church

The Second Orthodox Congregational Church was organized on October 15, 1867, with 122 members and 4 deacons, who were all dismissed by letter, at their own request, from the First Congregational Church. One member from Marlborough united with them, making a total of 123 members. Meetings were held for nearly two years in the old Methodist Church on the southeast corner of Court and Vernon Streets while a new church edifice was being erected on the northeast corner. Rev. Joseph A. Leach, assistant pastor of the First Church, became acting pastor while the new church was being built and until its dedication on September 16, 1869, at which time he was installed



Court Street Congregational Church

as pastor. Rev. Leach remained for 15 years, during 13 of which he was the settled minister.

During Rev. Willis A. Hadley's pastorate (1903-09) the Second Congregational Church was incorporated as the Court Street Congregational Church. In 1911 the 10 cathedral glass windows were dedicated. During the pastorate of Rev. William O. Conrad the church suffered a serious fire on November 10, 1912, resulting in extensive damage that required major repairs. The pipe organ, badly damaged in the blaze, was rebuilt by Emmons Howard, and the building was reopened in 1913. In the early 1920's the spire was removed, as it was found to be in a weakened condition.

Rev. William A. Hartman was the last pastor to serve the Court Street Congregational Church before it merged on June 26, 1963, with the First Congregational Church, from which it had separated 96 years earlier. The church building was considered unsafe for use by large groups and extensive repairs became necessary, and in 1965 the church property was sold and the building torn down. A bell, which had been purchased, hung, and dedicated in May 1883, was recently donated to Tunghai University in Taichung, Taiwan (Formosa) through the efforts of church members led by Miss Elsie M. Priest, a former foreign missionary and university official. Miss Priest had returned to Keene when driven from mainland China by the Communist government. The bell was dedicated in her honor at its new location in 1966.

Advent Christian Church

It is believed that this small group was somewhat in agreement with the Millerites of an earlier time (1842), although they did not establish a particular day on which the world was to come to an end. They organized in Keene on April 29, 1872, and held meetings in Gerould's Block.

Second Advent Church

Another small group was that organized as the Second Advent Church. Its members met on the east side of Central Square around 1874-75, and their pastor was the Rev. Marshall A. Potter. Later a group of similar name was meeting in Central Hall.

Universalists Church

As early as 1860 Rev. Isaac Case Knowlton was preaching to Universalists in Keene, and a Universalists Church was organized on March 12, 1876. The pastor at this time was Rev. William W. Hayward. They held their meetings in the Town Hall, in the old Baptist Church on Winter Street, and in a hall on Roxbury Street. About nine years later they were holding their meetings in Universalists Hall at 17 Roxbury Street. This group was probably also known as the Universalists Society.

Keene Church of the Nazarene

In 1888 Frank L. Sprague of Keene attended the Methodist Camp Meetings at Claremont Junction and heard a Methodist evangelist, Hiram H. Reynolds, preach on holiness. That fall saw the beginning of a work known as "Bethany Mission," which was organized as a church in February 1890, with Frank Sprague as the pastor. This mission joined with the Association of Pentecostal Churches in April



This building was originally the Methodist Church, then the Nazarene Church—later partially destroyed by fire and rebuilt for use as a store

1897, which in turn affiliated with the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene organized at Pilot Point, Tex., in October 1908.

The first place of worship in Keene was a building at the corner of Vernon and Elm Streets, which Sprague owned. (Later it was used as the first high school gymnasium.) A disastrous fire in December 1945 resulted in the transfer of the church to 388 Court Street, its present location. The new church building was formally dedicated on May 15, 1947. In 1962 a parsonage was purchased at 327 Water Street. The present pastor is Rev. Alan D. Smith.

Sturtevant Chapel

More than 70 years ago cottage prayer meetings had been conducted for some time on Rule Street by William C. Hall. The call of God to establish a permanent work came to Mrs. Julia Reed Rugg. Although a special committee of the Christian Endeavor Society of the First Congregational Church was nominally in charge of missionary work, the responsibility fell mainly on Mrs. Rugg. After some difficulty in securing a location, the cottage house at 101 George Street was hired, and Mrs. Rugg, one of the prime movers, devoted much time to the furnishings of the mission. The first meeting held in the rooms was a service of consecration for the workers on March 10, 1894. The first session of the Sunday School was held the following day and was attended by 51 pupils and 8 teachers.

In the summer of 1897 the group moved to a more central location on Washington Street. After remodeling, these quarters were dedicated on August 8, 1897. Charles C. Sturtevant served as superintendent of the Sunday School for 29 years, from 1899-1928.

On June 1, 1905, the conduct of the chapel work was passed from the charge of the Barstow Memorial Christian Endeavor Society of the First Church to the George Street Chapel, duly incorporated under the laws of New Hampshire on March 14, 1905. The original incorporators were Henry W. Lane, Austin A. Ellis, William F. Holbrook, Lewis H. Dodge, and Charles C. Sturtevant.

A new chapel building was erected in 1913. Later Rev. Edwin Meyers made improvements to the building, and inaugurated an evening service in addition to the morning sessions.

In 1962 Rev. Kenneth Batchelder of North Reading, Mass., was settled as pastor. A year later the entire main auditorium was renovated, a new electronic organ was purchased, the parking lot adjoining the church was acquired, and general improvements to the church and parsonage (located at 15 Washington Avenue) were completed.

The Salvation Army

On May 7, 1900, the Salvation Army came to Keene under the leadership of Captain Jennie Bradbury, at 69 Dover Street. Over the years there were varying locations used as headquarters. In 1914 the Salvation Army moved to its present address, 63 Church Street, and at the same location a new building replacing the old one was dedicated in 1962. Many Salvation Army officers have been assigned to Keene for anywhere from one month to several years.

Mrs. Cora Besaw, the oldest living soldier, tells of the many street meetings around the Common held to promote Christ as a means to a better life. These were climaxed by a parade back to the chapel. During World War II, through the generous contributions of many individuals in Keene, a section of the building was made into a USO center with a shower, wash rooms, and a room for lounging, with facilities for serving food. Mrs. Besaw recalls that many times she and others went to the railroad station with little gift packages and coffee and doughnuts for servicemen.

The Salvation Army has for years held family programs and promoted the Home League, a men's club; girl's guards; Sunbeam programs for girls ages 6-21; a Boy Scout troop; Sunday School for all ages; a young people's Christian Service, and a weekly Bible study and prayer meeting, as well as Sunday services and street meetings.

In 1965, during the All-America City parade, the Salvation Army inaugurated its Timbre! Brigade, a musical group. The Army today maintains extensive relief services and distributes hundreds of gift baskets at Christmas time. Captain and Mrs. Harry J. Michaels are currently in charge of the local headquarters.

Seventh Day Adventist Church

The Keene Seventh Day Adventist Church was organized on August 17, 1901, with 12 members. In 1908 a church building was erected at 10 Fairview Street. Dedication was held on January 17, 1909, with 38 members.

In 1908 an elementary church school, taught by Edith Chamberlain Atwood, was conducted in a room off the main church. The school continued intermittently from 1908 to 1959, when it became a permanent unit of the church. In 1964 the church purchased a schoolhouse in East Westmoreland which offered more adequate space for classrooms and playground facilities.

The church conducts a young people's Missionary Volunteer Society, which was organized on March 14, 1908. An active Health and Welfare Society meets regularly to mend and press clothing for the needy and for families burned out. The Sabbath School, which meets prior to the church services, is called "the church at study," as Adventists the world over study the same Bible lesson during a given week.

In 1964 the church was redecorated. The Northern New England Conference of Seventh Day Adventists purchased a home at 42 Shady Lane in September 1966 to serve as the parsonage. The present pastor is Rev. Raymond O. Richardson.

Cottage Prayer Meetings

Shortly after the turn of the century (1902-03) the Grace Methodist Episcopal Church, the First Baptist Church, and the George Street Chapel were holding cottage prayer meetings in the homes of their respective members. The evening meetings were in addition to regular church services, and were most successful over a period of several years.

The Gospel Mission

The Full Gospel Mission, ministering to the unchurched, which met in private homes and even in the jail on upper Washington Street, was organized in 1907 under the leadership of Oscar H. Thayer.

Assembly of God

In 1907 during the pastorate of Rev. Willis A. Hadley of the Court Street Congregational Church Oscar H. Thayer was disturbed to find that his minister was not a "fundamentalist preacher." As a result Thayer withdrew from the Court Street Church and organized the Assembly of God Church, which was founded as a mission in 1907 to serve those who were not members of a formal religion.

After meeting in the homes of interested persons for Sunday gospel services, the small group began meeting in Thayer's office building on Cypress Street. Later the group moved to larger quarters in the Buffum Block.

Upon the death of Thayer in 1931 Mrs. Elizabeth H. Britton assumed leadership of the mission and continued in that capacity until

Rev. Howard B. Hawkes came to Keene as pastor in 1935. At this time Sunday School services were introduced under his direction. About 1940 the need for larger quarters necessitated moving to the old Eagle Hall on Roxbury Street.

During the pastorate of Rev. Almon M. Bartholomew the local assembly joined the national organization of the Assemblies of God. In the same year (1950) the present location of the church on Park Avenue was purchased, and the basement of the present building was used for church services until the building was completed and dedicated in June 1958. A parsonage next to the church was completed in 1962. The present pastor is Rev. Keith E. Terry.

First Church of Christ Scientist

Christian Science was brought to Keene by a member of the Mother Church, First Church of Christ Scientist in Boston, who came here as a visitor and later became a resident. Around 1898 this Christian Scientist and a member of her family began to read together each Sunday the lesson-sermon given in the Christian Science Quarterly. Another interested person soon joined them and attendance increased during the next 10 years. The first public service was held in Wildey Hall in the summer of 1908. The Sunday School held its first session in July 1909, and continues to function as an important part of the church activity. A lending library was established in 1909, and the first Thanksgiving service was held in November of that year. For some years testimonial meetings were held in the homes of the various members.

In 1913 the Christian Science Society of Keene rented a room in the Keene Gas & Electric Co. Building in Central Square, where all the services were held and the reading room activities were carried on. Two years later a change was made to larger quarters in the same building. In 1926 the society voted to purchase a house located at 105 West Street. The Christian Science Society was then incorporated under the laws of New Hampshire. A Christian Science Church can be publicly consecrated to God only when it is free of debt. This church building was dedicated on Sunday, June 27, 1943, with services in the morning and in the afternoon.

The matter of changing from a society to a church was brought up for consideration in 1935, but no decision was reached until October 1940, when a unanimous vote signified the readiness of the members to take this step. The card of the First Church of Christ Scientist

of Keene appeared in the *Christian Science Journal* in March 1941.

The first Christian Science lecture was given in Wildey Hall in 1909. Occasional lectures were given during the years from 1915 to 1937. After that a lecture was given each year, and since 1945 two lectures have been given annually.

Needing more adequate quarters, in 1945 the members purchased the present property at 74 Washington Street. The building was remodeled and the first service was held in February 1947. In addition to the service room, a reading room and two study rooms are maintained on the ground floor of the building. The Sunday School occupies the entire second floor. The dedication services were held on June 28, 1953.

Chapman-Alexander Meetings

In a large frame tabernacle erected on the southeast corner of Roxbury Street and Norway Avenue were held the Chapman-Alexander meetings which drew people from every walk of life, from May 21 to June 18, 1916. The seating capacity was 2,300. These were union evangelistic meetings under the leadership of the noted evangelists, J. Wilbur Chapman and Charles Alexander, whose general theme was "Evangelism Is the Hope of the Church." Delegations attended from area Protestant churches, and music was furnished locally. During the revival sessions most of the regular services of participating churches were omitted except for Sunday School sessions.

Congregation Ahavas Achim

One of the first settlers of the Jewish faith in Keene was Samuel Finkelstein who resided with his family at Ellis Court. Their home was the first place of worship for the Jewish people in Keene, with services of the old orthodox religion. It was also a haven for others of their faith who found in Keene hospitality, advice, money, and merchandise before going on to settle in other New Hampshire communities.

In 1907 Rabbi Novich was settled in Keene and services organized in the Bon Ton building, and on January 16, 1916, a charter was granted to the Keene Hebrew Community, incorporating a synagogue which was located on the third floor over Lord's Candy Store at the head of the Square. Later the congregation moved to the Elliot Block at the corner of Main and West Streets, and then to a hall on the ground floor at 18 Center Street.

At the time the charter was issued the name assigned was Ahavas Achim, meaning brotherly love. In the 1940's the congregation had increased to approximately 30 families. In March 1947 the large house at 91 Court Street, then owned by the American Red Cross, was purchased for use as a synagogue. This building was remodeled for a place of worship, with meeting rooms and a Hebrew study with classes for children, on the first floor. The second floor was renovated as a residence for the rabbi. Dr. Arthur Cohen is currently president of the congregation.

St. George Greek Orthodox Church

According to the Keene city directory, the St. George Greek Church was organized on November 24, 1910, and held meetings in the Grand Army Hall in Ball's Block at the head of Central Square. Present-day members of the congregation do not recall this early organization but refer to the year 1926 when formal organization occurred. Meetings were held in the St. James Episcopal Church for a number of years and later in several other locations, including the Bon Ton Hall and St. John's Hall. **In** 1941 the church purchased property on West Street, and two years later an annex was erected in the rear of the church building. The present pastor is Rev. George L. Papaloucas. An active auxiliary of the church is the Philoptohos Society, Elpis, a woman's organization devoted to helping those less fortunate.

Keene Council of Churches

For many years prior to the organization of the Cheshire County Council of Churches, there was an organization known as the Keene Council of Churches, composed of the pastor and two laymen from participating churches. They met several times a year in the member churches to discuss common projects, such as local broadcasts of morning devotions, planning for union church services, hospital calls, and special religious events. Upon establishment of the county group the local organization was dissolved.

First Church of Christ

About the year 1937 Rev. Thomas Dance, pastor of the Surry Congregational Church, held open-air meetings in a wooded area at

the corner of Park Avenue and Pinehurst Street. Services were held here during the summer months for a year or two.

Newman Club

For the past 25 years a priest from Saint Bernard's Church has been assigned to care for the spiritual needs of Catholic students at Keene State College in an organization known as the Newman Club.

On April 27, 1965, property at 232 Main Street was purchased by the Bishop of Manchester to serve as the Newman Center, and it was dedicated by Bishop Ernest Primeau on March 12, 1966. On June 12 Rev. Gerard J. Vallee was appointed the first full-time chaplain and resident of the Newman Center, which was officially opened on September 11, 1966, for the students. Father Vallee had been the part-time chaplain at the college for three years prior to this appointment by the bishop.

The Newman Apostolate, independent of the Department of Christian Campus Ministry and the administration of the college, serves the intellectual and spiritual needs of the Catholic students.

Radio Broadcasts

For more than 25 years many of the Keene churches have broadcast Sunday morning services over local radio station WKNE. For a number of years there was a regular program, "Morning Devotions," conducted by the local ministry under the sponsorship of the Keene and Cheshire County Council of Churches.

Jehovah's Witnesses

The Keene Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses was first organized in the summer of 1944, although meetings had been held in private homes as far back as the early 1900's. Due to the large territory it covered, including a part of Vermont, the congregation established headquarters in Hinsdale. Later increases in membership made it necessary to divide the group. A new congregation was formed in Brattleboro, Vt., and the remainder was reorganized in Keene in 1953, with J. Wallace Barford as the presiding minister.

The Kingdom Hall, the meeting place of Jehovah's Witnesses, was first located at 17 Roxbury Street, then at the GAR Hall on Mechanic Street. As the congregation continued to expand, new accommodations became necessary. The old Hopkins School, an historical

landmark on the Old Homestead Highway, was purchased in 1955. Although the building is in North Swanzey, the congregation has always been identified as the Keene Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses.

In February 1958 Earl L. Fielders, who had been associated with the local congregation since 1953, was appointed presiding minister. Although Jehovah's Witnesses have a presiding minister, the Witnesses are an organization of ministers. Each of the five meetings held weekly is designed to train and educate individuals for the ministry, endeavoring to follow the example set by Jesus and His apostles. This is done by calling at the homes of people in Keene and surrounding towns.

The Open Door, Inc.

The Open Door, Inc. is a non-denominational, evangelical organization, incorporated as a non-profit body, whose purpose is to teach the Bible and further the word of God.

The Open Door Sunday School held its first session on June 1, 1952, at 314 Elm Street, in a house then owned by Charles Medvidofsky. The name chosen was "The Open Door Sunday School," and this name was used until November 1959, when the organization was incorporated and changed its name to "The Open Door, Inc." Shortly after the incorporation the property at 314 Elm Street was presented to the organization by the Medvidofsky family.

Elmer S. Hildreth served as superintendent of the school from its start until 1956, at which time Morris Medvidofsky became superintendent and continued until 1958, when Charles Medvidofsky was selected.

In 1952 an evening service was held the first Sunday of each month, with a guest speaker at each service. These were continued until 1964, when a weekly prayer meeting was held. This was later discontinued in favor of a monthly meeting. The Bible School, held each Sunday afternoon, has classes for people of all ages.

Extensive remodeling has been accomplished in recent years to provide an auditorium, needed classrooms, and more adequate facilities.

Trinity Lutheran Church

The Trinity Lutheran Church was founded in December 1952, following a church census by a board of the Lutheran Church in Missouri, which had revealed a large number of persons with no active

church connection in the Keene area. Further study indicated that the need for a new church was particularly great in West Keene. A church was founded under the name of West Keene Chapel-Lutheran, so designated until 1966, and the first service was held in the auditorium of the Symonds School on December 7, 1952. Rev. William Jensen was the first minister of the chapel.

The dedication of the church building at 28 Arch Street was held on May 15, 1955, coming less than three years after the first mission service was held in the area. Since 1955 the church has offered a day nursery for children, ranging in age from 3 to 5 years. During the pastorate of Rev. Lester Boehm (1965-66) the name of the church was changed to Trinity Lutheran. Rev. Robert Luoma is presently serving as minister.

Saint Margaret Mary Roman Catholic Church

Saint Margaret Mary Roman Catholic Church was established in 1955. Previously all Catholics living in the Keene area were served by Saint Bernard's Church. Rev. Francis L. Curran was appointed the first pastor and resided at Saint Bernard's rectory until he was able to purchase a temporary rectory on Bradford Road.

In organizing the parish, Father Curran obtained the use of the Keene Junior High School on Arch Street for Mass until the new church was built. The first Mass in the new parish was offered on November 13, 1955. The first service in the present church was held on Ash Wednesday 1957.

The new parish serves the mission of Chesterfield, including Spofford, Westmoreland, and Surry. The present pastor is Father Samuel J. Hewitt. He undertook the building of a new rectory on land adjoining the church at 35 Arch Street, and moved in on April 5, 1965. In June Rev. Nicholas P. Rogers was assigned as his assistant.

The Keene Church of Christ

The Church of Christ in Keene was established on April 22, 1956, with Charles S. Chandler as the first minister. The church began meeting in a classroom in what was then the Junior High School on Arch Street in West Keene.

A Sunday morning radio program had been conducted for two years on station WKNE in Keene by E. H. Masters prior to the beginning of the new church, and the program was continued for the following eight years.

Churches of Christ have no central headquarters. Each congregation is separate and independent. The church in Keene began as a "Mission Project" of the Church of Christ in Marlow, Okla., assisted financially by other Churches of Christ, which purchased the property at the corner of Arch and Blossom Streets. Rev. Chandler served as minister under the supervision of the elders of the Marlow church for the first year. After this the elders of the Geraldine Street Church of Christ in Oklahoma City assumed the oversight of Rev. Chandler's work.

In 1956 the Chandlers constructed a minister's residence on land adjoining the church property at 69 Blossom Street. A large room was provided in the basement as a chapel, with other rooms doubling as living quarters, classrooms, and an office. The church moved from the Junior High School to its new quarters, where it continued to meet for the next two years. Later the minister's home was deeded to the church. In 1958 a house of worship was built at Arch and Blossom Streets. The building is of contemporary design, faced with light buff brick, and includes a sanctuary seating 225, eight classrooms, an office, nursery, rest rooms, and a baptismal pool for immersion. Dedication services were conducted on August 24. The first annual Bible school was held in July 1959. The present minister is Rev. John O'Brien, who moved here from Philadelphia in July 1966.

The Mormon Church

Prior to formal organization on June 8, 1958, two elders from the Mother Church in Salt Lake City were making visits to homes in the Keene area. However, missionary efforts had been started as early as the 1830's by the father and brother of the church's founder, Joseph Smith. In the late 1950's cottage meetings were held with two or three families present.

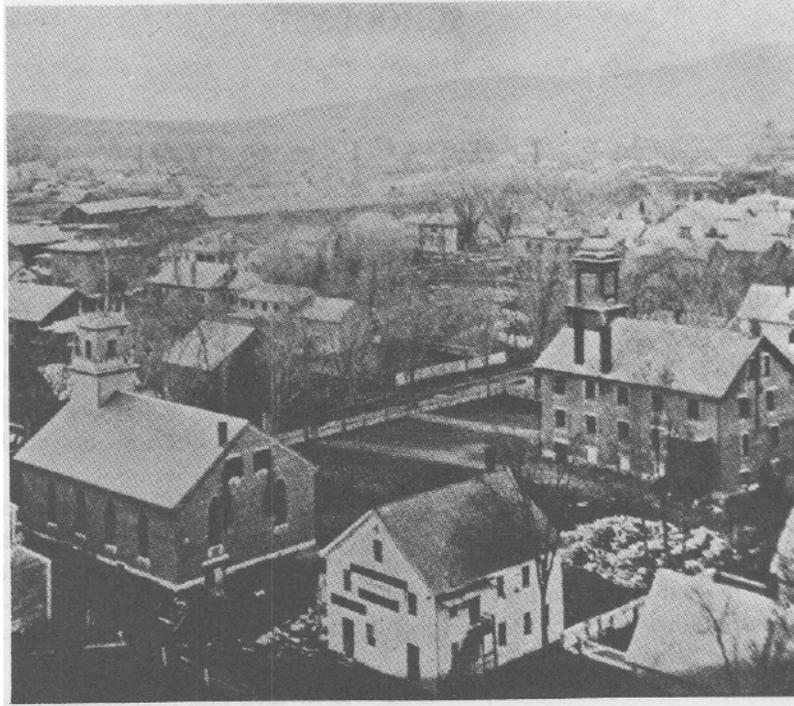
Following the cottage meetings, services were held in the Odd Fellows Hall on Roxbury Street and in the GAR Hall on Mechanic Street. The group, although very small, purchased land on the Summit Road to erect a church building. On September 26, 1963, ground was broken for the new church, where the first service was held on the first Sunday after Easter in 1965. This church is also known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

Campus Ministry

A small student Christian Association, with a charter from the

YMCA and the YWCA, was organized at Keene Normal School many years ago. Faculty members acted as advisers. Later local ministers took turns in counseling for two hours each week during the school year but eventually found that a full-time campus minister was needed. A Protestant Campus Ministry was set up in 1963 with Rev. Fay L. Gemmell, formerly pastor of Grace Methodist Church, as the first full-time campus minister.

The Keene State College Campus Ministry is now incorporated under an independent board of trustees.



"Gun Shop," Keene Academy and the old Baptist Church—on opposite side of street, where now stands the Keene Public Library, is a vacant lot, Rev. Hall's house having been removed—circa 1860's