

Old Town and Meeting House
Harpwell
Cumberland County
Maine

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PHOTOGRAPHS

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OLD TOWN AND MEETING HOUSE

Harpswell, Cumberland County, Maine

Present Owners

Town of Harpswell

Date Built

1757-1759

Builder

Probably Elisha Eaton, Carpenter, son of first pastor, who is mentioned in old records as the carpenter who furnished the sash and window frames for the church.

Present Condition

The building has been repaired and some of the sash has been replaced by new sash of the same size as the original. Most of the old box pews have been removed from the interior.

Description

The building is a rectangular mass about 35' x 40' inside with a 10' x 15' wing on the front containing the stairs. The building is two stories high, consisting of one large room with flat ceiling and gallery around three sides, - the pulpit being in the center of the fourth side. The foundation is of rubble stone laid dry.

The building is carefully framed with the usual system of sills, girts, posts, plate, and trusses. Over the outside of the frame 1 1/2" rough sawn sheathing is laid. Outside of this there appears to be a thickness of birch bark taking the place of the present system of using insulating paper. Outside of this again, are the clapboards.

The inside of the vertical walls is finished above the wainscot with lath and plaster about one inch thick. The paneled wainscot on the lower walls is flush with the plaster. Some of the original dado exists. The roof frame consists of a system of trusses with horizontal purlins. Over these are roofing boards, laid vertically down the roof, these latter being covered with shingles.

Other Existing Records

Booklet "Elijah Kellogg Church", Harpswell, Maine. Published by the Congregational Society, 1930. (History of Old Town and Meeting House and Elijah Kellogg Church).

Additional Data

The Town of Harpswell took possession of the old meeting house to be used solely for town meetings in 1341, but the meeting house had been used previously for town meetings as well as a church ever since it was built.

Although the meeting house is said to have been erected 1757-1759, it appears from old documents that as late as 1774, the interior of the building was still unfinished.

The first settled pastor of the church was the Rev. Elisha Eaton who came to Harpswell in 1738 and remained there for eleven years. On the occasion of the installation of the Rev. Eaton as pastor of the church, it is said that the church council met at the house of Lieut. Eaton in "the only plastered house in town". Rev. Eaton's salary was at first 35 pounds a year. At his death the town voted to pay his funeral expenses of 27 pounds and to provide his wife "with a Decent State of Mourning".

Rev. Eaton was succeeded in the pastorate by his son, Rev. Samuel Eaton who held the pastorate until 1820.

Elijah Kellogg, a young Bowdoin College student, was perhaps the most interesting of the preachers in the parish. While at Bowdoin College, he made the acquaintance of the farmers and fishermen at Harpswell and promised to become the pastor at the meeting house upon completion of his theological studies. He graduated from Bowdoin College in 1840 and from Andover Seminary in 1843. It is said that he hinted he should have a new church if he was to make good his promise to the Harpswell parish. Evidently the parishioners took him at his word for on his graduation a new church was completed directly across from the Old Meeting House and that year, 1844, he became the pastor of the church. He was destined also for a literary career and wrote a great many stories for boys and girls, most of which had their settings in Harpswell. His literary pursuits took him away for some years but he came back and spent the last ten years of his life in his beloved Harpswell. The new church which was built for him is still well known as the "Elijah Kellogg Church" and a monument to his memory is set at the right of the church.

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