Kingston Historic District Chronicles - THE CHURCH ON THE PLAINS I

The Church on the Plains in Kingston is also known as the First Universalist Church. It was built in 1879 and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979. It is an excellent example of stick style architecture, evidenced by a decorative gable screen at the front elevation, characterized by steep slopes, projecting eaves supported by brackets and diagonal stick work, all of which are illustrated in the church's exterior.

Located at 151 Main Street, this Church abuts the rectangular shaped Town Green, known as the Plains. Levi Bartlett, son of the famous Josiah Bartlett, gave the land to the Church. In 1878, C. Willis Damon, an architect from Haverhill, Massachusetts designed the Church. He was the son of a Universalist minister and was born in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. After graduating from the School of Architecture at MIT in 1871, he opened his Haverhill office in partnership with his brother in 1873 and was commissioned to design the church for the Kingstonians.

Certainly, in colonial times, the Church was the mainstay for the population in Kingston, but in 1954 it closed its doors due to lack of support.   Standing empty for nearly 20 years, it was finally donated to the Kingston Historical Society. Since then, the Society has had to struggle to stabilize the structure and to preserve its unique architectural beauty, especially its rare decor found in the interior walls, stenciled windows, organ and chandelier. The Church has a magnificent tower and inside is a most impressive antique bell cast in the 18th century. The interior of the Church and the history of that bell tower will be the focus in the next chronicle.

Today, the Church on the Plains is used for ecumenical purposes - weddings, funerals, concerts, lectures, community events and even the Thanksgiving Eve services. For a nominal fee, the Church can be rented by calling 603-642-5508 and tax-deductible donations for the church's upkeep and preservation are welcomed and accepted.