



# *Johnson Historical Society* Newsletter

May 2023

Happy Spring everyone!

The Historical Society has seen a great start to 2023. Three special presentations were well attended. Linda and Dean showcased the life of Red Hooper, Ben and Stacey Waterman covered their two-year stint in the Peace Corps and Alice did a piece on the Oread Literary Club.

The Town Meeting brought the first pie sale of the year. Many folks enjoyed their slice of pie. We are looking forward to Tuesday Night Live.

The Holcomb House is open two Sundays a month, except July and August, and always by appointment. Please stop and see our collection.

Thanks to everyone for your support of the Historical Society. We will see you all this summer.

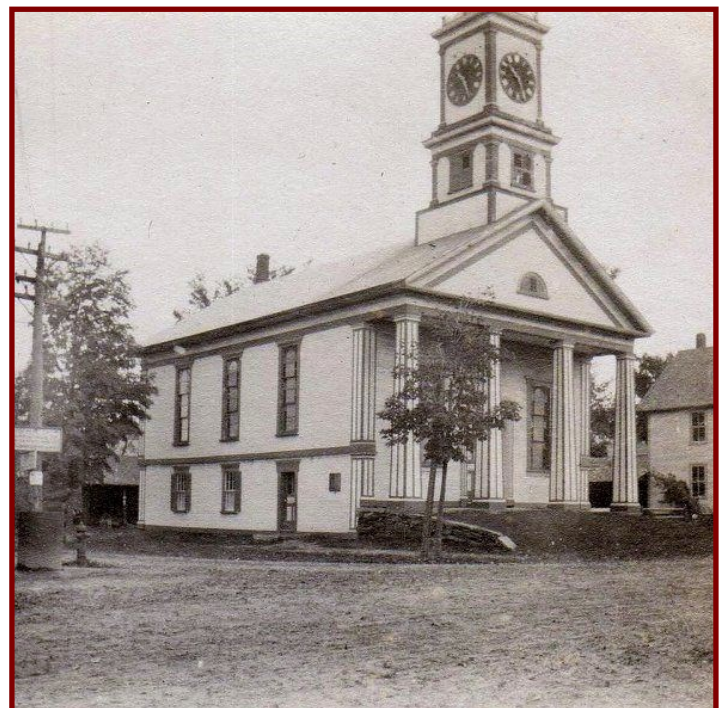
Dick Simays, President

## Past and Present Churches in Johnson

### Baptist Church

According to historical records, the first to organize in Johnson were the Baptists. As early as 1808, these residents met in private homes in the area then known as the Plot. As more and more people were joining the services, it became evident that there was a need for a church building. The first meeting house was constructed in 1833. It was located on the hill above what is now known as Legion Field on School Street.

In 1855, after 22 years in that location, the church building was dismantled. The timbers were used to reconstruct the church on the corner of Main and Pearl Streets. The stained-glass windows were installed circa 1894 and the clock was given as a gift from a deacon of the church.



*Baptist Church*

Nearly a century after the first organization of the Baptist Society, the membership had dwindled,

and they could not continue to support the church. Therefore, the members moved to either the Methodist or Congregational church.

The building was purchased and dedicated as a Masonic Temple in 1919.

## Congregational Church

In 1817 the Congregational Society was organized. This society held meetings in private homes until a schoolhouse, which became known as "Old Red Schoolhouse" was built across from the Normal School. In later years when this building was moved, a new structure was built on the same grounds. Services continued to be held here until the first official meeting house was built in 1832 on Main Street.



*First Meeting House*



*Congregational Church*

Church services as well as Town meetings had to be held there and by 1851 it was determined that both the town and the church needed their own buildings. The town purchased the building, and it became known as the Opera House or Town Hall. (Now known as Lowe Lecture Hall) A beautiful new church was erected diagonally across Main Street from the previous building. On November 12, 1851, the new Congregational Church was dedicated. Reverend

James Dougherty was installed as pastor on the same day, and he continued his ministry for 16 years.

There were stained glass windows on three sides of the building. Two of these windows were given in memory of Rev. Dougherty. The beautiful pipe organ was given by D. A. Barrows in 1927.



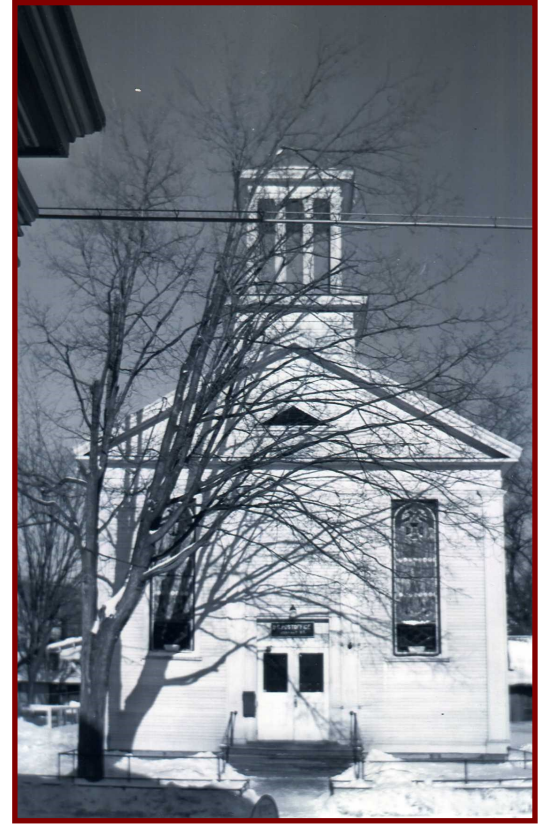
*The Pipe Organ*

## Methodist Church

As early as 1815, Methodist circuit-riders would come to town and hold a religious service in a private home or in a schoolhouse. By 1835 Reverend Lovejoy, who was holding revival services in a schoolhouse, organized the first Methodist class. Charles and Lucinda Dodge were some of the first members to attend these classes. Lucinda remained a member of this church until her death in 1900.

In the spring of 1854, Reverend William Clark was sent to preach in Johnson, North Hyde Park and Eden. With the growing need for a building, Reverend Clark drew up a plan and helped with raising the money for the construction. Pews were sold at \$100 each to help support the effort.

The decision was made to build the church in the village. In December 1854 a portion of Joseph Waterman's Garden (West of Waterman's brick house on the corner of Pearl and Main Street) was purchased.



Methodist Church



Ithiel Falls campground

Engel Sewing Machine Co. and apartments)  
One of the many ministers serving the church was Ithiel T. Johnson. He secured a parcel of land near the Lower Falls on the Lamoille River. The location is now known as Ithiel Falls. Land was cleared and the camp opened in August 1899.

People who attended the camp meeting in the beginning were lodged in tents, as well as tents being used as a dining hall and tabernacle. Now there is a dining hall, a tabernacle, and several cottages.

The building was constructed in 1855 as a Methodist Episcopal Church and continued to serve as the home of that society for approximately ten years. At that time, the church became Methodist. Lucinda Dodge deeded her house in 1888 for the purpose of a parsonage, with the right to use it during her lifetime. (Located on Main Street and now home to Steve



Dining Hall Ithiel Falls



Tabernacle Ithiel Falls

The camp meetings are held for 10 days each August. With declining membership, the Methodist and Congregational Churches joined together to become the United Church.

From 1937 to 1980 the vestry of the Methodist Church was leased and used as the Johnson Post Office.

The building now known as The Church Studio is owned by the Vermont Studio Center.

## United Church

The Congregational and Methodist churches joined together in 1930 and became the United Church.

Services were held in the Congregational Church. The home that Lucinda Dodge had deeded to the Methodist Church became the United Church parsonage. The United Church building served the community in many ways. The Boy Scouts held meetings there. Mother and Daughter as well as Father and Son banquets were held downstairs in the dining room. It was also the location for health clinics and blood drawings. Although several pastors served the United Church, one name Reverend A. Ritchie Low, stands out. He served between 1932-1947, bringing great recognition to the church, Johnson and the state of Vermont. He organized "The Vermont Plan", whereby children from New York City came to Johnson to spend

two weeks each summer with a host family. Several of the children returned year after year. Vermont children were also given the opportunity to spend time in Harlem.

The 118-year-old church burned on Saturday February 22, 1969. There was nothing that could be salvaged from the fire. The next day service, Sunday February 23, was held next door at Chesamore Hall. For two years following the fire, The United Church services were held in the Masonic Temple. Reverend Park Dickerson, N. Dean Rowe and numerous other people continued with the work of the church. In February 1970, a meeting was held to start canvassing for funds for the building of a new church.





*Ted Cromack, Dean Rowe, Park Dickerson*



*United Church*

Construction was started in the spring of 1971 and the United Church was dedicated in October of that year. This church is located at 100 Lower Main Street West.

### Nazarene Church

Holding services in a hall, probably in the hotel building, the Nazarenes were established as The First Pentecostal Church in 1904. A church building was constructed in 1907 at (what we now know as) 143 Lower Main Street E, beside the Whiting-Hill Cemetery. The first service in the new church was held in December of that same year. Later the name changed to First Church of the Nazarene. Over the years improvements were made to the church. The building was remodeled in 1923 with the addition of a tower to the front. A house on Stearns Street was purchased to be used as a parsonage. (It was the first house on the right side of street after leaving Main Street E. The house was taken down.)



*Nazarene Church*



*Lamoille Valley Church of the Nazarene*

In 1980, the church was sold, and it became privately owned. The old Methodist Church was purchased that year and some remodeling was completed. It then became the Nazarene Church. The old church building was later taken down to make room for Maplefields. A new church was built in 1992. It is located at 565 Vt. Rt. 15 E and is known as Lamoille Valley Church of the Nazarene.

## Catholic Church

As early as 1872, the Johnson catholic population traveled to Hyde Park to attend services.

In 1945, a search began for a house to convert into a church. The Community Gym and the Grange Hall were rented for catholic services.

Father Omer Dufault lead a search in 1947 for a church to be built in Johnson and land was purchased from Mr. and Mrs. Frank LeMay.

Construction was started on the new building in 1948.

The cornerstone was laid on December 27, 1948, Feast of St. John the Apostle.

Easter Sunday, April 19, 1949, the first mass was held in the new church with Father Omer Dufault as pastor.

On June 3, 2017, the last mass was held at St. John the Apostle, (117 St. John's Street) and the church was officially closed.

The building is now known as Jenna's House.



*St. John The Apostle*

## The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Days Saints

In 1992 a church building was constructed at 2548 Vt. Rt. 15 W and is known as Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Three years later, in 1995, an addition was built on the building.

Approximately two hundred people are part of this congregation. There are groups within the church for all ages, primary, youth, women, and men.

A genealogy club is available, and it meets every Wednesday at 6:30 PM. The church is currently working on a Family History Room.

Missionaries, young women known as Sisters and young men known as Elders, work throughout the Lamoille Valley Area.



*The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*

### ***Our Mission***

*The mission of the Johnson Historical Society is to preserve our history by weaving stories of the past with the present, using our collections of artifacts and displays, creating a legacy for future generations.*

#### ***Board Officers***

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