

## **FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF ESSEX JUNCTION**

### **CELEBRATING 150 YEARS OF SERVICE TO GOD AND COMMUNITY**

The year 2017 marks the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction (FCCEJ) located at 39 Main Street. As part of its 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration, FCCEJ will have a monthly feature in the Essex Reporter, on the second Thursday of each month, highlighting different aspects of the church's history. We invite you to follow this column to learn more about the church's place in and contributions to this community. You will see that it is much more than a place of worship. It provides meeting space for many local organizations and groups and helps to feed and clothe its neighbors. In addition, please watch for information on celebratory events during the year that will be open to the public – the first of which is an 1867 church service on Sunday, February 12. Please join us as we travel back in time at both the 8:30 a.m. and 10:15 a.m. services to experience a Sunday as the founders of our church would have. Attendees are invited to come in period dress.

#### **To begin our journey, here is a bit of our early history and how we came to be:**

The Congregational faith was one of the earliest in the Town of Essex with a formal organization in October of 1797. Plans for construction of a wood frame meeting house in Essex Center began in 1802. This building burned in 1838 and was replaced with a brick meeting house which opened for services in 1840. This brick meeting house is now the Essex Free Library.

In the 1860's, Essex Junction was largely a railroad village and becoming a self-supporting community with mills at the falls, stores, and surrounding farms. With this growth came the need for a church in the village. The Essex Junction Union Church Association was formed on February 14, 1866, by members of the Congregational and Methodist denominations with the Baptists as informal associates. This association of the three denominations continued until the Baptists withdrew in 1874 and the Methodists followed in 1897 when each of them built their own separate churches.

Land where the First Congregational Church of Essex Junction now stands was secured and construction of a church was started by February of 1867; and on February 21, 1867, the First Congregational Society of Essex Junction was organized with the signing of a constitution by the number of members required for a new church. The church building was completed in October, 1869, at a cost of \$7,826.06. It was wood frame until bricked over in 1913.

**Source:** The History of the Town of Essex, edited by Frank R. Bent, 1963