



**Oral History**  
Of  
*The First Baptist Church of Goffstown*  
[AKA Goffstown Christian Fellowship]  
200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

November 7, 1992

Summarized by William Hawkins

I would like to also welcome everyone to this our 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, most especially to those who have not been a part of our fellowship for a period. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those individuals involved in the planning, and gathering of the information necessary for this presentation of oral history. Many thanks and God's richest blessings to each of them.

Prayer

Praise to God

Thanks for His manifest blessings

Acknowledge the past members, their foresight, dedication, mistakes as men

God in His wisdom saw to it that at about the year 1790 there were three or four perhaps more Baptist families living in Goffstown. One of these families, possibly a recent new arrival, was that of David Bursiel. He and his family were members of Elder Samuel Fletcher's church in Salem, NH. It is noted that Elder Fletcher carried the Gospel to and held services in Goffstown and elsewhere in the area as was the practice in those days.

Then on January 2, 1792, a notice signed by David Bursiel, Ebenezer Hadley, Job and Noah Kidder, Philip Wells and others was posted, calling on the Baptists of Goffstown, to meet at the home of Philip Wells, to organize and take such action as might be necessary, to preserve their Christian independence and liberty. On April 20, 1792 a Baptist Society was organized with David Bursiel as clerk, and fifty were enrolled as members.

Committees were appointed to raise funds and provide preaching.

In the spring of 1793 Elder John Peak from Deerfield, NH came here and preached and in June of that year seven were baptized.

On June 19, 1793 a church was organized, as a branch of the Hopkinton Baptist Church. The Tibbetts Hill District was the center of the movement, along with the section reaching from the Wheeler district in Dunbarton to Bow Center. David Bursiel became a lay preacher, preaching for the two churches on alternating Sabbaths, in schools and various homes. His wages were raised by subscription – Money or grain - and paid \$1.00 per Sunday. Moses Gould, who was a blacksmith, by trade, one of those baptized by Elder Peak, residing in the northerly part of town, became the first deacon and was society and church clerk for a number of years. A man of sterling worth and convictions.

On October 13, 1802, sixteen members separated from the Hopkinton church, where a monthly church meeting was regularly held. In which all members were expected to attend; those who absented themselves from the meetings or from the Lord's Supper (communion) were sure to be visited by a church committee; expulsion always followed continued absence.

On September 10, 1812, Jacob Green was chosen second deacon. Meanwhile a church building was erected at Montalona in Dunbarton, and Abraham Gates was called as

pastor and ordained October 14, 1812. A union of the Bow and Goffstown churches was planned but due to some bitter feelings between members of the two churches they chose to go their separate way. The church in Dunbarton stood until about 1885 when it was hit by lightning and burned.

The church at this time numbered 25 members from the northern part of Goffstown and Dunbarton. Since there were many Baptist families in the southern part of Goffstown, Elder Gates set about the task of reorganizing the church. This was accomplished and April 27, 1820 the church changed its location to Goffstown Center with 60 members.

From 1820 to 1828 Elder John B. Gibson preached regularly and in June 1822 he became their settled pastor. During this period the church grew steadily under his ministry.

On November 28, 1828, 13 members were dismissed to form a Baptist church in Dunbarton. On May 28, 1829, 9 members were given dismissal to form a Baptist church on Chestnut Hill, Amhurst, NH.

In July 1835 a branch of the Goffstown Baptist church was organized at Amoskeag Village, and on December 29, 1836, 44 members were dismissed and a church formed which later became the First Baptist Church of Manchester.

In the early 1840's there were 150 members in the Baptist Church of Goffstown. By 1875 many of the strong members had passed to their reward or moved away and the church was in a season of depression; for some months no services were held.

In July 1877, John H. Nichols became pastor. His labors were blessed and the church once again was built up by his ministry. Rev. Nichols submitted a letter of resignation to the church in September 1877 which was denied by resolution of the church. The resignation was withdrawn and Rev. Nichols served as pastor till April 1883.

Rev. James W. Poland whom I feel, after reading many minutes of meetings was a pastor of note within the church a highly motivated and dedicated servant of the Lord. He was pastor of our church on three different periods 1844-1847, 1850-1854, and 1871-1874. During that time and in between and until his final entry in the record book on May 6, 1882 he was the church clerk, except for brief period, when he lived in Massachusetts or held other offices within the church. He was a peace maker within the church body. A true Christian's Christian. I believe the following will illustrate God's will in our lives if we only trust in Him. The following is quoted from the record books as entered by Rev. Nichols.

Quote, August 31, 1882 "Rev. Poland who had not been present for sometime on account of sickness, made a few remarks, expression his pleasure at being able to be present on this occasion, also his feelings in view of his death which he felt was near at hand." September 16, 1882, Rev. James W. Poland died today.—not having an enemy in the world. — He has been very feeble for sometime but was not expected to pass away so soon. On Monday he expressed to the writer of this, the thought that he should "die this

week” words that seem prophetic in view of the fact that on Saturday evening just as the sun was setting he passed away.” Unquote.

A large number were present and many pastors from surrounding churches took part in the solemn service. All present mourned the departure of so good a man.

In 1883, a horse shed and land 15 feet by 100 feet bordering the church property on the north was bequeathed to the church by will of Nathaniel E Kimball.

In 1886, was the first year that offering envelopes were used in the receiving of offerings and tithes.

In 1889 the old schoolhouse in school district #9 was purchased and moved to a site obtained in upper Grasmere Village where it was fixed up for a chapel, About the same time the church was repaired, new windows put in and other changes made.

In June 1890, at the celebration of the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper a new communion set was presented to the church by a group of current and passed members of the church. Their names are listed in the church records.

In 1898 Samuel Orr left the church \$500.00, the interest of which was to be used for the support of preaching. I would like to note here that this was the first of many bequeaths to the church were the Lord has worked His perfect will ad touched the hearts of many of his saints.

In the summer of 1902 the church was repaired and several changes made in the interior plus the installation of electricity.

In March 1905, a clear title to parsonage property was granted by Dana W. King Esq., register of Deeds for Hillsboro County, and by opinion given by Judge J.W. Fellows of Manchester.

Rev. Edwin Goodwin became pastor in June 1908 and the church more then doubled in membership during his ministry of 18 years.

From information available this is the oldest church in Goffstown still standing,

The Hammond Organ honors the memory of our Pastor Rev. Noyes D. Farmer, Jr. Who having been granted a commission in the Navy in 1942 went off to war in the Pacific and the Lord deeming his work complete called out his name and he rested in 1944. [*The Hammond organ was removed from the church around 2003 because we did not have anyone who could play it any longer. Nor could we find someone to keep up with repairs.*]

On May 28, 1943 the Baptist Society and the Baptist Church having worked side by side since 1812 was merged into the “First Baptist Church of Goffstown.”

In 1945 the church finding itself more in tune with the scriptures and the desire to follow Christ's teachings voted its independence by withdrawing from the progressively liberal Northern Baptist convention.

In August 1945 the Church voted to support its first foreign missionary, Miss Katheryn Evans who went to Quito, Ecuador to "Herald Christ Jesus Blessings" on radio station HCJB. She has remained with World Radio Missionary Fellowship and is now retired and living in Florida.

A bus transportation service was started in 1946 for the Boys and Girls activities, bible school and other religious needs and services. The bus ministry was active until the late 50's or early 60's.

Since 1934 when we celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the church building, many changes both spiritual and physical have taken place. Some of which have already been alluded to. One of the leading problems confronting the church was insufficient room for the conducting of Bible/Sunday School.

In 1947 the chapel at the rear of the church was dedicated to the Lord and a plaque presented to honor those members who made it possible. The former chapel located near Grasmere center was sold. In 1949 a Baptismal tank was dedicated in honor of former Deacon Harry Marden.

Our motto which you may have seen "The Church in the Valley" was pinned in 1958 by our Pastor Garnsey and used in the Goffstown News. It was later added to by Deacon Bissonnette and became "The Church in the Valley on Henry Bridge Road."

In 1963 our first member to be commissioned to go to a foreign mission field was Miss Naomi Umenhofer who was posted in France with the Unevangelized Field Mission.

In August 1970 a new entry way was completed in the front of the church.

All of the building additions and repairs made over the years was to maintain the appearance, improve comfort and most importantly gain added classrooms for Sunday school. This was effective but did not give the added room necessary.

It seemed that the major topics of discussion was where to hold Sunday School classes.

In 1979 serious discussions was once again started to expand the building to allow adequate room for Sunday school classes. These talks continued into 1982 and after, the plans for the building and the obtaining of finance was made. The Lord woke your truly out of a sound sleep with the realization that the whole thing was wrong due to the building configuration. (The new entry to the church would be behind the alter and everyone would be entering the sanctuary in front of the alter.) After explaining this to the body all plans were tabled, but not forgotten. Many plans and ideas were put forth

which had to be discarded due to lack of land area for necessary parking or other considerations. Then land adjoining the church property became available was purchased in 1986, and then subdivided and a portion containing the building was sold. This added approximately 1.3 acres of land area which was a definite answer to prayer. Up to this time the emphasis was the making of room for Sunday school then in early 1987 a group of parents and interested people in the church body and community at large had the desire and saw the urgent need of a Christian School in Goffstown.

I personally feel that the Lord touched the hearts of these people and the body, giving it new direction and emphasis, plus an increased desire to support the building program. (Read selected portions of letter written by Elder Douglas N. Locker to the member and friends in June 1988.)

And so the building, as you see it now, was completed and dedicated too and for the service of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on October 2, 1988.

One of the God's richest blessings to this fellowship has been the realization and establishment of Goffstown Christian School which was also started in 1988 with enrollment off 12 students in kindergarten and first grade. It has seen steady growth every year, adding a grade a year and now has six grades with enrollment of 60 students.

And so the building, as you see it now, was completed and dedicated too and for the service of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1988. I hope each of you here will take the opportunity to look through out building and if you have any questions please feel free to ask anyone of us here.

[Hand written addition – Would like to know how many people here accepted he Lord here at this church – would you please stand, -- ]