

Our History

On March 15, 1727, eight men of East Enfield, as Somers was then called, gathered to form an ecclesiastical society. On that same day, Rev. Samuel Allis, who had recently graduated from Harvard, was inducted as our first pastor. Prior to that, the East Enfield folks made the sixteen mile round trip each Sunday to their mother church, the Enfield Congregational Church.

In those early days, church and town government were closely intertwined. Town meeting minutes noted that financial provision be made for the erection of a meeting house and so, after much discussion about location and size, in the fall of 1731, a plain wooden meeting house was built on the northwest corner of Springfield Road and Stebbins Road where our North Cemetery is today.

Our third pastor, Rev. Charles Backus, a graduate of Yale College, arrived in Somers in 1773 and was ordained on Aug. 10, 1774. He is perhaps best known for mentoring about 50 young men, mostly Yale graduates, who were studying for the ministry. His school is known as the first Congregational Theological School in the country. He also oversaw the building of our second Meeting House.

By the 1780's, with the first Meeting House needing repairs and the congregation growing, a second Meeting House was built in the southwest corner of the North Cemetery. We have no pictures of this structure but an old description says it was made of wood with a steep shingled roof two stories high with large windows on each floor, a door in the middle on each side as well as one on either end.

By 1840, when the second Meeting House was in need of repairs and it was becoming clear that the center of town was now on Main Street, a third Meeting House was built and dedicated in 1842. When funds were being secured for the building, the Town of Somers agreed to contribute to the cost, with the stipulation that the Foundation Room could be used for town meetings and other gatherings. This practice continued until the town hall was built in the late 1940s. Our third Meeting House stood strong, the center of religious and social life on Main Street, until our devastating fire of Jan. 1, 2012.

Several times over the years, the need for space has led the congregation to increase the size of the building. In 1948, Pilgrim Hall was moved from across the street and attached to the existing Meeting House, on a foundation that allowed room for the kitchen under Pilgrim Hall. In 1959, the church added a parish hall, the Bugbee Center, a separate building for church school, office space and a library. Through the 1990's, the congregation experienced another significant growth in numbers and an addition was built in 1999 which joined the Meeting House and the Bugbee Center together as one facility.

On May 18, 2014, our beautiful new Fourth Meeting house was dedicated. Somers Congregational Church has been home to numerous pastors through the years, each of whom has contributed to the spiritual life of the community in his own way according to the gifts he had for ministry.

Information comes from our church archives, "History of Tolland County" 1888, and "The History of a Connecticut Town" by Davis and Davis.