

47 Post Mills Church

Thetford, Vermont

The Village of Post Mills, within the Town of Thetford, is home to the unpretentious, neoclassical Post Mills Church. While several village buildings are concentrated along Route 113, the Post Mills Church is located in the Ompompanoosuc River plain, east of the village center and river. The south facing Greek Revival building looks out onto a triangular-shaped common and the village cemetery. Fields that stretch north and west, with views of the Vermont Piedmont mountain range create a sense of solitude and peace. The Post Mills Church, also known as the Post Mills Meeting House, was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1992.

The Greek Revival church's most prominent feature is a three-stage bell tower that sits above the pedimented pavilion. The entablature's frieze, added during an 1855 renovation, surrounds



the sides and front of the building and was created from the doors of the original box pews that were replaced by open pews during that same renovation. A Seth Thomas Clock was added to the building in 1915. (Seth Thomas was a famous American clockmaker who eventually became known as a pioneer of mass production.) While the front and sides are uniquely adorned with Greek Revival detailing, the rear façade has little details and is probably representative of

what the building looked like before the 1855 renovation.

The bell tower continues to express the community's ongoing pride in the meeting house. The original plans in 1818 were for a simple square bell tower, but apparently the earlier residents wanted a more elaborate cupola and weather vane. Nothing is known about the original bell, except that it became cracked, and a new bell was purchased in 1879.

Although not officially completed until 1829, the meeting house began hosting services in 1821. Invoices from 1818 demonstrate that rum was probably used, at least in part, for the payment of labor. In 1855 the Post Mills Church was remodeled by West Fairlee craftsman, Hiram Powell. During this remodel, the floor was raised, the side galleries removed, the box pews were replaced with open bench-like pews, and a stage platform was built to replace the original pulpit that had been ten or twelve feet high, reaching nearly up to the galleries. In 1920 when a new floor and new pews were installed, some of the 1855 pews were moved to the gallery.

Inside, the sanctuary are rare examples of late nineteenth century stenciling and while most of the ceiling painting has survived to the present, the wall stencils were painted over in 1959. In the winter of 1989/1990, Vermont artisan, Leonard Spencer, restored the walls and ceiling. From an original sample that survives on the belfry wall, the terra-cotta, apple green and blue cove band was reproduced. At the base of the walls above wainscoting, a fan and scepter stencil was reproduced between the windows with a horizontal green band edged with gold

stripes surrounding the room forming a stepped pattern behind the pulpit. Wood-grain painted wainscoting along the base of the walls probably pre-dates the painted plaster and may have been part of the 1855 restoration.

Even though the church is on a much smaller scale, there is speculation that The Post Mills Church may have been designed after plates appearing in Asher Benjamin's The Architect's Companion and The American Builder's Companion. The three part bell tower, with square base and two octagonal upper stages, with the bell located in the middle stage, suggests a Benjamin's design.

Sources:

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Seth Thomas (clockmaker). (2013, February 28). In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Web Accessed May 20, 2013 by L.Morrow. [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Seth_Thomas_\(clockmaker\)&oldid=541304546](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Seth_Thomas_(clockmaker)&oldid=541304546)