

History of the East Harpswell Baptist Church

The East Harpswell Baptist Church was built in 1843 on land purchased that year from Isaac Rich 2nd by Stephen Purinton Jr., "in behalf of the proprietors of the Meeting House which we now contemplate building on Harpswell Island". The church was built in the Greek Revival style, the facade simply adorned with three pilasters framing the double doorways. The interior is distinguished by the pulpit placed on the entrance wall and the elevated choir loft with panels of painted graining popular during this period. In 1845 Pew Number 19 was assigned to Eunice H. Purinton and Pew Number 32 to Priscilla Lunt as part of Stephen Purinton's estate.

The Free-Will Baptist Church and Society of East Harpswell had been organized during the ministry of the Rev. George Lamb of Brunswick in 1817. The original members of the society included members of the Curtis, Purinton, Coombs, Rich, Snow Totman, Dingley and Raymond families. All indications are that the society used the ancient East Harpswell Meeting House, built at Cranberry Horn about 1767, as their place of worship, prior to the building of this present church. The society's greatest period of growth was during the time from 1840 to the Civil War. Other familiar Island names listed as members (Raymond Papers, Pejepsco Historical Society Archives) are: Coffin, Aubens, Hersey, Holbrook, Trufant, Doughty, Catlin, Anderson, Goddard, Small, Ridley, Toothaker, Stover, Eastman and Watson.

While regular services have not been held for many years, the church had its first restoration work and series of services during the 1930s under the leadership of Charles F. Huff of Orrs Island. The Sebascodegan Island Garden Club was formed during the 1960s to continue the restoration. The old church has continued as the site of weddings, christening and summer services, keeping alive for the future this special place in our community.