

(Date of writing is unknown – probably in the early 1950's)

It's a filial!

By Martha Batchelder  
Hampton Falls

Whenever you speak of the Hampton Falls Baptist Church to a stranger they reply, "Oh yes, the church with the beer bottle on top." And every so often a story will appear in a newspaper about it, not to mention all the people taking pictures of the church with "the beer bottle on top."

People will always go on believing that a beer bottle was put there due to a reputed donation from a local brewer for the church construction. But, this is not true. Frank Jones, the brewer, was a vendor in Portsmouth when the actual spindle, called a "filial" resembling a bottle was mounted there.

The hill the church is located on is known as Brimstone Hill, but many do not know the story behind the origin of the hill's name. Going back in history, one may find that an earthquake on the night of October 29 or 30, in 1727, was the cause.

Warren Brown's history states:

"At Hampton, when the first noise was heard, a flash of light was observed at the windows and a blaze was seen to run along on the ground and then the shake began. The brute creation ran roaring about the fields in the greatest distress. A spring of water which had boiled over ever since the town was settled 30 years before and never frozen was now sunk down so much that they were forced to dig to raise it, but were unable to raise it to its former height, and it now freezes in moderately cold weather."

The land shook so hard with such a terrible thunderous sound that houses trembled. Some chimneys cracked and others broke off. This event was especially noted in the South Parish (Hampton Falls) where the land shook the hardest on the hill where the "house of God" stood. Three houses, according to the history, had their chimneys broken, including the Rev. Mr. Whipple's.

When the shaking began, many people observed a flash of light at their windows and some saw streams of light running on the earth where flames seemed to shoot out with a bluish color. The flashes, no doubt, broke out of the earth and were probably seen by many. The sea was reported to have roared as well in an unusual way.

The earth, supposedly, broke (-----) casting up bluish sand. Where the earth erupted, considerable quantities of water were issued, even two months after the incident. One part of the ground was so soft that a man could not walk on it without throwing brush or other objects on it in order to walk.

Before the earthquake, a man could walk on the ground when it was not so soft. "Where the earth broke open was said to have been near Morton Hill. The smell of brimstone about the place for some time after, gave rise to the name of "Brimstone Hill."

In addition, there is a springy plot of land in that neighborhood answering to the description above. The late William A. Janvrin said he had been told of a place where the earth broke open. He said the area was south of Brimstone Hill on Lafayette Road by Whittier Pond.

## HISTORY OF OUR CHURCH STEEPLE

by

Pearl Marston

(probably in the mid 1960's)

*"Here is the church  
And here is the steeple.  
Open the doors  
And see all the people."*

Most of us can remember this little finger-play from our early childhood and for many of us "the church" and "the steeple" were embodied in the picturesque white church near the Hampton Falls Common.

From its original construction in 1836 until 1859, the building was without a steeple, but at that time, the graceful fluted white spire was added. The finial on the top was produced by a Boston firm at a cost of \$200. This appears to have been a gift from the Dodge family.

In 1892, the bell was hung in the tower and in 1894, the town clock, a gift of John T. Brown to the town of Hampton Falls, was placed in the tower, also the striker was attached to the church bell.

The town report for 1894 notes that the sum of \$66.00 was spent for "preparation for installation of town clock." There is no further mention of monies paid to the church for maintenance of the church tower.

During these 125 years, the spire has experienced many severe weather conditions. In 1902, it withstood a heavy earthquake, and in 1908 came near to being totally destroyed by lightning - total cost of reconstruction, \$350. Damage to the town clock at that time was covered by insurance. The hurricanes of 1938 and the 1950's taxed the slender spire, but various repair projects have kept it in good condition.

Over the years, this spire has been a landmark for ships and small craft at sea. In the "thirties," the dream of a visionary young pastor became a reality - our spire was illuminated. No other church in the area had a light on it, so ours soon became famous up and down Route 1 as the "White Spire" church.

Who can tell the extent of its influence on passers-by as it has steadfastly pointed heavenward? One can only imagine those who have been reminded of God's goodness and mercy as this silent witness has been faithful.

Now it needs the help of each and every one of us, if it is to continue to lift eyes and thoughts heavenward, if the booming of the old bell is to sound over the town, if the "Memorial Gift" clock is to get people to appointments on time, if the town common can continue to be the typical New England scene.

Perhaps we can improve on the old rhyme...

*"Here is the church  
Still topped by its steeple  
It stands tall and secure  
Because of the people."*