

FIRST PARISH STEEPLE & SPIRE

Applicant: First Parish Unitarian Universalist

Historical rendering of the First Parish building dedicated in 1824.



Project Description:

Dating back to 1824, the First Parish Unitarian Universalist (FPUU) is the oldest church in Canton. In many ways, the town of Canton and First Parish has been intertwined since their inception beginning in 1717 when new Land Grant settlers of Plymouth Colony dedicated the “meetinghouse” in what is now Canton Corner Cemetery. The town later built its second meetinghouse at the present day site of First Parish using it for both religious services and as a seat of local government. When the newly-independent First Congregational Church congregation outgrew the second meetinghouse in 1820, the present-day church sanctuary was built in the same location.

Located in in the Town’s only National Historic District, the FPUU is one of the most prominent buildings in the district. Despite ongoing efforts by the church to maintain this historic structure - including a \$54,000 project to restore the stained glass windows - the steeple and spire of this quintessentially New England church are in dire need of restoration. Rehabilitating the steeple will ensure that the historic 1821 Paul Revere & Son bell will continue to ring every Sunday and on special occasions for all of Canton to enjoy. The newly re-gilded weathervane, which predates the current church, will shine anew, drawing the attention of passersby who come in by road from Route 138 or who enjoy walking through the Canton Corner Cemetery.

The Canton Community Preservation Committee recommended funding this historic restoration project in the amount of \$99,120. In addition to CPA funds, the congregation at First Parish Unitarian Universalist have raised \$15,000 towards the steeple and spire restoration project and have secured an additional \$25,000 of in-kind project management services. If approved by Town Meeting, the CPA grant will be contingent upon the granting of a permanent historic preservation restriction. More information about the proposed project can be found on the FPUU webpage: <http://fpuucanton.org/about-us/steeple-project/>.