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## **NEWS FROM THE NEW HAMPSHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **PHOTOGRAPHS AVAILABLE**

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### **Amherst Congregational Church Records Now Available Online**

CONCORD, NH--With the support of New Hampshire Historical Society trustee Bill Veillette and his wife, Tracy, of Amherst, NH, the Society recently digitized and made available online records for the Amherst Congregational Church, dating from 1741 to 1957. The remarkably complete set of records yielded some interesting historical material about an organization that was at the heart of the Amherst community for centuries and played an instrumental role in the lives of many Amherst residents throughout the town's history. The records, donated to the New Hampshire Historical Society in 2003, are accessible through the Society's online collections catalog at [nhhistory.org](http://nhhistory.org).

The newly digitized collection includes bound volumes of church records detailing births, deaths, baptisms, and marriages—a true treasure trove for genealogists looking for official documentation of their ancestors.

It also includes records documenting the organization's history, such as meeting minutes and "warrants," which were essentially meeting agendas and public notices. Accounts of the church

expenses and assets over the years are also included in the digitized collection, including documents related to the construction of a new organ for the church.

Most remarkable is the documentation related to the ownership of church pews, which served an important role in 18th- and 19th-century societies. Those of higher social status owned the best pews, and a family's social position could be measured by the location and quality of the pew they owned. Through hundreds of receipts, deeds, bills, and contracts, researchers can now trace the ownership of the pews in the church, which documents not only what family owned each pew but also the location of the pew within the church. "From these records, we know how much money people spent, when they spent it, and their position in the church community based on the location and cost of their pew, all of which provides a window into Amherst society," said Society Library Director Sarah Galligan.

The collection also contains correspondence regarding the selection of new ministers and copies of some of the eulogies they delivered, including information related to Nathan Lord, who served as an influential leader of the church and community before becoming president of Dartmouth College.

The digitization of this collection allows researchers to learn about the history of the Amherst Congregational Church from the comfort of their own homes through the New Hampshire Historical Society's online catalog. The project also underscores the immediate impact that support for this and other digitization projects has at the Society. Digitized records are being added to the Society's online catalog on an ongoing basis, enabling a growing number of remote researchers to learn more about the state we love.

Founded in 1823 the New Hampshire Historical Society is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to saving, preserving, and sharing New Hampshire history. The Society serves thousands of children and adults each year through its exhibitions, research library, educational programs, and award-winning publications. The Society is not a state-funded

agency. All of its programs and services are made possible by membership dues and contributions. For more information about the Society and the benefits of membership, visit [www.nhhistory.org](http://www.nhhistory.org) or call 603-228-6688.

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