

Belmont Historical Society to present talk on 'Old Worsted Church' May 17

BELMONT — The Belmont Historical Society will host a presentation by Mark C. Stevens titled "Legends, Mysteries, and Memories of the Old Worsted Church" on Tuesday, May 17, at 7 p.m.

For almost 120 years, the old Worsted Church stood quietly in the northeast corner of Canterbury at the tiny crossroads hamlet sometimes referred to as "Hill's Corner" or the "Canterbury Uplands." Sadly, this unique church burned to the ground in 1958.

This Old Worsted Church has an unusual history with many legends about it that involve New Hampshire politics in the highest offices, a tragic love affair interrupted by the Civil War, allegations of spying for both the Confederacy and the Union, owning a slave in Canterbury during the Civil War, a female preacher at a time when women weren't allowed to preach, orphanages and con-man swindles, a destitute recluse living in the church and relying on the charity of the neighboring Shakers, the somewhat bizarre (or beautiful) decorations that adorned the interior of the church, vaudeville dancer Gypsy Rose Lee, lost pictures of the fire that were found decades later in an old family Bible, and the almost comic rescue of the various artifacts that were saved during the church fire. These are just some of the elements that make this a good story.

Stevens is a licensed land surveyor, history buff and Canterbury native. As a surveyor, his profession often leads him to old burned-out cellar holes and it also dictates that he read a lot of old deeds, maps, wills, and other historic documents.

As a history buff, he couldn't resist researching further into the story of the Old Worsted Church when he inadvertently stumbled across it. He spent several years interviewing people who remembered the Old Worsted Church, and collecting old photos, letters, newspaper clippings, journal entries, and documenting the memories and legends he encountered.

The presentation will be held at the Corner Meeting House in Belmont, and is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served.
