

UNITARIANS PURCHASE LAND, PLAN CHURCH CONSTRUCTION

That could have been the headline in the Burlington Free Press (had the Free Press then existed) on September 15, 1814, for it was in that month that Ebenezer T. Englesby traveled to Castleton to purchase, from Chauncey Langdon, for \$1000, Lot 17, a five acre lot in the town of Burlington, for a "seite" for our treasured meeting house; then only a possibility.

On April 10, 1815, a meeting of the First Congregational Society (as it was then known) was warned and held at Barnard's Tavern, and it was voted to build on that lot, west of the store lot of L. Tousey. A subscription was started "For the purpose of erecting a Brick Meeting House for the accommodation of the First Congregational Society of the Town of Burlington that they may be enabled to worship Almighty God conformably to the dictates of their consciences, and in a manner suitable to the religion they profess..." Does not that sound like an early 19th century expression of our present day Fourth Principle, "A free and responsible search for truth and meaning"?



During April and May of 1815, John Johnson, for a cost of \$3, surveyed Lot 17. On May 13, 1815, Englesby ordered 100,000 bricks from William Eddy to be delivered before the last day of

October, "counted and haked up (i.e. stacked) on Lot 17." The bricks are specified to be 8-½ inches long by 4-⅞ inches wide by 2-⅞ inches thick, and cost \$5.25 per 1000. They were delivered but not counted, and Englesby added a contract provision that the bricks would be counted after they were laid. Also on May 13, another 300,000 bricks of the same dimension were ordered from John Wetmore and Eli Kimball of Burlington.

This is the first in a series of articles leading up to the celebration of the 200th anniversary, on January 9, 2017, of the dedication of our historic and iconic Meeting House. The material comes from several sources, including Rev. Charles J. Staples, minister during the celebration of the 100th anniversary in 1917; the Burlington Weekly Free Press and its predecessors and successors; our church archives, maintained by Ann Livingston and Mary Gade; and a lengthy article in Old-Time New England Volume 69 (1978) written by William Lamson Warren, entitled "Peter Banner, Architect of the Burlington Church."

-Submitted by Woody Fulton

