

## PART X: 1866-1874

Following the Civil War Keene embarked upon a period of renewed growth, including both industrial and civic improvements. The Fourth of July 1866 was an occasion for patriotic festivities, with ringing of church bells and firing of cannon. The parade included the usual procession of "Antiques and Horribles," comic floats which frequently poked good-natured fun at local institutions and activities. Local firemen, visiting companies from neighboring communities, and bands from Ashburnham and Gardner, Mass., Unionville (a name applied to East Swanzey), and Keene provided martial music. In the afternoon there was a muster contest between crews of the hand-pumped fire engines, and an oration by Rev. William Gaylord at the Town Hall. The day ended with evening fireworks, as did so many "Glorious Fourths" in Keene.

A unique feature of the 1866 celebration was to have been an ascension in the balloon "Emporia" by Professor Allen of Providence. The event, set for the east side of the Square on the open lots created by the October 1865 fire, never came off due to high winds, which was a disappointment to all but the tavern-keepers. It was not Keene's first proposed balloon ascension, however. An earlier event sponsored by the Cheshire Agricultural Society was scheduled for September 19, 1860, by Professor H. M. Spencer of Winsted, Conn., but this was also called off at the last minute.

In 1866 the Cheshire Railroad erected new brick shops, 415 feet long, under the direction of Francis A. Perry, master mechanic of the road. Dedication of the new building was held in April 1867 with a supper for 800 and dancing until 2 A.M. Perry received a patent for an improved spark arrester for locomotives in 1874, and a number of the locally built wood-burning balloon-stacked engines equipped with the device bore names honoring the railroad's leaders, "David Upton," 1866; "F. A. Perry," 1870; "Samuel Gould," 1870; and the "Thomas Thatcher." The railroad's extensive service and repair shops soon became a major Keene industry, and a pioneer labor organization, the Sovereigns of Industry, Keene Council No. 5, was formed in August 1874.

Huge woodpiles lined a great part of the yards and Railroad Street; area farmers made extra money by providing fuel for the locomotives. Special excursions were popular such as the one on August

28, 1869, to Bellows Falls, when 100 citizens and the Keene Brass Band went to honor President Ulysses S. Grant and party, including his wife and two children, during their brief stopover en route to Saratoga, N. Y.

The failure of the town well and cisterns during the great fire of October 19, 1865, prompted renewed agitation in favor of a water system for the town. The subject had been considered by industrial interests and the public for many years without result, despite the studies made in 1861 and 1862. A committee appointed at the annual meeting in 1866 selected Goose Pond as a source for such an enterprise. The matter was again postponed, but a special meeting was called in October 1867, and authorization for the project was given in December. Pipe was finally laid and water introduced to the Square in November 1869, and to neighboring areas of the town shortly thereafter for an original system of 48 hydrants. The town well at the head of Main Street was soon filled in and a bandstand with six lamps was erected in August 1872 on the site next to the "Walker" or "Auction Elm." A third fire engine, Niagara, was purchased in 1867, and moves to acquire a steam fire engine were begun soon after the water system had been inaugurated. The town's first street sprinkler made its appearance on the dusty streets in May 1872. Proposals were made in 1870 for a sewerage system in the town.

Despite the great advantages to the community, there were some who opposed the water system because of the expense involved. Soon after the introduction of water to the village a comic poster, "Grand Celebration, Introduction of Swale Juice in Keene," appeared, a satire in which the critics were vigorously lampooned, along with numerous local characters and institutions. In August 1870 a public watering trough, designed and built by John Humphrey, with accommodations for the public, horses and cattle, and for dogs drinking from a lower basin, was erected at the head of Main Street. An idler in the Square counted 267 people and 311 horses and cattle served from 6 A.M. to 7 PM on a May day in 1872, attesting to the usefulness of such a public convenience. An octagon-shaped auxiliary reservoir was constructed in the present Robin Hood Park area in 1872, known as the Beech Hill Reservoir.

At a council held in October 1867 it was decided to organize another Congregational Church, to be known as the Second Congregational Church in Keene, and formed of about 125 members dismissed from the First Church for that purpose. The new group was led by Rev. Joseph Allen Leach, formerly the associate pastor with



*Watering trough and drinking fountain erected 1870  
against background of the old Buffum Block*

Rev. Barstow. Rev. Leach, assisted by his wife, also taught a successful private school for poor boys in Keene. In December the new congregation voted to build a house of worship, and land was purchased on Court Street across from their temporary meeting place. The church building was dedicated on September 16, 1869, a William Johnson pipe organ was installed in 1870, and active parish organizations were formed.

Rev. William Herbert of the Catholic parish in Keene succeeded Rev. Bernard O'Hara who died in January 1866. Under Rev. Herbert a vestry and three living rooms were added to the church building on Marlboro Street, where the pastor had his residence. He was succeeded in 1869 by Rev. Daniel W. Murphy, who enlarged the church buildings and installed an organ. A Second Advent Church under Marshall A. Potter was active for a number of years; the Advent Christian Church was organized in April 1872.

The Unitarian Church was remodeled and redecored during 1867 and 1868. The seating was increased from 430 to 600, a tall steeple, a William Nutting pipe organ ("one of the largest instruments in the state") installed, and a new tower clock added. The church was

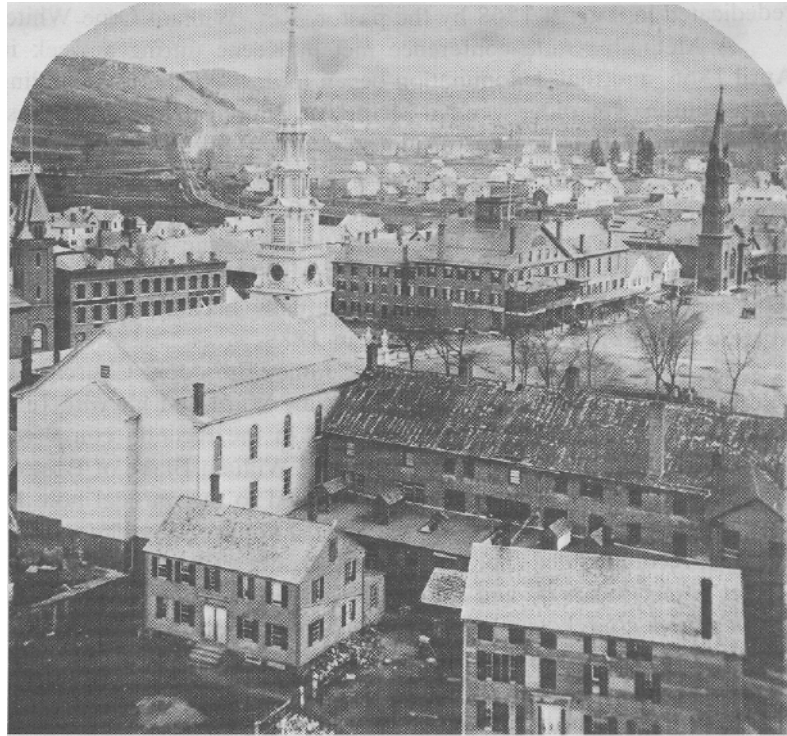
rededicated in August 1868 by the pastor, Rev. William Orne White.

A Methodist state conference met in Keene during a week in April 1866, and that denomination began to devise means of building a new church. The older wooden Methodist Church was moved across Court Street to the site later occupied by the Baptist Church, and a brick Methodist Church was erected from plans by the Boston architect, Shepard S. Woodcock. Grace Methodist Episcopal Church was dedicated on November 23, 1869, and its pipe organ (by the firm of Steer & Turner) was installed at this time. The former church was soon moved to Vernon Street, and eventually became the Bethany Mission organized by the Methodists in 1889.

The first service in the present St. James Episcopal Church was held in 1864. The bell, a gift of D. Henshaw Ward and his wife Julia F. Ward, arrived in Keene and was hung in the recently completed tower during the fall of 1869. A product of William Blake of Boston, the bell weighed 3,087 pounds and was tuned to the musical note D. Rev. Austin V. Tilton, pastor of the Baptist congregation from 1869 to 1872, recommended that his people consider expansion from their Winter Street location, and under the pastorate of Dr. William H. Eaton a brick church was erected from plans of Shepard S. Woodcock, and the cornerstone was set on August 6, 1873.

Another destructive fire had occurred on August 12, 1867, which destroyed most Mechanic Street shops, as well as several nearby dwellings. The fire spread so quickly that workmen were forced to jump from windows to escape the flames. In about an hour and a half 17 or 18 buildings were reduced to ashes. The fire was kept from spreading to Court Street by pulling down a wooden building that stood between the two areas. Another mill fire in 1869 destroyed the Ralston Street industrial buildings, and in 1873 a blaze ravaged woodsheds and storehouses of Faulkner & Colony mills.

Buildings were replaced on the east side of the Square, including structures by Charles Stone and Charles Bridgman in 1866, and in 1870-71 the Bank Block by the Cheshire Provident Institution. A matching block was erected by Timothy Colony. The construction of these blocks was hampered by an earthquake which occurred when they were nearly completed. Fortunately there was no serious damage, although a construction worker had been killed in a fall earlier during the work. Below the ground were found logs and tree stumps preserved by the moisture of the old Town Brook, some of which were thought to date from early geologic periods; similar wood was found elsewhere in the Square during building construction.



*View from Baptist Church steeple, showing old Unitarian Church, corner of Main and Church Streets and, in the distance, the old Catholic Church on Marlboro Street.*

Elbridge Clarke developed several wooden buildings and the Albe Cady house into what became known as Clarke's Block. Morgan J. Sherman, landlord of the Cheshire House from 1866, built for the hotel a reputation as a leading New England hostelry. Brick buildings were erected at a number of places in and around the business district. About 75 new homes were built in the town during this period.

In May 1874 citizens purchased 25 pairs of English sparrows which were set free in the park at Central Square in an effort to further beautify the village. Birdhouses were even installed in the park.

A cast steel bell by the British firm of Naylor & Vickers Co., Sheffield, was placed in the tower of the Town Hall early in 1868, the gift of a public-spirited citizen.

In 1870 Fred A. Barker built a residential block beside the Methodist Church on Court Street. It was his plan to dispose of the property by means of lottery tickets at \$1 apiece. Only a portion of the tickets

were sold, however, and the drawing held at the "Grand Musical Jubilee" staged in March awarded only a part of the prize; the other apartments were sold individually. The scheme was not without its problems; the price of the block was reported at \$15,000, and there were financial difficulties.

In 1873 the Philadelphia firm of Sanford & Everts published a large wall map of the town showing the many new buildings and other properties as well as proposed city ward divisions.

On July 1, 1868, the entire town joined in a celebration honoring Rev. Dr. Zedekiah S. Barstow's 50 years as pastor in Keene and his formal retirement. The First Church was decorated for the occasion, and Rev. Barstow, wearing robes of the period of his ordination in 1818, delivered an historical sermon. This was followed by a procession to the Town Hall and a banquet served to 600. Speeches by town leaders and pastors of all Keene churches recognized the contributions made by Dr. Barstow to his church and community. The last minister settled by the town before the final separation of civil and church authority, Dr. Barstow was an earnest and powerful champion of education, temperance, and all good causes. The pastor and his wife celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in August at their residence, the historic Wyman Tavern on Main Street. Mrs. Barstow died in 1869, and the pastor on March 1, 1873, on the 55th anniversary of his first appearance in the Keene pulpit.

Keene's first Memorial Day observance was held May 30, 1868, with a procession of soldiers and sailors, fire companies, school children, units of the Grand Army of the Republic, the Keene Brass Band, and a decorated floral cart drawn by four white horses. At Woodland Cemetery, where a receiving tomb had been erected in 1866, graves were decorated, and Rev. William Orne White gave the oration.

Masonic organization in Keene was increased with the formation of Hugh de Payens Commandery, Knights Templar No. 7 in 1866 and the Lodge of the Temple No. 88 in 1869. The Keene Masons entertained Fitchburg units with colorful parades and ceremonies in May 1870. The Elliot building, St. John's Block, at the corner of West Street, was again remodeled in 1868, the hall enlarged for the Masonic fraternity. In 1870 the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite was established as the Winslow Lewis Lodge of Perfection, revived in 1884. The Odd Fellows organization was meeting in its hall in Ball's Block, where Monadnock Encampment No. 10 was formed in 1868, and Rebekah Degree Lodge No. 6 was instituted in 1871. The pioneer GAR unit formed in town in February 1868 was later called the John Sedgwick Post No. 4. The vet-

eran group became inactive after 1872 but was revived in 1880, when it had some 300 members.

The Young Men's Christian Union, begun somewhat earlier, and the Keene Social Union organized in 1873, became the Young Men's Christian Association. However, this organization which was dedicated to Bible study did not last long. The Keene YMCA was not definitely organized until November 1885. In October 1871 the Keene Natural History Society was formed "for the promotion of scientific knowledge in Keene and Cheshire County" largely through the leadership of George A. Wheelock. Veterans of the Civil War also formed a military organization, the Keene Light Infantry, with armory facilities on Vernon Street.

In 1871 the Ladies Sewing Society of the Unitarian Church, a group which had been formed as a Sabbath School Society in 1833, voted to establish an Invalid's Home in Keene. Led by Mrs. Margaret E. White, wife of Rev. William Orne White, and aided by a legacy from Charles F. Wilson, the proceeds of a May Festival, and funds from a small pamphlet titled *The May Flower*, a house on Beaver street at the corner of Grant Street was acquired and the organization was incorporated in November 1874.

Among prominent speakers and performers to appear in town was Petroleum V. Nasby (David Ross Locke), famed humorist, who lectured on "The Lords of Creation" in December 1869. This was a comic treatment of the pioneer woman suffrage movement just beginning to appear. General Tom Thumb, his wife, and Commodore Nutt, celebrated midgets, appeared in June 1868; George Francis Train, author and financier, spoke in April 1871, and Thomas Nast, the cartoonist who created the popular image of Santa Claus, as well as the Republican elephant and Democratic donkey symbols, appeared at the Town Hall in December 1873. Anna Harriette Leonowens, British tutor to the royal household of Siam from 1862 to 1867, whose adventures were the inspiration for *The King and I*, lectured at the Town Hall in February 1873, and Ann Eliza Young, the 19th wife of Mormon leader Brigham Young, spoke in December 1874.

Whitmore & Clark's Minstrels played a two-day engagement at the Town Hall in December 1867. This troupe had been organized in 1866 by George Clark and Osceola A. Whitmore of Vermont. For a quarter of a century the company toured each season and many of the performers were Keene and Swanzey citizens. In preparation for their road appearances they rehearsed in Keene, where many made their homes. Their colorful street parade at noon served to advertise

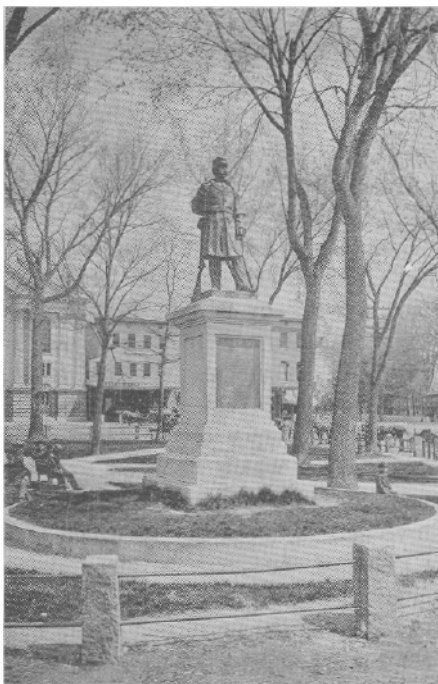
the attraction; however, they were but one of many traveling shows to include Keene on their circuit in increasing numbers following the Civil War. In 1869 J. M. French's Oriental Circus and Egyptian Caravan exhibited, featuring the elephant "Empress," claimed to be "the largest wild beast ever captured alive." In December 1871 Hall's Boston Orchestra was highly praised, "the best musical entertainment which has ever been given in Keene."

The Cardiff Giant, supposedly a "petrified man" over 10 feet tall and "discovered" in 1869, though later proved a hoax, was displayed in Keene for a week or two in January 1871. One of its viewers was Robert P. Leonard, a local itinerant tinker and clock repairman who was also an amateur printer and publisher. Bob Leonard wrote a "poetic history" of the attraction and also printed at irregular intervals a newspaper called *The City News* and later *The Douglas Street Journal*, which he filled with his own doggerel verse. One of the familiar sights in town was the shanty on wheels (complete with stove and smokestack) in which rode Bob's lunatic brother, Welcome Leonard. Too poor to hire anyone to watch over his brother and unwilling to commit him to an asylum, he hit upon this novel method of keeping the unfortunate man near at hand while he journeyed about town repairing clocks, tinware, and umbrellas.

The Chauncy Hall Battalion, a Boston schoolboy military group, visited Keene for a parade and review in May, and The Worcester Highland Cadets made a similar appearance in June 1873. There were concerts from time to time by one or another of the three bands organized in town, and also frequent dances and balls at the Town Hall and elsewhere. The Keene Brass Band, reorganized in June 1866 under the direction of William T. Allen, reached its highest point in this period, playing for commencement at Middlebury College in 1869, at Kimball Union Academy, and at out-of-town special events and public functions. Also organized were the Keene Quadrille Band and J. R. Colby's Quadrille Band.

Efforts to erect a commemorative memorial to Keene's role in the Civil War were begun in 1868, when a soldiers' monument was voted by the town. The sum of \$2,000 authorized was inadequate for the project, and no further action was taken until August 1870, when an additional \$5,000 was appropriated, and a committee appointed to carry out the work. The Soldiers' Monument on the Common was erected in 1871, and further improvements were made on the park in 1872. An iron fence surrounding the monument was added in July 1885, and park benches were first installed in 1882.





*Soldiers' Monument*

Martin Milmore of Boston was the sculptor of the eight-foot bronze figure of an American infantryman cast at the Ames Mfg. Co. in Chicopee, Mass. A matching figure was erected at Woburn, Mass., as that community's war memorial. The pedestal of Roxbury granite, about 13 feet in height, was cut by Charles S. Barnes, a local stonemason, from designs furnished by the committee. Dedication ceremonies were held on October 20, 1871, with a crowd of some 7,000 in attendance, including the governor, units of the local GAR, companies from neighboring communities, Keene firemen, civic bodies, the Keene Brass Band, and the Keene Light Infantry. A guest of the day was General James A. Garfield, later President of the United States, who was in New Hampshire on a visit to his mother's birthplace in Richmond. General Judson Kilpatrick delivered the principal address, and following the ceremonies guests and officials, about 150 in number, dined at the Cheshire House where numerous toasts followed an elaborate banquet. In the evening gala receptions were held at General Simon G. Griffin's West Street home (later the

site of the post office) and at the newly-completed home of Henry Colony (now the Keene Public Library), both affairs serenaded by the Keene Brass Band.

Keene's population in 1870 was 5,971, and the town had 1,185 dwelling houses. In 1872 a *Keene Business Directory* was issued, the first such publication in book form since 1831. Its compiler, A. C. Tuttle, ingratiated himself with the managers of the Boston, Concord, and Montreal Railroad and other companies on the promise of compiling directories of the communities on their lines. Armed with free passes, Tuttle ran up heavy board bills, secured all the advance money he could, and then disappeared. In the case of Keene, however, he did carry through with the project, and a directory was actually published. Another by R. S. Dillon & Co. was published in 1874, after which date Keene directories were issued almost annually and provided valuable records of residents and business activity in the town.

One of the industries established in this period was the pottery begun in 1871 by James Scollay Taft, and over the years "Hampshire Pottery" has come to be widely recognized. Starkey & Howard's pottery was established on Myrtle Street also in 1871, and E. C. Baker & Co. was begun in 1873, but both were closed by 1875. These industries made use of the rich clay deposits of the Ashuelot River, as did the brickmaking firms of George W. Ball, W. A. Barrett & Co., and Bemis & Russell.

The Keene Five Cents Saving Bank was incorporated in 1868 and began operations on January 1, 1869. Successful for over two decades, it was forced to close during the great financial panic of the 1890's.

General James Wilson returned in 1867 from California, where he had been a commissioner to aid in the settlement of Spanish claims, and he represented Keene in the state legislature in 1871 and 1872. General Simon G. Griffin was chosen speaker of the House of Representatives in Concord in 1867. Salma Hale, historian, died in Keene in 1866. Levi Chamberlain, a lawyer and political figure for many years died in 1867, as did Major Asaph Harrington, well known to travelers as host of the Eagle Hotel.

The Chesire House and Eagle Hotel offered free transportation to and from all trains. The American House (at the corner of Emerald Street), which became the City Hotel in 1874, did not offer such service, but had "a good and lively billiard hall connected with the house," which may have made up for it. This hostelry, now the Ellis

Hotel, has had a number of names, including the Workingman's Hotel, Emerald House, Union Hotel, and Revere House.

John Prentiss of the *New Hampshire Sentinel* died in 1873 at the age of 95. Although he retired from active management of his newspaper since 1847, he had continued to write for it until shortly before his death. He contributed greatly to the growth of the community, aided its schools with gifts of books, supported its various libraries and cultural organizations, and was among the most influential citizens of Keene for over 70 years.

Agitation to make Keene a city was begun early in 1865 with action by the New Hampshire legislature to permit such a change in government, but voters turned down the proposal and did likewise in 1866. In 1867 a similar measure by progressives was voted down 460 to 430, and a protest was lodged which resulted in the whole issue being dropped. In 1868 city status was defeated 700 to 378, and in 1869 it lost by a vote of 784 to 177. The issue again failed in 1870. Those in favor of city government formed a committee in June 1872 to draft a charter, which was approved by the legislature on July 3, 1873. On March 10, 1874, Keene adopted the new municipal status by a vote of 783 to 589 and thus became a city. The New Hampshire town charter of 1753 was surrendered to a new city government headed by Horatio Colony as first mayor. The municipal government was organized on May 5 when, somewhat to the dismay of many, Democrats took control in what had traditionally been considered a Republican town. A city seal was adopted which showed the figure of Justice surrounded by symbols of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture. The change from government by a board of three selectmen to that of a mayor, aldermen representing each of the newly-created five city wards, and a common council of 15 began a new era for Keene as a municipality.

In August the Keene Public Library organization voted to surrender to the city the shares and property of the library, and final transfer of the collection of about 3,000 books was made the following February.

Mrs. Lydia M. Handerson, the first woman to hold this office in Keene, was appointed postmaster in September 1874 to succeed her husband, Henry C. Handerson, who had died the previous June. The first woman doctor in the city was probably Dr. Rebecca F. Hill, who practiced with her husband Dr. Gardner C. Hill. She was a graduate of the New England Medical College in Boston and began practice in Keene around 1867.