

The Stone Church of the South Parish is 143 years old, having been built between 1824 and 1826. It is now the second oldest house of worship in Portsmouth, the oldest being St. John's Church, which was completed in 1808. Both structures may rightfully be considered architectural gems in their own right.

The architect of the Stone Church was Alexander Parris, who also designed the Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Boston, and many of the principal buildings at the Ports, Navy Yard.

(St. Paul's and the Ports. church are of similar design on the exterior)

The contractor and builder was Jonathan Folsom of Exeter, who had established a reputation for his work in stone and granite construction. He also built the stone docks at the Navy Yard, and the stone breakwater at the Isles of Shoals, which is supposed to have been financed with pirate's gold that was found buried on the islands.

The church is built of Rockport granite, with a square bell tower, intended as the foundation for a steeple or spire, which was never added. It follows the classic revival of the early nineteenth century, the front portico being adorned with simple Doric columns. The interior follows the ornate Corinthian order, and for a free(or liberal) church, contains quite a bit of symbolism.

In 1858 the church was enlarged and the interior remodeled, without destroying its architectural unity. A new section was added on the back, and the present pews were installed instead of the old square type.

In 1948, following the loss of the Universalist building the year before, the basement was remodeled into the present parish hall and rooms.

In 1953 the last remodeling took place, when the present chancel and choir was constructed, and a new organ installed.

Silver Communion Service, wrought by Wells & Gelston of N.Y.C. Presented to the Church in 1829 by the Haven family.

(misses being classified as early American by 4 years)

Silver Tankard- early American-Jeremiah Durmer(1645-1718)
Dates from 1693

Marble Baptismal Font- presented by the Sheafe family in 1859.

Nine portraits (oil paintings) of former South Church ministers.
(One of two of Rev. Nathan Parker by John Trumbull)

Relic from the Old South Church on M.H.Hill (occ. 1731-1826)
"Boss" or centerpiece taken from ceiling for suspending chandelier.

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BELL

We have the oldest bell in its original casting in Portsmouth, dated 1828. It is one of the last bells ordered from the Revere Foundry listed in their inventory. It was cast by the Boston Copper Co., owned by Joseph Warren Revere and William Blake

(Son of Paul Revere- later Blake est. his own company)
It weighs 2,540 lbs.

The Revere Co. made very few church bells weighing more than one ton(2000 lbs) and as far as I know this bell and the King's Chapel bell in Boston are the only two larger bells still in use.

The K.C. bell was cast in 1816 and weighs 2,440 lbs.

Incidentally, the oldest Revere bell still in use is within 40 miles of Portsmouth- at the Congregational Ch. in Groveland, Mass. This bell was cast in 1795 -weighs 2000 lbs

ORGAN This church owns a very fine pipe organ, which is enclosed behind the grill work on each side of the chancel.

It was originally built by Ernest M. Skinner for the Bethlehem Chapel in the National Cathedral at Washington, where it was used until the cathedral proper was opened in the early 1950's. ← 1910

It was rebuilt and installed by the same Skinner Co. in this church in 1953-1954.

Several pipes and stops from our old Hook & Hastings organ were added, and it now has three manuals with 40 stops.