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*Compiled and Narrated*  
*by*  
*Mattie Kilborn Webster*  
*for*  
*The Two Hundredth Anniversary*  
*of the*  
*Town of Merrimack NH*

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**EPISODE 5 - Presented by Congregational Church, Merrimack**

First Church and Rev. Jacob Burnap

1772                    Burnap its first Minister

The general settlement of the Town began before 1772. Those early people enjoyed preaching by visiting ministers in their home and sometimes in their barns. Also they crossed the river on the ferryboat, and went to Church in Litchfield, then a part of Naticook, as Litchfield and the south part was called. (Side note: Cummings of Litchfield opened the Ferry before 1766).

1736                    Nothing was said in our Charter about maintaining and building a meeting house. Several of the Charters issued to towns about this time are silent in this respect, probalby because Gov. Wentworth was a very jealous Episcopalian. He represented the Royal Govt, and we may well suppose him loyal and devoted to the Church of England; and to have little sympathy with the current Orthodoxy.

1753                    However in 1753 we find that towns were assessed on non-residents to help pay for a meeting house.

1756                    In 1756, a meeting house was built near Turkey Hill the center of the town. It was burned July 4, 1898 and the Town placed a plaque on one of the original doorsteps or stones to mark its site.

1772                    In 1772 the Rev. Jacob Burnap a young Harvard man was called to preach. His letter of acceptance was read in Town meeting in March of that year. Plans were made for his ordination. The Church not being finished, they laid a floor in the gallery, braced it thoroly (sic), put rough breast works in front, and built a stair-way or ladder to each gallery. Later they laid out pew-grounds or "slips" as they were called and when they were sold each purchaser built his own pew. Dr. Burnap was pastor about 50 years, and received into the Church about 194 members. When he came to Merrimack there were 14 church members in a town of about 500. He was married twice. His first wife Ruth lived about a year and is buried at Thornton's Ferry. He married again and he and his wife Elizabeth lived and brought up their family of 6 sons and 7 daughters in the large old-fashioned house this side of Turkey Hill Bridge.

He was learned, affable and dignified, and was buried with his second wife in the "Old Town Cemetery at Turkey Hill." The inscription in part reads, "He sleeps here in the midst of his flock; by whom he was loved and revered." Cummings and Petteru were the first Deacons.

1822                    In 1822 the Town voted to give permission to the Universalists to use the Meeting House one Sunday each quarter, this continued

for many years, with a gradual increase until in a few years they used it about 1/4 of the time.

1826                    In 1826 we find the first and only notice of the "Eastern Star Lodge," being granted the use of the meeting house for their Installation Ceremonies.

1828                    Later, Deacon McGaw one of their members was always very liberal in his support of the Church. He gave very generously toward the organ which was originally in the "Belfry" of the present edifice. He gave the first bell later exchanged for this one at an expense of over \$100. Among our permanent legacies is his for \$5,000.

1837                    The present building was built in 1837, a hot air furnace with ventilating flues was installed 62 years ago. The Church has always worked thru (sp) its distinct organs. The Ladies' Aid has always been ready to assume any obligations the Church has seen fit to place upon it. Always doing a large part of general repairs, and for years, has assumed the financial responsibilities for the music, organ and organist.

The good that the Missionary Society has done is inestimable. Its record goes back to the early years of the Church. In those first days it began its missions of love and mercy, and for the past 28 years, since its reorganization, has livd up to its former reputation. We have had for one youth the Sunday School, Y.P.S.C.E. which was followed by the Jacob Burnap Society.

A noble band of Ministers have served us thru (sp) the years giving their lives and energies to the spiritual growth of this Church. They have expended their talents thru (sp) its working channels. The first and last, our present pastor, seving the longest period of time.

With active leadership, consecrated workers inbued with a quickening of the spirit, we have faith that this church will meet the present challenge with the same Christian fortitude she has met the crises of the past.