

From Sarah Brown McCulloch's *Guilford: A Walking Guide* (2012):

First Congregational Church, 110 Broad Street Federal, 1829-30; Builder-architect: Ira Atwater.

This is Guilford's architectural masterpiece — the glory of the Green. The third building of the Congregational Church, it was the most splendid meeting house of its day on the shoreline, its builder already well known for Yale's chapel and other major buildings in New Haven. The building committee specified that the style should be "nearly the same" as that of the new churches in Milford and Cheshire, then the grandest in the New Haven area. They also wished to have a commanding site at the head of the Green and achieved this by buying a house already there and reselling it to Rossiter Parmelee who agreed to take it away; it was moved off in a grand procession drawn by 35 yoke of oxen down Whitfield Street to its present location near the sluice (see page 58). For the raising, the town was divided into districts, the men of each district being assigned their day to help the carpenters, without charge, while "the ladies furnished a good supply of cake, and there were no accidents." The total cost was \$7500. The "Great Bell," cast in 1725 for the second meeting house, was hung in the new belfry and, recast four times since, is still there today. The clock built in 1727 by Ebenezer Parmelee, also for the second church, was installed in the steeple; replaced in the 1890s, it is now in the Henry Whitfield House Museum (see 248 Old Whitfield Street). In 1860-61 the interior was partially remodeled to plans drawn by Nelson Hotchkiss, a well-known builder-architect from New Haven then living next door; in 1898 the pulpit recess and its surround were built, and in 1908 a fine organ was installed which lasted until 1981 when it was replaced. The gallery columns with finely carved capitals are original. The spire was blown down in the fierce hurricane of 1938 but quickly replaced, weathervane and all. Various other additions are evident but the church exterior, dedicated in 1830, remains the same.