

Prince Jenne First Pastor Ludlow, VT


The Town of Ludlow was chartered on September 16, 1761, by Benning Wentworth, colonial governor of New Hampshire. The first settlers arrived in 1783 or 1784, and were Josiah and Jesse Fletcher, Simeon Read, and James Whitney, all from Massachusetts. Ludlow was probably named after Ludlow, Massachusetts. The Town was organized in 1792, and the first annual town meeting was held that year at the home of Stephen Read.


Settlement in Ludlow began in earnest in the 1790s northeast of what is now Ludlow Village, and Ludlow remained an agricultural community until small saw and grist mills started to appear in the early nineteenth-century. Development in the village area began around 1800 due to the construction of the Green Mountain Turnpike and mills on the Black River, and Ludlow Village was incorporated in 1820. Growth in the village continued throughout the nineteenth-century, and textile production was the most important industry in Ludlow for one hundred years, until the mid twentieth-century. The establishment of the Central Vermont Railroad through town in 1849 helped further expand commercial, industrial and residential growth, particularly on Main Street near Depot Street (a few blocks from the subject church). A town common was created in the early nineteenth-century, on Main Street about one block north of the subject church. Most of the landmark public buildings in Ludlow Village are located on or near this common.

The first road through Ludlow was the Crown Point Road, which was also one of the first roads through Vermont. It was built in 1759-1760 to provide a route during the French and Indian War from Fort No. 4 in Charlestown, New Hampshire, to Crown Point, New York. The road passed through the northeastern corner of Ludlow; this section of the road no longer exists but there is a granite marker. The second road through Ludlow was laid out in 1784, and was a section of what was later to be known as the Green Mountain Turnpike and Route 103, and Main Street through Ludlow Village. The Congregational Church of Ludlow (hereinafter called "the church") faces Pleasant Street, which is parallel to and one block south of Main Street. Pleasant Street had been laid out between Depot Street and Elm Street in 1845. At that point, Reuben Washburn, who lived in a farmhouse at the corner of Main and Elm Streets, owned most of the land on Pleasant street, including the church lot. He and some of his neighbors sued the town in 1845, as they were "dissatisfied with the layout of the street." In 1850, after the suit was brought to county court, each plaintiff was awarded one cent for damages. Elm Street, which passes by the east side of the church, appears on the 1855 Doton map of Ludlow.

When the Town was chartered, a glebe lot was set aside for the Church of England, but was not developed as such. In 1792, the same year the Town was organized, some citizens of Ludlow started worshipping weekly, except for the winter months, but with no formal church organization. Services were probably held at the house of Stephen Read, a few miles outside of Ludlow village, the same location as the first town meeting, and also in a natural outdoor amphitheater. Read's house is no longer standing.

The First Congregational Meeting House Society, the first church society in Ludlow, was formally organized September 25, 1806, forty-four years after the first Congregational Church society was organized in Vermont in Bennington in 1762. It was the ninety-first Congregational Church society organized in Vermont. At this point, there were twenty-four church members. The first service of the organized church was held at the High Street schoolhouse, with a preparatory lecture given by Rev. Prince Jenne of Plymouth, Vermont. At this service, Peter Read (1751-1839) was chosen as the first deacon. He became the pastor in 1810, and served both positions until 1826. Read was also the first Ludlow representative to the state legislature, starting in 1795.

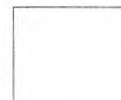
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