

A hidden treasure

An old photo shows the Georges Mills Community United Methodist Church in the early 1900s. It sits alone in an expansive field, a large outcropping of rocks in the front and one building far off in the distance to the left. There are no trees in sight. These were the early days of Prospect Hill Road.

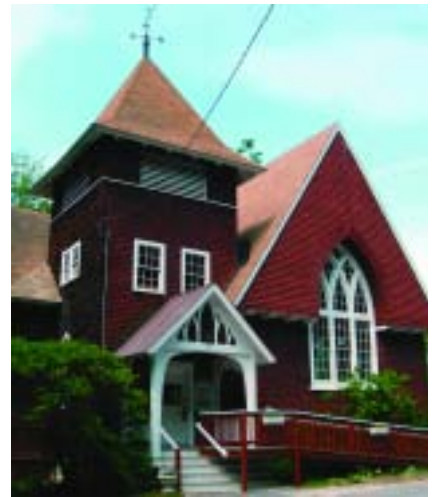
Today, the road is a bit busier. At the base is Sugar River Outfitters; at the top is Prospect Hill Antiques. The church still stands, a quarter mile up the road on the left. “We’re here, and anyone is welcome,” says Linda Gardner, whose family was one of the original founders of the church.

For many years, Georges Mills did-

n’t have a church; people worshipped in the hall above the A.W. Russell Store. In 1893, Willard Chase and Alfred Martin, manufacturers of shingles and bobbins, solicited funds to build a church. A Ladies’ Aid Society formed in 1895 to help the church building effort. By 1898, the village was ready to build. Contractor George H. Dyer built the five-room church on land donated by Alfred Martin. The foyer, vestry, chapel and vestibule with stairway were downstairs; the kitchen, dining room and belfry were upstairs.

The church remains surprisingly similar to its early days. The kitchen and dining room have moved to the basement, but the bell — donated by John Eaton, a guest at the Pleasant Home boarding house — is still in place. The Chase and Reed pump organ installed in 1898 remains, and was even playable 100 years later. A cross and crown painting, by local artist Fred Barnes, hangs above the altar.

In the vestry hangs one of two Louis Comfort Tiffany stained glass windows (the identical twin is in the Third Presbyterian Church in Rochester, N.Y.). Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848-1933) was a son of New York jeweler Charles Lewis Tiffany, who founded Tiffany & Co. The window, originally part of the



The stained glass window was made by Louis Comfort Tiffany, son of New York jeweler and Tiffany & Co. founder Charles Lewis Tiffany.

Wayside Chapel in Otterville, was moved to Georges Mills in 1955. According to handwritten notes in the Ladies Aid Society scrapbook, “L.C. Tiffany invented a new glass technique



A cross and crown painting, by local artist Fred Barnes, hangs above the altar.

he called Favrite Glass. This was a composition of various colored glasses which were worked together while hot. This glass was notable for its metallic iridescence — with no pigment added to the glass — all the color was in the glass.” The result is stunning; the stained glass angel shimmers and shines in the sunlight.

Georges Mills, considered a village of Sunapee, has less of a community feel than it did in the old days. Sunapee’s population, usually around 2,000 full-time residents, swells to 9,000 in the summer. But the church’s congregation decreased to about eight members in the 1990s. “Everyone met in the vestry until about 10 years ago,” says Sue Maurer, lay leader in the Georges Mills Community United Methodist Church. “The congregation had gotten so small that we blocked off the rest of the church.”

Today, the church is creating community once again, much like it did in the 1900s. Each summer month, the church hosted family suppers on the second Friday and ice cream socials on Sunday afternoons. “We eat with almost everything,” laughs Maurer, “which is not good for people on a diet.” There was a Ladies Aid Fair in July, a Pemi Valley Bluegrass Festival Field Trip and a Georges Mills Community Yard Sale in August.

At a recent family supper, a half dozen members gathered for ham and baked beans, macaroni and cheese, and a variety of salads. “My extended family is in Ohio,” says Karin Berthiaume, a Sunapee resident. “When I moved here I was attracted to a small church. It was a way to connect with different generations; my son would get to know young people and old people.”

The elders love the interaction, too. Dorie Morrow, a lifelong church member, tells the story of a little girl sitting up on the altar in front of the

entire congregation, watching everyone throughout the service. “It was hard to concentrate on the service, but everyone enjoyed her,” Morrow says. Linda Gardner responds, “There’s always next week to listen.”

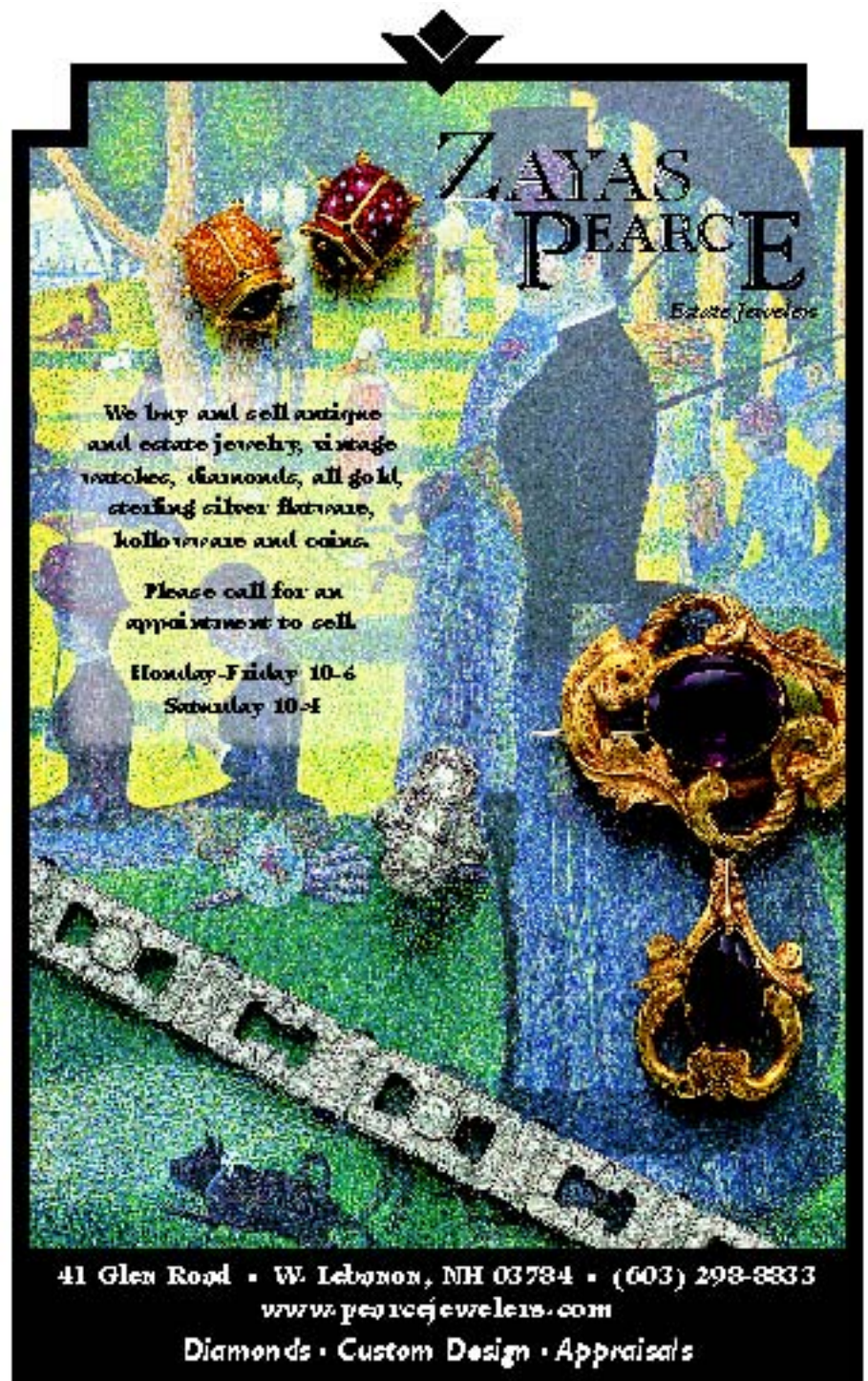
“It’s an easy place to belong,” says Maurer. “When you walk in the door you are a stranger, but you won’t be halfway through the service.”

WHAT: Georges Mills Community United Methodist Church

WHERE: 37 Prospect Hill Road, Georges Mills

WHY: History, architecture and a sense of place

CONTACT: Sue Maurer, 763-5738



**ZAYAS
PEARCE**
Estate Jewelers

We buy and sell antique and estate jewelry, vintage watches, diamonds, all gold, sterling silver flatware, hollowware and coins.

Please call for an appointment to sell.

Monday-Friday 10-6
Saturday 10-4

41 Glen Road • W. Lebanon, NH 03784 • (603) 298-8833
www.zayaspearcejewelers.com
Diamonds • Custom Design • Appraisals