

A Walk through the ‘Hood to ONC’s birthplace up on the Burial Hill

From Old North Church (41 Washington St.) to Old Burial Hill (the “Burying Ground”)

Sunday afternoon, March 29, 2020 at 2 pm (60 to 90 min.) (*rain date tbd*)

Marblehead’s development and the built environment in the three neighborhoods of ONC, as they relate to the town’s early local government and the First Church, and related topics.

Walking tour donated to ONC by Judy Anderson of Marblehead Architecture & Heritage Tours, for the benefit of Old North Church. Contributions to benefit ONC welcome, but not required.

Guests are welcome. No RSVP necessary (but helpful in case of rain).

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More Info:

On Sunday afternoon, March 29, at 2 pm, a walking tour (60-90 min.) led by Judy Anderson of Marblehead Architecture & Heritage Tours will trace Marblehead’s early development from the area around Little Harbor (after 1629) then down along the main harbor (1680s to mid-1700s) as the town grew ~ as it relates to the evolution of the town’s First Church (gathered c.1635) and official Marblehead town government, which were closely related at first.

The walk will begin in front of Old North Church (the third edifice of the centuries-old congregation) and will end at the top of the Burying Hill (site of the early congregation’s original meeting place).

The tour will particularly note the First Church’s second meeting house, built in 1695 on the corner of today’s Franklin Street, with a spire added not long before 1763. That is important because until 1729, that large house-like structure was also the official gathering place for town meetings and government until the new (now “Old”) Town House was built one block up from the public town landing as a purely municipal building — thereby separating church and state a half century before the new United States did officially after the Revolution, in the newly independent country’s new Constitution (1786-89).

“Old North Church” was not called by that name until two centuries into its history. And, in the 1600s & 1700s, in New England, a “church” referred to the congregation rather than the building. Instead, until around the time of the Revolution (1775 to 1781 with a final peace treaty in 1783), the term for non-Anglican (official Church of England) church buildings was “meeting house.”

(Also after the Revolution, Anglicans in America became known as Episcopalians. Marblehead’s Anglicans had worshipped (as they still do) in St. Michael’s Church, built in 1714, originally with a steeple that was taken down in 1793 and recreated in 2014. A renovation of the interior occurred in 1833, in a Gothic Revival style; pointed Gothic stained-glass windows were added in the 1890s.)

As always, Anderson’s tour will include social history, helping to bring to life the early townspeople as well as ONC’s early ministers, who now rest among their early parishioners up on the Burial Hill.

Unlike the Second Church congregation, the First Church had only two long-lived ministers during its first full century — from 1668 to 1770 ! The tour will put into a broader context the impact that one of them, Reverend John Barnard, famously had on the Marblehead community. A savvy young man in his prime at first, with international experience and commercial acumen, Barnard’s advice prompted an economic transformation of the town. However, the business opportunities that he recognized and encouraged locally before he assumed his full-time church responsibilities (after the death of the principal minister, Rev. Samuel Cheever, in 1724) were due to an international treaty in 1713, at the end of a war that had prompted the first of several upgrades of the Marblehead Fort on Gale’s Head.

(And without that treaty, Marblehead would not have become what it did, and that could have meant that two crucial events in 1776 that saved the American Revolution might not have happened !)

The tour will also reference the town's **Second Church**, which was formed by a group of members of the First Church in 1715, as Marblehead was growing vigorously. By the following year, their "New Meeting House" (as it was widely referred to) had been built farther down in the rapidly expanding town — up the hill from where a secular municipal Town House would be erected just a decade after.

A century or so later, in 1824, soon after that new congregation had adopted Unitarian teachings, the First Church (ONC) built its **new stone edifice**, with **3** front doors proudly proclaiming its Trinitarian perspective. Sixty years after that, in 1886, the current façade of cut granite was applied to the front.

Around 1858, a **Third Church** (third congregational / non-Episcopal church) was formed by some First Church members who leaned toward teachings that were of a more Presbyterian nature.

A new church for them (the correct term by that time) was built further **south** in town ~ thereby earning the older First Church its current name of "**Old North**" (just as had happened in Boston in the 1700s).

Built in 1858, on Essex Street, the new edifice stood near a community building (the Hibernian Hall) that had been built as a gathering place for Irish immigrants (where a Spiritualist congregation also met). The Third Church was constructed of wood, in the Italianate style that was fashionable then. It looked a bit similar to the current Baptist Church on Pleasant Street that would rise a decade later (1868), after the Baptists' earlier edifice burned that year. A year after the Third Church (1859), a wooden Catholic church with two tall spires was erected up on a hill on Prospect Street ("prospect" meaning a "view").

Within 20 years, four buildings burned: Hibernian Hall in 1860, the earlier Baptist church in 1868, the Catholic Church 1872, and the Third Church in the "great" fire of 1877, which left 90 families homeless. The second major town fire was 1888, leveling 50 structures and taking the jobs of 2000 people / families). After that, most Third Church members returned to Old North, the older church further north in town.

The walk will also note some vanished aspects of the early townscape — such as a bridge over a creek that ran down a hill (along today's Wadden Court and Doake's Lane), by the First Church's 1695 edifice, to a cove at the eastern edge of Little Harbor (by Gale's Head, where the town's fort was built in 1644).

Images of the first meeting house and all three of the town's early church buildings in the 17-teens will be shown (since all but one are long gone), along with conjectural images of the spires that were added to the First and Second Church structures in the mid-1700s, plus St. Michael's original spire as re-created in 2014.

No RSVP is needed. Donations of \$5 or \$10 (or more!) to benefit ONC are welcome, but not required.

For more information, call 781-631-1762 or email MarbleheadTours@aol.com.

For other scheduled tours (this year, several will benefit Glover's Regiment and Salem Sound Coastwatch), visit www.MarbleheadTours.com and click on 2020 Public Tours.

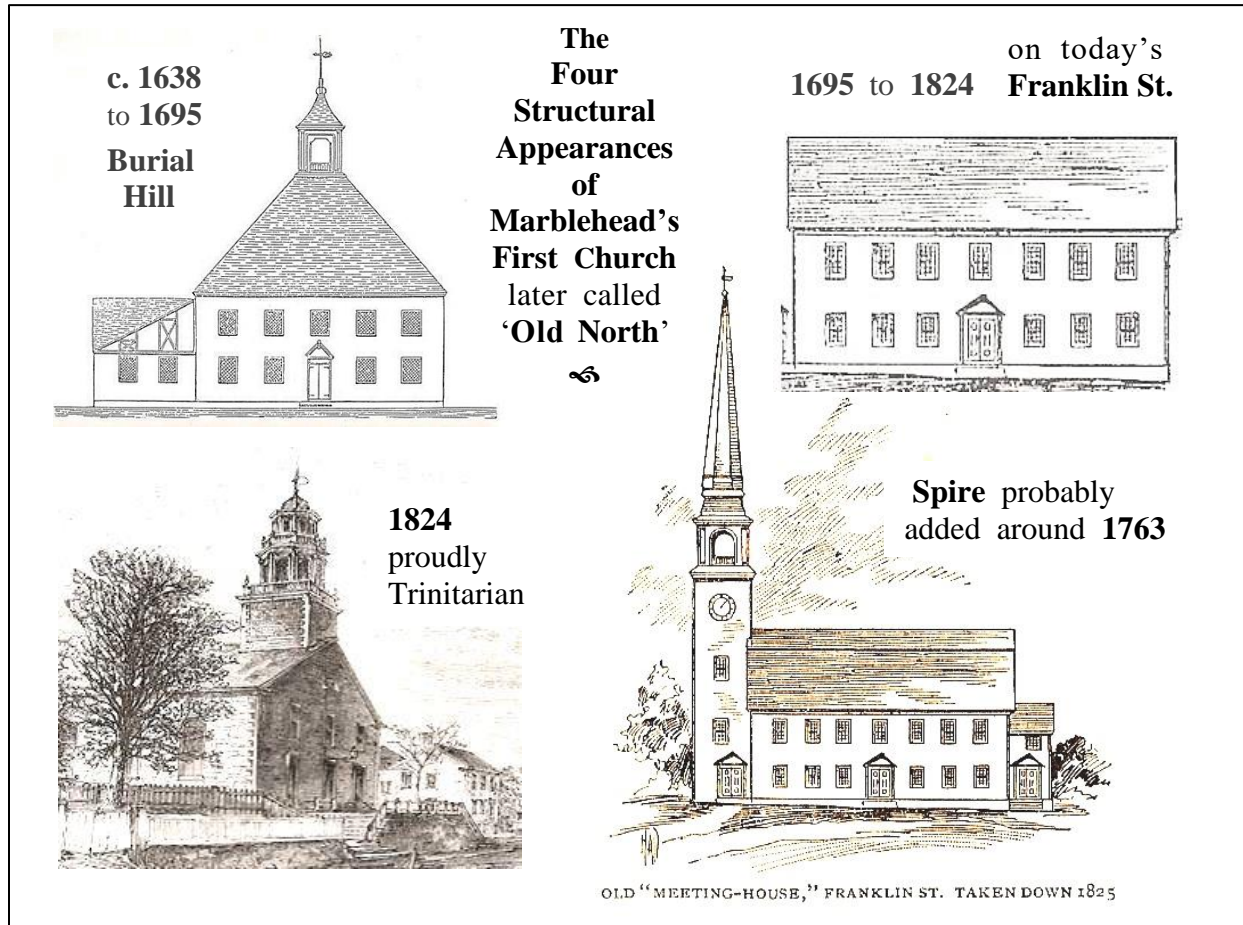
Privately arranged tours are also available year-round, at the same contact info.

Did you know ...

- **For about 35 years (a full generation), after 1695, church services AND town meetings were held in the second edifice of the First Church (which was only later called Old North) ?** That structure was built across from the fire station on today's Franklin Street, near the current site of the Mary Alley Hospital condominiums, as the center of downtown was moving further down from the Little Harbor area toward the current downtown, along the town's main harbor.
- **Marblehead was prosperously thriving by 1727-29, when the new (now "Old") Town House was built to serve an exclusively municipal purpose ?** It is significant that Marblehead separated church and state very early on, 60 years before it became a national policy.
- **By 1750, the town had grown into the 10th most populous metropolis in British N. America ?** Even in 1790, when the first U.S. census was taken, Marblehead's population was still high (tied for tenth largest in the new United States) — even though the town was not as prosperous then, due to economic and social losses during the Revolution and for 50 years / two generations afterward.

Images & captions —

Old North Church's three edifices (c.1635 to 1824) In Marblehead's first two church buildings or "meeting houses," town meetings were also held (as needed, not just annually), in the same structure in which the church congregation met on Sundays (often for most of the day!)



**Marblehead's first
four buildings for
town government
(c.1635 to present)**

**The second building
was used for town
purposes for only 34
years (1695 – 1729)**

