



CENTRAL SQUARE

PHOTOGRAPH HISTORY PACKET

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CHESHIRE COUNTY, 246 MAIN STREET, KEENE, NH 03431

WWW.HSCCNH.ORG

603/352-1895

DIRED@HSCCNH.ORG

IN YOUR PHOTO PACKET

This packet contains enlargements of 8 historic photographs in the collection of the Historical Society of Cheshire County, each related to the history of Central Square in Keene, NH. Photos are marked on the back with their catalog number, any known dates, and a description.

SOME WAYS OF USING THE PACKETS

- 1- Orient students to the direction in which they are looking. Is the camera pointed north, south, east or west?
- 2- Ask students to put the photographs in order of date, without looking on the backs of the photos.
- 3- Identify what is different in the photograph from what they know today and what is the same.
- 4- Talk about modes of transportation in the photographs, stores, electricity etc...
- 5- Note the architectural changes, changes in building materials used, lighting etc...

BRIEF HISTORY OF CENTRAL SQUARE

Keene, New Hampshire, (originally called Upper Ashuelot) was a planned town beginning in 1733. That plan did not include a central square. As transportation patterns evolved at the northern end of Main Street and a meeting house was erected, the area now part of Central Square emerged as a community gathering space. In 1788 the present church at the top of the square was dedicated and the old meeting house (which had been used as a church, courthouse, and government building) was moved to the west and became a court house. The new 1780s church originally faced west and was in the area where we now have the soldiers' monument. In 1828 the church was moved back to where we see it today and it was rotated to face south as we see it today. This move opened up the area at the top of Main Street at a time when the community of Keene came to the Central Square area for meetings, shopping, to do business, and for church service. This open area developed into a park by the mid-to-late 1800s to be used for public enjoyment.

CONTENTS OF PACKET



No# ("F")- **1858**, view looking north. The population of Keene at the time was about 4,200 residents. Note how wide the main street is prior to urban development and paving. Hotels were commonly constructed in the area around town halls and court houses, where people from around the county would be traveling to. In 1858 the court house was only one year old in the town and located to the left (west) of the Congregational Church (not in view). On the right (east) side of the image is the Unitarian Church (built in 1829) and the Cheshire House hotel (built in 1837). At back (north) is the Congregational Church.



P228. **1865**, view looking south. The population of Keene has grown to about 5,500 residents. The Cheshire House hotel and the Unitarian Church are at left (east). At right (west) you can see the Appleton-Elliott building which houses a hardware store (built in 1815). In the square, notice the granite fence posts have been installed and elm trees have been planted.



P2408- **1888**, view looking southwest. The population of Keene is now 7,200 residents. This is the year of the famous Blizzard of 1888. Plows have not been invented yet so cities, like Keene, often rolled their streets of snow with large snow rollers or packed it down.



P752- **1895**, view looking northeast. The population of Keene has remained 7,200 residents. The Cheshire House hotel is still doing business. New business blocks have been constructed around the hotel because of the growing use of Central Square for conducting business and doing shopping. Note: Colony Block (to the left of the hotel in the French Second Empire architectural style) and Ball Block behind (in the Italianate architectural style). Blocks of buildings are often named for the person who invested in its construction, typically a major businessman in the area. The Colony family ran the large textile mill in town and the Ball family owned and operated a large brickyard. City hall has been remodeled and now houses an auditorium and a tower. The square has added a bandstand and a watering trough. Telephone wires are in view, having been installed in the 1880s.



P4633- **1913**, view looking east. The population of Keene is now around 10,700 residents. Street lights are in view as well as the soldier's monument (added in 1871) and the streets are newly paved (completed in 1910). Barker block is located beside the Congregational Church to the north.

Historical Society of Cheshire County
Photo History Packet: PHP1- Central Square



No# ("T")- **1920s**, view northwest. The population of Keene has grown to 11,200 residents. Court street is located straight through to the other side of the park. On the left (west) are the post office, a bank and stores. The square has new lighting.



P2978. **1940**, view southeast. The population has grown again, now to about 13,800 residents. The Cheshire County Fair is holding its parade through Central Square. Behind the parade is the Cheshire House hotel (far left), the Kresges Block in the Art Moderne architectural style, the E.F. Lane Building (built in 1891), and Church Street at right. Notice that the Unitarian Church was removed (in 1894).



P2600. **1960s**, view looking northeast. The population in Keene is now about 16,500 people. A lot of changes are seen in Central Square including additional lighting, a traffic light (center), a flag pole (added in 1924), and a newly remodeled City Hall (remodeled in 1960).