

DRAFT
PARISH HISTORY
SAINT JOHN'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
FOUNDED 1826





PREFACE TO THE 2ND EDITION, 2012

As a sort of preface to his Gospel Saint Luke addressed “Theophilus”, perhaps an individual known to Luke or more likely a reference to anyone who is seeking God or information about God saying,

“ Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed.”

I think this is a good description of what I tried to do in this book. I have also tried to present an orderly account **“of the things which have been accomplished among us”** in this parish over the past 186 or so years. So I like to think that Luke was my guide in the construction of this work.

Just as Luke made use of Mark’s earlier Gospel as a foundation for his own work, I have made extensive use of the History Book compiled in 1975 by Father Clifford Buck and members of the parish. In places I have corrected that text making use of the wider variety of resources for research available today

which was not even dreamed of by my predecessors. Like Luke, I have also found some information which was not even mentioned in the earlier work which I have added to that text. And of course I have added several chapters at the end of the book to bring it all up to the present day.

Most parish histories consist of a list of Rectors and the dates of their service. While such lists are a helpful tool in recounting the chronology of events in parishes, it should be noted that Rectors are not the only ministers in parishes. According to the Book of Common Prayer the ministers of the church are “*lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons.*”

The ministry of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and, according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church.

The ministry of a priest is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as pastor to the people; to share with the bishop in the overseeing of the Church; to proclaim the Gospel; to administer the sacraments; and to bless and declare pardon in the name of God.

Rectors are important officials in parishes and they usually set the liturgical tone of worship and have great influence in the direction of life and service found in parishes. But they are not the parish and parish history books should not be primarily about them but about the parish and the people they have served and influenced.

Having said that, I should point out that the materials available for compiling parish histories are very limited by the very nature of the institution we are writing about. Parishes are living breathing entities where life often takes place in the moment

just as it does for individual people. Sermons are given each week but in most places are usually not recorded. Evangelism and outreach take place constantly but few records are kept of what was done. Visitation of the sick, fellowship, education and lots of other things go on all the time but few written records reflect their impact upon individuals or the wider community.

Since vestry minutes are required by both church canon and state laws governing religious corporations, they are the most readily available historical sources to anyone attempting to write a parish history. Unfortunately vestry minutes usually consist of little more than what is required of them by law. So they usually read very dryly of the passage of resolutions regarding the expense of funds and administrative matters. Great and traumatic sociological upheavals can be occurring all around the parish and the world in which it lives without being noted much in the minutes of any vestry. It is not that they are unconcerned with affairs but that those affairs are not the focus of their attention during meetings.

In recent times the Internet has provided some wonderful new tools for researchers. In many places local newspapers and magazines have been digitalized and placed online so they can be searched rather easily from the comfort of the church office. Here in Brooklyn the public library has digitalized the local newspaper which was called the *Daily Brooklyn Eagle* from the early 1800s through 1920 or so. The Brooklyn Historical Society has also digitalized much of its collection and made it available to the public. This has been a tremendous help as I and others have conducted research for this current volume.

A few years ago I attended a series of Lenten Lectures in Brooklyn offered by Father John Farrell on Celtic Spirituality. I learned that the ancient Celts felt that there was only a sort of thin membrane dividing this time for all that has gone before. They felt that sometimes, in some places, if you were very still and very quiet you could perhaps almost see images of those who have lived before sort of out of the corner of your eye. I have often thought of that when I have been inside Saint John's Church early in the morning or at twilight. As the dim light filters through the windows I can almost see the thousands of people who have lived, shared, cried and



laughed in this holy place as they have worshiped together at masses, weddings, funerals, baptisms, and so much more. It is their faith and their contributions which have built up this holy place that I have tried to present in this work. I am very grateful to them and to those who helped me in recent months, as well as to Father Clifford Buck, the Brooklyn Public Library and the Brooklyn Historical Society without which this volume would not have been possible. I hope that you

have as much fun reading it as I had writing it!

Father Clarence H Powers,
Sixteenth Rector of Saint John's Church

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*Early Drawing of Saint John's Church on
Johnson Street*

Laying the Foundations

In 1636, the Dutch became the first settlers of the hinterland of New Amsterdam (now New York City) where they purchased territory in the Gowanus Bay area from the Montauk Indians and called it “*Breuenckelen*” (meaning broken land). It was incorporated as a village by that name in 1816. It was not

until 1834 that the village became known by its present name, incorporating as the City of Brooklyn.

Brooklyn was a village of fewer than 10,000 inhabitants in 1826 when King George IV, eldest son of George III, whom we may recall from our Revolutionary War, was on the throne of England. King Charles X, youngest brother of Louis XVI, who actively supported our Revolution with men, money and arms, was reigning in France. John Quincy Adams was the sixth president of the United States. His father, John Adams, the second president, and Thomas Jefferson, the third president, both died on Independence Day, July 4, 1826. There were no telegraph lines, telephones, automobiles, radios or even express trains in those days, so that it was several days later that the news of the deaths of these two national heroes reached Brooklyn where workmen were building the first Saint John’s Church.

The origin of the church is unique in that it was planned, erected and paid for by the [Reverend Evan Malbone Johnson](#), who became the first Rector. He operated it at his own expense until it was purchased by the congregation in 1832 and served without pay for the first 20 years!¹

¹ *And this not because he was rich. The property which came to his care, had to be improved by building and other loans, which required large realizations to pay the interest, and nothing but great attention and good management could have kept it from becoming submerged by taxes and assessments, in the advancing progress of Brooklyn.*

<http://www.panix.com/~cassidy/STILES/EPISCOPALCHURCHES.html#NOTE11>



***Saint Ann's Church 1824 Church
on Sands Street***

Born on June 6, 1792 in Newport, Rhode Island, he obtained a classical education at college in Rhode Island and at Cambridge, Massachusetts where he became a candidate for orders. He was ordained at Trinity Church, Newport, by Bishop Alexander V. Griswold on July 8, 1813.

Shortly afterwards he was invited to New York City to serve as curate at the fashionable Grace Church and later became Rector of Saint James Church in Newtown, Long Island.²

There he married Maria L. Johnson³ of New York in 1814 with whom he had one son. After her death in 1825, he married Maria Purdy of Newtown, with whom he had three children.

In Newtown he acquired a farm which he managed in addition to his duties in the church. After some years he determined to sell the farm and to use the funds to build a new church. By 1826 he had sold it for \$4000, a great sum in those days, and moved to Brooklyn where he purchased another farm on the outskirts of the village.

It was there that he built the first Saint John's Church on a corner of that farm which later became the corner of Johnson and Washington streets which today is directly across the street from

² *Saint James Church was founded in 1704 and officially chartered in 1761 by King George III. It was the first parish in Elmhurst, called Newtown in colonial times. One of Saint James' earliest Rectors, the Reverend Dr. Samuel Seabury Jr., was consecrated in 1784 at Aberdeen, Scotland, by bishops of the Scottish Episcopal Church to be the first bishop of the Episcopal Church. Ironically, this parish, once served by the radically inclusive Father Johnson, voted to leave the Episcopal Church in 2005 over the inclusion of gay people. Since then the parish property was returned by Court Action to the Diocese of Long Island. LONG ISLAND: Court rules for diocese, wider church in property case, by Mary Frances Schjonberg, ENS March 26, 2008 http://www.episcopalchurch.org/81803_95981_ENG_HTM.htm*

³ *obviously a popular name as we will see later*

the Brooklyn Central Post Office. Saint John's became the second parish in Brooklyn, the first being Saint Ann's, which was founded in 1784 and has come to be called the "mother" church of Episcopalian Brooklyn.

In a sermon preached on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the Parish historian Fred Clarke said of those bygone days:

"Saint Ann's Church, which was organized in 1784, was on Sands Street, having been named for Ann Sands (not Saint Anne, mother of the Blessed Virgin, as might be supposed), who was largely instrumental in its founding. Sands Street was a very fashionable street in those days and my own grandmother told me how much the New York girls valued the chance of walking along Sands Street Sunday afternoons with a naval midshipman."

In the original 1826 Parish Register Father Johnson vividly describes the early days of Saint John's in somewhat archaic language:

"In consequence of the increasing growth of the Village of Brooklyn, the design of building a new Episcopal Church was formed by Evan Malbone Johnson in the spring of A.D. 1826. In the course of that summer, he caused a plain, wooden building to be erected at the corner of Washington and Johnson Streets, said building is fifty feet by fifty. It was first opened by him for Divine Service on Sunday the 24th of September 1826. The pulpit was supplied by him and the Reverend John A. Hicks, alternately, during the winter. In March Doctor Johnson removed from New York, where he had been settled twelve years, to Brooklyn. I took sole charge of the congregation."

Holy Communion was first administered on April 15, 1827, Easter Day, to nineteen communicants and, [while slavery was not abolished in New York State until July 4, 1827](#), it is interesting to note that several of these people were listed as "colored". This is

not surprising since Father Johnson⁴ later became a well-known opponent of slavery in New York State and the nation. In a letter he wrote to the Convention of the Diocese of New York in 1844 concerning the admission of Saint Phillip's Church, a black parish, as a full member of the Diocese he said:

"I have been brought truly to believe that "God hath made of one blood" the whole race of man. I think the more we can realize the great truths, that every member of the Catholic Church is also a member of the body of Christ –and that in him we are all one – the more shall we disregard the wicked notion, that the colour of the skin ought to make any difference whatever in our intercourse, as Christians, with those who, with us, are buried "with him by baptism in his death". ⁵

Influenced by its abolitionist founder, Saint John's was a multiracial place of worship from its foundation, and though it has undergone many changes throughout its long history, it is still so today.

The Church was consecrated by the Right Reverend Bishop Hobart on the 10th day of July, 1827 and called Saint John's Church.⁶ The congregation was incorporated by election on Easter Monday, April 16, 1827.⁷

⁴ The title "Father", which is commonly used today in the Episcopal Church, probably would not have been one adopted by the Reverend Johnson in his day. However it suits the taste of this editor and will be used wherever appropriate throughout this work with the caveat that it is a modern redaction.

⁵ ***Faith In Their Own Color***, Craig D Townsend, Columbia University Press 2005, page 109 – 110

⁶ *The church was named by lot, at the time of laying the corner-stone, - which was done," says Mr. Johnson's manuscripts, " without any Previous conference with any of the inhabitants, for fear of exciting the jealousy of the members of the old (Reformed Dutch) church."*

⁷ *An excerpt from the Certificate of Incorporation is presented: "Recorded March 19th 1827, L. Bi, page 13. ... all persons of full age belonging to the Church Congregation or Society at the Village of Brooklyn in the County of Kings... met at said church for the purpose of incorporating themselves under the act entitled: **An Act to provide for the Incorporation of Religious Societies**' and the act to annul same. Monday in the week*

The cornerstone was actually laid on May 9, 1827 and bears the following inscription:



"Saint John's Church was erected by Evan Malbone Johnson, AD. 1826, the cornerstone of which was laid by the Masonic Fraternity on the 9th day of May, John Henry Hobart then being Bishop of the Diocese."

It was removed in October of 1869 when the old building was sold, but it is not certain where it was stored until the church was expanded in 1889 when it was then placed just inside the new entrance where it may still be seen today, although it is in a serious state of deterioration.

Brooklyn in those days was still heavily influenced by its large Dutch population, most of whom were members of the Dutch Reformed Church. The First Dutch Reformed Church of Brooklyn, now known as Old First Church on Seventh Avenue in Park Slope, was in the 19th century, situated in the middle of Fulton Road, near current Borough Hall. Oddly enough, these two churches that were so physically close together in another part of Brooklyn in the 19th century find themselves in a similar geographical position in the Park Slope of today. They were also close in a familial sense since Evan Johnson's wife was the granddaughter of a pastor of that church whose name interestingly enough was also Johnson, though no apparent relationship to our own first Rector. Her father had also been a Dutch Pastor who had died of consumption when she was a

called Easter Week was in like manner fixed on as the day on which the said offices of Church Wardens and Vestrymen shall annually hereafter cease and their successors in office be chosen and the name or title of 'The Rector, Church Wardens and Vestrymen of Saint John's Church at Brooklyn' was in like manner fixed on and agreed to as that by which the said Church Congregation or Society shall be known in law."



*First Dutch Reformed Church of
Brooklyn, 1666*

child. She was raised by her maternal grandfather, Peter Roosevelt of Jamaica, Queens, who was an Episcopalian.

Married into a Dutch clergy family, Father Johnson seems to have been so popular among them that he was often called "**Domine**" by them and others in Brooklyn, an affectionate term for Dutch

ministers. In addition to his work as Rector of Saint John's Church, he took a keen interest in all community activities. In particular, he was a leader in the cause of the "common" school (today we would call it a public school), which was opposed by many wealthy residents. Education by a governess or tutor, or at private "finishing" schools was the order of the day for those who could afford it. Father Johnson became Chairman of the Citizen's Committee which was formed to create and then expand public education in Brooklyn. Religious education was also very important to him and he was active in the organization of the Brooklyn Sunday School Union which was launched at the Apprentices' Library by representatives of the Presbyterian, Baptist, Reformed Dutch and Saint John's churches - an early example of ecumenical cooperation.⁸

He also helped to found the Long Island Bible Society and served as chaplain in the Grand Masonic Lodge. A publication describing Brooklyn Village of the day records that Saint John's Sunday School owned the biggest library in the village, and that the church officers made it available to the public. By 1832 this library contained 400 volumes - an amazing collection of books in those

⁸ *This Sunday School Union grew steadily and mightily and reached such proportions that eventually all public schools in Brooklyn were closed on a Thursday in June for its annual parade. The event was marked by thousands of children with flags, banners and a few "Episcopal processional crosses" marching from Flatbush Avenue around the plaza, past reviewing stands in front of the magnificent Grand Army Arch, and into Prospect Park. It was there that church, school and city officials (almost always the mayor) made tributes and presented various awards to the participating groups. Like so many civic traditions and celebrations, this one too has been relegated to the annals of history and memory.*

days. It later was donated to the public to form the nuclei of the present Brooklyn Public Library system.

At one of the first vestry meetings held on March 2, 1827, the vestry voted to

"accept proposals of the Reverend Mister Johnson for the purchase of the church and grounds,"

although this was not done until 1832. Pew purchase prices were set from \$30 to \$200, depending on location, and corresponding quarterly rents from \$1.00 to \$5.00. In 1843 Father Johnson sent an important message to the vestry about seating in the church:

"I would wish the vestry to remember that it is the glory of the gospel of Christ that it is to be preached to the poor - and that the Church extends her arms to embrace as well the low as the high, the poor as the rich, the servant as the master. How can all such enjoy the blessings offered to them by the Church if by any arrangement a portion of these classes be excluded from the place where is offered up the Holy Sacrifice? My object in sending you this communication is, to recommend that you take such order and give it publicity, that no person whatsoever of any description shall ever apply at our Church and not be supplied with a seat (gratuitously, if necessary), as long as we have any room. I would have the sexton instructed to remain at the door until after the second lesson, and to show to a seat every person who makes application for one."

It is not known at what date pews became rent-free and open to all, but this was a first step in that direction.⁹ Nonetheless, pew rentals provided for the operating expenses of the church for many more years. Luckily, these expenses were moderate even in the early 19th century. In 1827, as we have noted above, the Rector worked for free, the sexton received \$40.00 per annum, the entire church

⁹ Father E. M. Johnson felt so strongly about abolishing pew rentals that upon leaving Saint John's Church in 1847 he founded Saint Michael's "Free" Episcopal Church. The "Free" refers to the fact that pews were not rented or sold. The church was funded by "subscription", what we call pledges today.

was painted for the sum of \$7.45 and the next year the collection at Easter was \$3.00, at Whitsunday \$3.31, and at Christmas \$3.60!

In the 20 years that Father Johnson served as Rector of Saint John's Church, he baptized a total of 1346 people. That's an average of 67.3 persons per year! According to his records he also married 587 couples during that time. He listed 499 total communicants for the parish in those years according to a sermon he delivered at Saint John's Church on October 14, 1861 at an evening service celebrating the opening of the renovated wooden building on Johnson Street.¹⁰

After 20 years of faithful service Father Evan M. Johnson retired in July of 1847. He had literally built the church himself and then helped it grow in membership, strength and involvement in the larger life of the Diocese and the Episcopal Church. He was beloved not only among his parishioners but also in the wider Brooklyn community and throughout the Diocese and the state of New York for his pastoral care and leadership.

A few weeks after his resignation he went back to doing what he did best, building churches – as he formed another congregation in a room on Jackson Street, which became Saint Michael's Church.

¹¹ He continued his ministry of planting churches, caring for the poor

¹⁰ *The church was closed for several weeks for a fairly complete renovation which included the addition of a bell tower. The entire article describing the church and including this very interesting and historically detailed sermon is included in the Addendum of important documents at the end of this book.*

¹¹ *St. Michael's Church. In the year 1847, the Rev. Evan M. Johnson resigned the rectorship of St. John's church, Brooklyn, for the purpose of establishing a new congregation in the fifth ward of the city, at that time lamentably deficient in religious privileges, there being but one house of worship within its limits, and a population of twenty or thirty thousand souls. Hiring a lecture room in Marshall street, near the Jackson ferry, he commenced to hold meetings in September of that year.*

Such was the success which attended the labors of the Rev. gentlemen, that this building soon became insufficient to accommodate the congregation, and he accordingly leased from the city for ten years, the building known as the Eastern Market, in High street, in the Fifth ward. Services were first held here on the 5th of February, 1848. Soon this building failed to accommodate the constantly increasing congregation, and in 1849, the Rev. Mr. Johnson caused to be built an addition to it, some forty by fifty feet in dimensions, which made a very comfortable and commodious church edifice. In 1852, the Board of Education established a primary week day school, for which the church was used, and where some two hundred children received instruction.

and remaining vocally opposed to slavery for almost 20 years in Brooklyn and New York City as is attested by the following notation from minutes of Saint John's Church vestry shortly after his death in March of 1865:

At a meeting held in the Chapel after service the Committee on Resolutions presented the following:

The Reverend Evan Malbone Johnson, late Rector of Saint Michael's Church in this city and the founder and for many years the Rector of Saint John's Church at Brooklyn having been removed from the scene of his earthly labors, a meeting of the Rector, Wardens, and Vestrymen of Saint John's Church was held on Monday evening, March 20, when the following resolutions were unanimously adopted:

Resolved. That while bowing with humble submission to this afflictive dispensation of Divine Providence, we recognize in the decease of this venerable and devoted servant of God the loss to our city of one of its oldest, most useful, and respected citizens; to the poor a true, liberal, and faithful friend, and to the church of a zealous, faithful, and efficient laborer for the salvation of souls and an earnest defender of the Faith once delivered to the Saints. His venerable form, and quaint, frank, truthful, and outspoken utterances, will long be remembered by all who knew him.

Resolved, that as individuals and as a vestry we present to the bereaved family of our departed Brother in Christ the expression of our warmest sympathies and condolences in their affliction, with the earnest prayer that divine grace and consolation be abundantly theirs.

Resolved. That in testimony of regard for the deceased appropriate drapery be put in our church, and remain until the great Festival of Easter.

Resolved. That an attested copy of these resolutions be sent to the family of our deceased Brother, and published in the city papers.¹²

Oddly enough, the second Rector of the parish was also named Johnson. The Reverend Samuel Roosevelt Johnson was no blood relation to the first rector but was related in law. Brother-in-law of the Reverend Evan Malbone Johnson, he served briefly from 1847 until November 1850. The importance of Saint John's Church in those early days is evidenced by its hosting of a special convention of the



The Reverend Samuel Johnson, Second Rector

Episcopal Diocese of New York¹³ which met in Saint John's

¹² *Mr. Johnson's good nature and liberal tendencies caused him to be, extensively sought by parties desirous of being united in matrimony, and at the time of his half century discourse, the number of marriages performed by him had reached as high as two thousand. No man's life was more studded with deeds of actual and daily kindness than the domine's, as he was generally called throughout the city. He would at any time rise at midnight or daylight to marry the humblest couple or do the smallest deed of kindness. During the whole of his life here, none of our clergymen was ever half so much seen among the people as the domine. Almost any day at about ten or eleven o'clock he might be seen turning the corner of Pearl street from the north into Myrtle avenue; for he lived where his ancient farm house stood, and in walking through Pearl street follows in some degree the ancient cowpath of his farm. His style of dress was plain, simple and old fashioned, a felt hat, always carelessly crumpled ground the rim, surmounted the face of an ancient Roman, crowned with a strong crop of standing hair, as white as snow; and an atmosphere of ease and benignity surrounded him, inviting everybody to stop and have a chat with him. He might have been, and indeed frequently was, taken for one of the ancient crop of Dutchmen, an error which his name assisted in producing; but, as we have seen, the nearest he came to it was in marrying into a Dutch family.*

<http://www.panix.com/~cassidy/STILES/EPISCOPALCHURCHES.html#NOTE15>

"Chapel"¹⁴ to consider certain special amendments to the canons of the diocese. Elected Professor of Systematic Divinity at General Theological Seminary, Dr. Johnson resigned as Rector in November of 1850 but continued to be actively involved in the parish ministry, at least in a part time manner, for the next few years.

There is some confusion regarding the third Rector of Saint John's Church, the Reverend N.A. Okeson, which is reflected in the first edition of our parish history published in 1976. That book reports that *“parish records contain a curious letter from the Reverend N.A. Okeson addressed to the wardens and vestry of Saint John's Church accepting their call to become their Rector dated December 10, 1850.”*

That letter is still in our parish archives. The first edition goes on to say,

There are equally mysterious references to a Reverend D. V. M. Johnson (another Johnson relative?) who apparently took some services during 1852. There are no further records of, or references to, either of them, nor are they to be found in the archives of the diocese.

More modern research on the Internet indicates that The Reverend D. V. M. Johnson was the founder of Trinity Episcopal Church which was the foundation from which Saint Luke's Church was born. (which later merged with Saint Matthew's to form what is known today as Saint Luke and Saint Matthew's Church).

He also founded Saint Mary's Church on what is now Classon Avenue¹⁵ and apparently helped out at Saint John's.

¹³ *The Diocese of Long Island had not yet been created.*

¹⁴ *“Chapel” rather than “Church” is often found in various historical references. The use of this term may well imply that whatever building is currently being referred to is not the final, larger structure that is imagined.*

¹⁵ *In March, 1835, Trinity Episcopal Church was organized and a stone edifice erected during the same year on Clinton avenue, between Atlantic avenue and Fulton street, which location was in what was then known as the Wallabout district. Rev. D. V. M. JOHNSON was the first rector and continued for a year. In 1841 the parish became embarrassed and the church was sold, but was purchased and services revived by the present St. Luke's congregation in 1842.*

St. Mary's Church was begun on Classon avenue at the Wallabout, by the Rev. D. V. M. Johnson, while in charge of Trinity church. A Sunday school was commenced in March, 1836, and formed the nucleus of a church. Here the Rev.

An examination of the vestry minutes of 1852 – 1853 clearly shows that the Reverend N. A. Okeson was present as Rector in January 1851 and that he presided over all meetings of the vestry during that period. His name is also to be found in editions of the Brooklyn Eagles newspaper and in other historical sources.¹⁶ The vestry minutes state that his resignation was accepted on October 20, 1852.

Why he resigned after such a relatively short period of time is not part of the record, but this in itself is not unusual. A few other rectors stayed even less time and some have left without giving reasons for their resignation.¹⁷ So it is rather curious that this Rector

Mr. Johnson held services on Sunday afternoons for about six months. In May, 1837, Mr. Joseph Hunter took charge of the school, and served as a lay-reader to a small congregation which assembled with the children. During the year an edifice of a very limited extent was erected, and a church organized, to which the name of St. Mary's was given. This was consecrated on the first of February, 1840, and was enlarged in 1841, so as to accommodate about two hundred and fifty persons.

<http://www.panix.com/~cassidy/STILES/EPISCOPALCHURCHES.html>

¹⁶ *In fact he seems to have had quite an active ministry while here. An article in the Brooklyn Daily Eagle newspaper of April 12, 1852 describes a service of Confirmation held at Saint John's Church in which 70 – 80 people were Confirmed and which lists the Rector as the Reverend N. A. Okeson. The article describes this number as the largest class ever confirmed at Saint John's Church! A great deal of ministry was going on at that time presumably by, and under the direction of Father Okeson the Rector.*

¹⁷ *One was especially tight lipped about why he was resigning - I love it. Brooklyn Eagle Oct 9, 1902; Section:None; Page Number:20 reports The Rev. Dr. George F. Breed, whose resignation as rector of St. John's Episcopal Church was announced in yesterday's Eagle, declines to state his reasons for resigning.*

These reasons are his own affair, he says. The members of the vestry who received his resignation at a vestry meeting Tuesday night say that what transpired at that meeting was confidential and they are mystified over the publication of his resignation.

"My reasons for resigning are my own affair," said Dr. Breed this morning. I've got no statement whatever to make."

"Is it true that you intend to go abroad for a year?" the reporter asked.

"You can publish that if you want to," was his reply. "That's what I told the other reporters who came here. The newspapers don't publish the facts, even when they can get them. A paper distorted an interview with my wife yesterday."

was left out of our history and such a great point was made in the first book to explain why parish records differ from diocesan records in terms of the numbers of Rectors who had served Saint John's Church.

Perhaps some of the confusion as to the status of this Rector is due to the circumstances under which he resigned. This presents yet another minor mystery. In May of 1852 vestry records indicate that a special committee was formed to investigate some particular *financial matter* which is not disclosed. That committee reported its findings to the vestry on October 20, 1852, and it was at that meeting that the resignation of the Rector was received. The committee report is not included in the minutes.¹⁸ No further information regarding that report or the reasons for Father Okeson's resignation have been found.

On the surface it would seem that the two things are connected, reflecting rather poorly on the character of the Rector. But one should be careful in making allocations against the character of someone long dead who has no ability to defend himself. Although nothing more is reported in the records of Saint John's Church, research of Episcopal Church sources and newspaper articles indicate that he returned to his native state of Virginia to accept the call of Rector at St. Paul's Church, Norfolk where remained for many years with no apparent hint of scandal.

Conspiracy theorists might have a field day addressing the question of why this third Rector of the parish might have been intentionally left out of our history book! It is hard to see how such a mistake could have been unintentionally made in the light of both vestry minutes and newspaper accounts which show his presence in office as Rector. It is a bit of a mystery and like so many others in

"Well, is it true that you resigned to go abroad?" the reporter asked.

"I don't know whether I am going abroad or not. What right has anybody got to demand that I make up my mind in fifteen minutes as to what I am going to do?"

When told that it was a common thing for rectors resigning a charge to announce their reason for doing so, Dr. Breed replied:

"Well, that's not my way."

¹⁸ *This editor would love to see the report of that special financial committee! But this will probably never happen. Perhaps those who take minutes for parish organizations and vestries should take note that important events such as this should be more carefully documented to avoid confusing future generations!*

history, will probably remain so. But at least we can set the record straight in this second edition of our parish history and reclaim Father Okeson as one of our own.



*The Reverend Thomas F. Guion,
Fourth Rector*

Whatever may have happened, it would seem that our parish records must be adjusted as a result of this new finding. Our list of Rectors from the beginning until the present day should include 16 names rather than the currently accepted 15. Therefore, the current holder of this office, the Reverend Clarence H. Powers is the 16th Rector of Saint John's, not the 15th as he has always thought!

The Reverend Thomas F. Guion was instituted as the fourth Rector in 1853. He became a beloved pastor and well-known figure in the Brooklyn of his day. He also seemed to have been what we sometimes call a "**brick-and-mortar**" sort of priest. After a few years in office, the old wooden church building was closed for awhile as it was repaired, enlarged, and renovated as we have already noted above. Services were conducted during this renovation in space rented at the nearby Packer Institute.

A report from the committee on Carpet and Cushions to the vestry in September of 1861 describes the carpet which was to be laid down and says that the cushions are to be "**of the Best quality stuff with Purified hogshair at \$.50 per running foot.**"

At the same meeting it was decided to move paintings formerly in the church on either side of the chancel, to the **Sunday School Room.**

What those paintings depicted and where that room might have been located is somewhat of a mystery since later in the meeting it was resolved to



*The newly renovated Saint John's
Church with its new bell tower, 1861*

sell the Sunday School building (wherever that was) and have it removed from the property. It is possible that this building housed the Brooklyn Sunday School Union, of which Saint John's was an active member, and not just the parish Sunday school, but more research will need to be done to determine if this was the case.

The renovations were completed in time for Saint John's Church to host a special convention of the diocese of New York later in the year. To mark the reopening of the church a special service is described in the Brooklyn Daily Eagle of October 14, 1861:

“The old “Church in the Meadows” endeared to us by so many pleasant associations and ... memories was re-opened yesterday by the memorable Bishop Potter, in the presence of a full congregation. Just before the sermon, the Pastor, Mr. Guion, in brief and appropriate words, welcomed his parishioners back to, their old homestead”^a

It is interesting to note that even as of the renovation was taking pace and more than a full year before the reopening of the renovated church, the vestry formed a committee in May of 1860 to look into the sale of the property and to search for new location! This probably indicates that there was a bit of disagreement within the vestry and parish about its future. Discussion of this issue continued and intensified over the next few years, resulting ultimately in the relocation of the parish to what is now Park Slope. But before this was sorted out Father Guion died in 1862 and was buried in Greenwood Cemetery.



Guion Memorial Window

The high regard in which he was held by members of the parish is attested by a beautiful large memorial window in his memory that was installed a few years later behind the High Altar of the new church building In Park Slope. That window is now behind the choir.



Bishop Horatio Potter

Vestry minutes of October 26, 1862 include a touching memorial, which says *“during the whole period of his ministry, his entire strength and energies were devoted to the welfare of this parish, raising it from the state of depression in which it then existed, to that of comparative prosperity, that it now enjoys”*. Anytime a beloved Rector leaves a parish there some degree of mourning takes place, especially when a beloved Rector dies in office, as your editor can attest having become Rector himself shortly after the death in office

the father Clifford Buck in 1985.

A period of administrative turmoil often follows such a death and certainly seems to have been the case after the death of Father Guion. Vestry minutes for several months described the call of one clergyman after another to become Rector, all of whom declined. On January 30, 1863, the vestry addressed a letter to the congregation saying that they were unable to agree upon a candidate for Rector. They therefore deferred this decision until after a new vestry was elected and in place.

The confusion and disagreement in parish leadership is reflected by numerous resignations of vestry members and many occasions where vestry meetings could not be held due to the lack of quorum. Finally the new vestry invited the Reverend George F. Seymour¹⁹ to become



**The Reverend
George F. Seymour
Fifth Rector**

¹⁹ born in New York on January 5, 1829 he studied at General Theological Seminary and was ordained deacon on December 17, 1854, and priest on September 23, 1855, by Bishop Horatio Potter, of New York. He served a parish in Dutchess county, New York, where he founded and became the first warden of Saint Stephen's College. In 1861 he accepted the Rectorship of Saint Mary's Church, Manhattanville, and in 1862 that of

Rector and he accepted by letter dated June 9, 1863, a copy of which is in our vestry minutes.

At first it seemed as if he might reject the call was well but, at the urgent request of Bishop Horatio Potter he went, as the bishop expressed it,

*"to lead a forlorn hope" in recovering the parish of Saint John's, Brooklyn, New York, from the distressing condition into which internal dissension had brought it.*²⁰

Not surprisingly his ministry was not to be an easy one. He remained in office only few months longer than Father Okeson had done and spent most of that time helping the congregation deal with the vacuum of leadership that often results in any organization after the death of a very popular and strong leader. The first few years of the current Rector's ministry, following the death of Father Clifford Buck in 1985, were spent in a similar fashion.

The three years of his ministry at Saint John's were marked by continued turmoil which included the firing of several members of staff and the resignation of others, including choir masters, choristers and sextons. Rumors were rife in the midst of such confusion in leadership. Minutes of a vestry meeting held on March 13, 1866 include a resolution to be read to the congregation to the effect that the opinions being expressed by some people in the church that the Rector's position was only temporary be corrected! It goes on to request that the Rector change his mind and stay on as their pastor. Whatever the source of these rumors may have been, there appears to have been some truth in them. In a letter posted from the General Theological Seminary and dated July 11, 1866 Father Seymour wrote,

"my mind is clear, gentlemen, that I owe it to my Divine Master, to you, and to the Parishioners of Saint John's, perhaps I should add to myself also, to relinquish the Rectorship to which you called me three years ago. I therefore tender to you, with real sorrow, my resignation as Rector of Saint John's church, Brooklyn, New York –

Christ church, Hudson, New York.

²⁰ <http://sangamon.ilgenweb.net/1904/seymour.htm>

such resignation to take effect on Monday the first day of October next.”

Another letter in our archives dated October 05, 1866 indicates that he has indeed resigned and urges them to *“take speedy action in calling a Rector.* Saying that he does not want to influence them in their choice, he nonetheless goes on to say that

“ it would grieve me... to have the parish pass into the hands of a lax churchman, of one who would do as certain ill-informed and thoughtless clergyman of the city have done, disregard the terms of their ordination vows, and the moderate reasonable distinctions of their ecclesiastical superior and encourage by their precepts and example lawlessness and disorder.”

He also advises against having candidates for Rector come to preach in what he calls **“a trial”** saying that effect of

“having one and another come to the parish in this way is to demoralize the congregation, to degrade the character of a clergyman in their eyes, and to injure their own souls.”

He encourages them rather to just call a clergyman of good reputation.

This letter includes a financial report which says that from October 1865 to October 1866 a total of \$13,820.77 was contributed to Saint John's – an amount he says far surpassing his expectations. He concludes that the church will soon be out of debt if this degree of giving continues. He then report that he has baptized 16 adults and five infants, performed 25 marriages and 56 burials, and has presented 53 people for Confirmation. This letter was read at the meeting of the vestry of October 05, 1866 which Father Seymour said he would not attend in order to give the vestrymen a chance to discuss the future of the parish without him being present. Our records indicate that the vestry met on four additional occasions during that month but unfortunately does not give us any information as to what was discussed.

On November 26 the vestry finally accept the resignation of Father Seymour. He left the parish to accept the position of Saint

Mark's Professor of Ecclesiastical History at the General Theological Seminary and later he became the first bishop of Springfield, Illinois. As Bishop Potter had hoped, he brought a great deal of pastoral care and administrative expertise to the parish which was suffering greatly as it mourned his beloved predecessor. Even upon leaving he influenced the selection of his successor as we have seen in his letter of October 05, 1866 - something many priests would love to be able to do!

Relocating the Parish

The Reverend Alexander Burgess, was installed as Rector on the Feast of Epiphany 1867. Born in Providence, Rhode Island, on October 31, 1819, he graduated from Brown University in 1838 and from General Theological Seminary in New York in 1841. He was ordained deacon on November 3, 1842, and priest November 1, 1843. He served several parishes in New England before coming to Saint John's in 1867.

Despite Father Seymour's hopeful observations regarding the parish debt, the financial situation seems to have gotten worse. Several loans were taken out to pay bills. Subscriptions (pledges) were requested from members of the parish to pay them, and then new loans were sought. At one meeting the finance committee reports that two persons who were behind in their "subscriptions" were contacted. One paid up and the other did not. A lawyer was hired to sue the one who did not pay!

A house at 20 Johnson Street, owned by the Church, was made available to Father Burgess as a place to live rent-free as part of his compensation but he was required by the vestry to take responsibility for all repairs and upkeep.¹² They apologized for this unusual requirement but said it was due to dire financial necessity. Later in the year the parish was assessed \$2000 by the new Diocese of Long Island as its portion of the amount needed to support a Bishop. The minutes say that after a careful consideration of the subject the vestry decided that in *view of the present financial condition of the parish* the sum named was too large. A later meeting reports that the Diocesan Commission that had requested those funds said that it was under misapprehension

of the financial state of Saint John's Church. In other words they said that they believed that the parish had far more funds than it really did – a situation that seems not to have changed much in all the years that have passed!

By April 20, 1868 continuing financial strain led to a resolution which was passed forming a new committee including the Rector who were

“to discreetly ascertain and report to the vestry the most desirable relocation for the church in case a removal is decided upon and also to report on the feasibility and desirability of a sale of the church property at its probable selling value”.

One month after the formation of that committee the parish property was sold. But we should note that this was not a quick and easy decision. The idea of selling the parish and moving somewhere else was not new. As seen above, a similar committee was formed eight years earlier in May of 1860 charged with the same tasks.

Baptismal and Communicant records show that the parish was growing in numbers and attendance. So what was the nature of the financial crisis which led to the decision to sell and move? An answer may well be found in the manner in which the parish was established.

The first Rector built the church building using his own funds on property he already owned. The vestry decided at its first meeting on March 2, 1827 to purchase the building and presumably the land on which it stood but did not do so until 1832. From 1827 to 1847 the rector worked for free and the sexton was paid \$40 per year, at least in the earlier years. The parish was primarily funded by the sale and rental of pews as were most churches of the day. So expenses were negligible for the first 20 or so years.

However within 5 years of having to begin paying a rector's salary financial difficulties began to be reported in vestry minutes, though only obliquely. As reported above, a special committee was appointed in May of 1852 to investigate some mysterious financial matter. A report was received by the vestry in October of that year and at that same meeting the rector's

resignation was accepted. Since the rector went on to serve other parishes for many years without a hint of scandal it is doubtful that the financial matter in question was a result of any sort of misappropriation of funds on his part. It is more likely that the matter had to do with a lack of basic funding.

So in May of 1868, only 36 years after purchasing the building and 21 years after the parish began paying the full salary of its rector the building and grounds were sold for \$90,000.

Choosing the new location

Relocating a parish is never easy. There are always deep bonds of affection that bind people to the buildings in which they were baptized, married, and from which loved ones have been buried. As we have seen from the newspaper account of the reopening of the renovated wooden structure on Johnson Street the old church building was affectionately called the *Church in the Meadows* by those who loved it.¹⁴ We don't know anything about the Meadows in which it was located, but it must have been hard for those who loved that old building to leave it. Some people probably refused to discuss any sort of move while others agreed that the parish needed to relocate in order to reach its potential.

Above all the leaders of the parish wanted to relocate to a neighborhood with the potential for growth and economic stability, and, since most of them would continue to live near the old church, one that would be accessible by good public transportation. In order to understand the options available to them let's take a brief look at the Brooklyn they knew and how it had developed.

Brooklyn was first settled in the late 1630s and early 1640s by Walloon and Dutch farmers who settled along the shoreline just north of the Fort Greene area, and in 1645 the Dutch village, centered where the Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges now stand. The village developed very slowly and even by 1790, two years after the New York State Legislature incorporated Brooklyn as a town, the population was only 1,603.

The opening of reliable ferry service between Brooklyn and New York caused the first great spurt of development that

changed Brooklyn from a quiet town into the third largest city in 19th-century America. The first regular ferry service began in 1814 when Robert Fulton's ship Nassau opened a route between New York and Brooklyn. By the mid-1830s and 1840s fast, safe and reliable steamboats were regularly plying the waters between the two cities making it possible and convenient for a New York City businessman to live in Brooklyn and work in Manhattan.

The extensive residential development of Brooklyn began in the 1830s in the Brooklyn Heights area, which was located near the ferry slips. The rapid growth in the town's population led to the incorporation of Brooklyn as a city in 1834. As the 19th century progressed the residential area expanded outward in an easterly and southerly direction from the Heights and by mid-century much of the area now lying west of Flatbush Avenue (including the present-day neighborhoods of Brooklyn Heights, Cobble Hill and Boerum Hill) had been substantially built up.

By the early 1850s major residential development was beginning in the area now known as Fort Greene. Fort Greene Park, originally called Washington Park, predates this row house development. The park had been planned in the 1840s (on the site of an old fort) as an open space for the working class population which then inhabited the area. Most of the houses erected in Fort Greene before the Civil War were fairly modest by comparison with later construction.

These houses included frame dwellings and modest brick and brownstone row houses, many of which are still standing on South Oxford Street, Cumberland Street and Carlton Avenue. The middle-class residents of these houses made the area respectable, and this led to the construction of grander brownstone rows and a number of free standing mansions (two of which were located on Lafayette Avenue between South Oxford Street and South Portland Avenue, but they have been replaced by apartment houses) for the upper middle class. South Portland Avenue, South Oxford Street and Clermont Avenue became the home of wealthy merchants, lawyers, stockbrokers, and businessmen.

With this influx of a new "monied" population there came a change in the park. By 1867 when Olmsted & Vaux were appointed to lay out the parks of Brooklyn, Washington Park had

severely deteriorated. The Olmsted & Vaux design for the park was planned to appeal to the leisure time requirements of the middle-class families who were living in the newly built brownstones.²¹

It was quite natural that the leaders of the parish considered this newly wealthy and fashionable community to be a prime candidate for the new structure. Within days of the formal sale of the parish property an offer of \$21,000 for six lots of land on the corner of De Kalb Avenue and Elliott Place was made and accepted.²² Within a few months an architect, Mr. E. T. Potter, who later designed the current building in Park Slope, was hired to design a new building. But it was never to be built – at least not there.

At the same meeting of the vestry in which the property was sold in May of 1868 an application was received from families residing near another park planned by Olmsted & Vaux asking Saint John's to establish a mission in that part of the city. The vestry enthusiastically accepted this request and resolved that the committee on church property be authorized to select a suitable location for establishing such a mission and that the Rector be requested to commence services there the next Sunday! Within a few weeks a report from the committee on church property that

**²¹ FORT GREENE HISTORIC DISTRICT
DESIGNATION REPORT**

EDWARD T. KOCH, *MAYOR*

NYC LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

KENT L. BARWICK, *CHAIRMAN*

MORRIS KETCHUM, JR., *VICE CHAIRMAN*

²² *The church holds a deed now long-defunct for property at the corner of De Kalb Avenue and Elliott Place with a frontage of 359 feet and a depth of 264 feet. According to our records there are two Titles of Deed to this property. Therefore it is believed there were actually two parcels of land. One was delivered to a Mr. Thomas J. Taylor and wife on August 5, 1868, by a Mr. James B. Beers, who appeared to be at that time the clerk of the vestry, in the amount of \$4,000. Another deed dated August 15, 1868, was delivered to a Mr. Louis van Antwerp, Sr. for the purchase price of \$19,250. This had to be the money used to buy land on Douglass Street for the new church. In addition there is evidence of a loan made through the East River Savings Bank for nearly \$30,000, presumably borrowed and used for the construction of the chapel and Rectory. No records indicate how or when that debt was repaid.*

services had begun to be offered in the Chapel of the Home for Destitute Children on Butler Street near the entrance to Prospect Park.

In February of 1869 residents near Prospect Park families who attended those services expressed a strong desire to have Saint John's relocate there - a desire shared by the Bishop of Long Island who wrote to the vestry that he would prefer that Saint John's Church be built near Prospect Park rather than on the De Kalb property.

In a resolution a few days later the vestry created yet another committee to select a location in that neighborhood and by February 26 they recommended the purchase of property on the northwest corner of Douglass Street and Seventh Avenue where 10 lots were purchased for price of \$26,000.

Prospect Park, bounded by Prospect Park West, Prospect Park Southwest, Parkside, Ocean, and Flatbush Avenues, consists of 526 acres of rolling meadows, picturesque bluffs, and luxuriant verdure. The park is the chief playground of Brooklyn, with picnic grounds, tennis courts, baseball diamonds, ponds, a zoo, a lagoon, parade grounds, bandstand, gravel walks, and broad driveways. The city of Brooklyn purchased most of the area in 1859 at a cost of nearly four million dollars from the Litchfield estate, whose mansion serves as borough headquarters of the Park Department. Delayed by the Civil War, development was begun in 1866 under a commission headed by James S. T. Stranahan, the "Baron Haussmann" of Brooklyn, creator of its park and boulevard system.

Horse-drawn rail cars running to the park and the ferry, brought many rich New Yorkers to the neighborhood transforming it by the 1870's and 1880's into what came to be called the Gold Coast. By 1883, with the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge, Park Slope continued to boom and subsequent brick and brownstone structures pushed the neighborhood's borders farther. The 1890 census showed Park Slope to be the richest community in the United States.

Having provided leadership for the purchase of property for the new church, Father Burgess decided to move on with his ministry rather than to stay to oversee the building of the new church. He resigned as Rector in a letter dated October 7, 1869 and shortly

thereafter became the Rector of Christ Church in Springfield, Massachusetts where he served until elected the first Bishop of the new diocese of Quincy, Illinois. The building of the new church was left in the hands of the lay leadership of the parish.

The New Buildings

A letter was written to the Bishop Long Island requesting that he participate in the laying of the cornerstone for the new building which was to serve as a place to offer divine services

“until such time as the church is erected on the corner of seventh Avenue and Douglass Street.”

The cornerstone of the new Chapel was laid June 15, 1869 and it is still to be seen today on the far left of the steps going up to the Chapel, the original entrance to the church. It reads simply: "Jesus + Christ.

The opening service of the new chapel is reported in The Brooklyn Eagle of January 17, 1870 which says,

“The opening services at the new chapel yesterday morning were attended by about six hundred persons. After the pews had all been filled camp stools were placed in the aisles for those who could not be otherwise accommodated. At half-past ten o'clock Right Rev. A. N. Littlejohn, D. D., Bishop of Long Island, entered the chapel followed by Rev. Robert E. Terry, Rev. A. N. Spafard, Rev. R. R. Johnson, Rev. Mr. Newton and Rev. Mr. Degen. As the clergy advanced up the aisle and took their seats inside the chancel, the choir sang the welcoming hymn commencing "To the glorious King, shall the ransomed people sing."

The usual morning service of the Episcopal Church was then celebrated. The tenth selection of Psalms and Jackson's Te Deum were chanted by the choir. The Ante-Communion service was read by Bishop Littlejohn, the choir chanting the responses...The sermon was preached by the Right Rev. Bishop Littlejohn

On the conclusion of the Bishop's discourse, Rev. Dr. Terry announced that the offertory would be for the benefit of the missions of the city, and while the collection was being taken up the trio "Lift Thine eyes" was sung

The Sacrament of the Holy Communion was then administered, after which the Bishop pronounced the benediction and the congregation dispersed.

Stained Glass at Saint John's Church



Top, a collage of our glass. Above left to right, Saint Cecilia, Chapel; Saint John, Chancel, Geometric Design Series in Nave and one in the Guild Room recently restored in Loving Memory of the parents of Father Powers.

The Holy Family Windows in the Nave facing Saint Johns Place



Christ Blessing Children - Tiffany Guild Room, Saint John's Church





The Lancet Windows over the Chapel Door

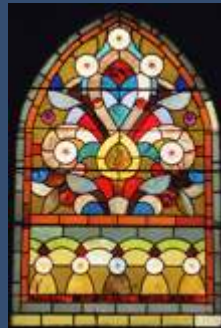
Seven windows depicting the Seven Sacraments, each surmounted by a Saint.

From left to right

- Holy Matrimony, Saint Andrew
- Holy Ordination, Saint Luke
- Holy Penance, Saint Elizabeth
- Holy Baptism, Saint John
- Holy Communion, Saint James
- Holy Unction, Saint Martha
- Holy Confirmation, Saint Francis



Once behind the High Altar, these windows featuring Saint John in the center and two geometric designs on either side, are now partially hidden by organ pipes over the current location of the choir.





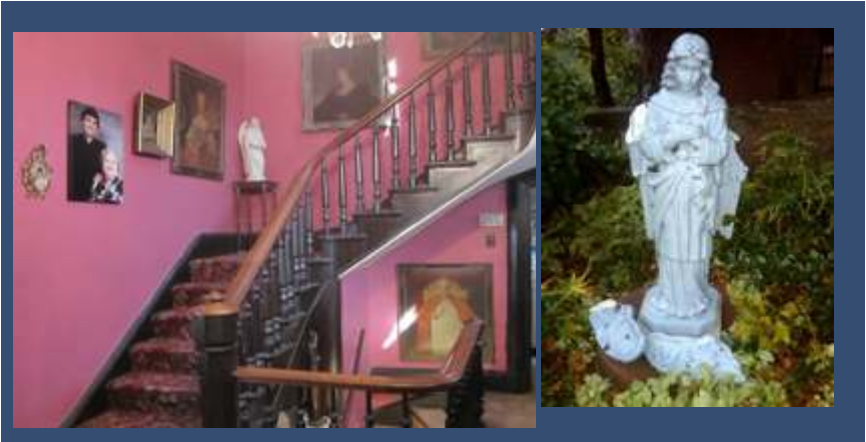
Views of the Rectory Dining Room from the Living Room Pocket Doors





Rectory Living Room, Parlor Floor





One can only wonder how on earth they got 600 people inside since only what is now the Chapel was completed! The service also marked the beginning of the ministry of the newly called Rector, the Reverend Robert E. Terry.

We are lucky to have this article because it provides us with a wonderful description of the newly constructed buildings which is not found anywhere else and a description of the original plans for a larger structure to be built, which, as it turns out, never was:

"The Chapel is a substantial stone structure of the Gothic style of architecture, and will seat about 400 persons. The interior is very handsomely fitted up, the woodwork being of Oak, and the pretty prevailing colors of the decorations are blue and gold, which contrast very pleasantly with a rich dark brown used on other portions of the building. The stained-glass windows, which have already done good service at Saint John's church, had been removed to the new edifice, and a Memorial window, bearing the inscription, "In memory of Reverend Thomas T. Guion, Rector of this church from February 1, 1853, to October 21, 1862", has been placed in the rear of the chancel, where it will remain until the new church is built. The Chapel is also furnished with a fine organ, in which Mister Archibald Arthur, the organist at Saint John's church for a long time past, will preside.

Adjoining the Chapel, on the West side, a Rectory is now in course of erection is also of stone, in the style of architecture will correspond with that of the Chapel. Between Seventh Avenue and the Chapel there are six lots of ground on which it is intended at no

distant day to erect a magnificent stone church, and the Chapel will then be used for prayer meetings and other similar purposes. The total cost of the Chapel and Rectory together with the ground has been about \$80,000 and it is estimated that the church which it is proposed to erect will cost a similar amount."

Stone, dark wood, with walls of blue and gold – the new Saint John's was certainly Victorian! According to one authority on the Victorian period,

*"It was in the 1840s that Gothic Revival, with its Romantic preference for natural dark colors and elaborate ornament, reached New York. Gothic found its ideal building material in the local brown sandstone of Connecticut and New Jersey. Soft brownstone could be cut to produce elaborate facades for brick row houses-and in no time weathered to a rich mahogany, which was considered refined. By the 1860s, brownstone had become the favorite building material of New York City."*²²

White limestone was used for aesthetic contrast for the capstones, a few decorative small columns and door arches. A few broad steps and a large, arched entranceway housing heavy oak double doors became a grand facade with an invitingly lofty entrance. From the street it offered a "come hither" view of the High Altar which in those days was directly opposite the doors where the choir is currently located.

Alongside and above the main doors of the Chapel were placed seven windows symmetrically arranged and filled with geometrically designed stained glass, gradually increasing in length and breadth from the lower ones to the top. This too hints at a spirit of "uplifting" or "reaching for above" which reflects the true spirit of Christ, Our Heavenly King.

At the very top is a modest Bellcote made of four white stone columns capped with an A-shaped stone to follow the contour of the roof and the front of the edifice itself. Such architectural fixtures sometimes contain a bell, but often do not. It is not known whether a bell was ever installed in this one but there had been a small tower and bell in the original wooden building so it may have been brought and installed here though it has long since been removed.



Baptism Font in its original position near what is now the Chapel Door.

Surviving intact for over 100 years, the Bellcote was damaged by a tornado which struck this part of Brooklyn in the fall of 2010. That storm knocked a very large stone cross from over the doorway of Saint Augustine's Roman Catholic Church behind us on Sixth Avenue and hurled a large iron cross from the top of the Presbyterian Church directly in front of us into two parked cars.

Luckily no one was badly injured, but the angel in our Memorial Garden was cast

down and broken while the stone work of the Bellcote was weakened so that the keystone arch began to fail. The angel was repaired by Building Chairman Larry Bickford and the Church Insurance Company is paying for the restoration of the Bellcote which is being done as this is prepared for print.

Episcopal Churches often display a cross on the uppermost peak of the building and Saint John's was proud to bear two of them made of marble, one atop the Bellcote and one at the back as can be seen in the photograph on page 38. It is not known when these crosses fell down or were removed but they have been missing for many years.

Another made of copper was placed over the entrance to the newly expanded church in 1889. It was blown down by a blizzard one night in the 1960's toppled it to the snowy ground. Copper being fairly valuable then, it soon disappeared and has never been seen since.

A lovely Celtic cross was installed in its place in 2005 in memory of a beloved member of the parish, Mr. Jeffrey Thomas, who had served as a Vestryman, Chorister, and Eucharistic minister and who died unexpectedly of a heart attack at the age of 39. A

brass plaque in the Narthex above the entrance is dedicated to him as well.

The inside of the church was rectangular, being approximately eighty feet long by forty feet wide and was rather simple in architecture and design. Probably the most beautiful ecclesiastical appointment was the marble font still in use today, which was placed just inside the doors.

The foundation walls of that old building deserve mention. They encompass the present undercroft or parish hall and are made of granite and other very hard stone, three feet thick. An excavation of it a few years ago reminded one of a mighty, if somewhat small, fortress. This, then, was the beginning of the present Saint John's Church at Brooklyn on Saint John's Place, a rather small church extending from the present Lady Chapel to where the choir and organ console are now located.



*The Reverend Robert E. Terry
Seventh Rector*



In contrast, the Rectory seems larger than would be warranted by such a small church building but it was built with the planned larger church in mind. It is rather distinctive in architecture and design, which is obvious to anyone who has seen it either from the outside or from the inside. All exterior window frames, except those on the garden floor, are fashioned of brownstone and limestone cornices with gothic arches. Woodwork for the most part is mahogany and walnut, plainly designed, with gothic archways free of the later Victorian filigree or "gingerbread" fussiness which so characterized decor at the end of the century.

Seven fireplaces made of Connecticut white marble were also installed. They too are neat in their simplicity rather than commanding attention in a room which they compliment, giving it a feeling of spaciousness. Their real purpose was for heating in cold weather, six designed to burn coal and one, in the Dining Room, burned wood. One can only guess what a chore it must have been to tend them day and night, climbing up and down stairs with coal and wood, cinders and ashes so that they were kept clean and tidy, free of soot and smoke.

In addition to the four dwelling floors, a cellar and attic were constructed. The cellar is dark and damp but was no doubt used for laundry and storage of household tools and equipment. The attic is tall enough to stand up in and was used to store boxes and trunks as well as the usual items deemed too good to throw out but not good enough for daily use.

In the beginning the lower, or garden, floor was occupied by a domestic couple who lived in and, to a large extent, managed the household. The woman would occupy herself with shopping, cooking and light housekeeping, while the man would undertake several roles, among them gardener and liveryman. (The nearest livery stable was but a block away on the corner of Saint John's Place and Flatbush Avenue.) The houseman was also called upon for especially heavy chores and for acting as butler from time to time.

Above is a photograph of the Chapel and Rectory taken shortly after they were erected. Saint John's Place (then Douglass Street) is seen as a dirt road and all about the immediate buildings are small farm plots. The ornate gaslights and the intricate wrought-iron fencing around the roof have long since disappeared. A view of

the churchyard from the Rectory roof in 1870 would have shown a garden, large by current New York standards, comprising all the land on the west side of Seventh Avenue now occupied by the many buildings extending from Saint John's Place to Sterling Place.

The new buildings may have been grand but financial difficulties continued to plague the parish in the new location. The Reverend Terry resigned in January of 1874 but overstayed his welcome in the Rectory and seems to have owed the parish a significant amount of money which they tried to collect and eventually complained in a report to the Bishop that he

“had not delivered to the proper officers of the church the records of the Parish and also that he had failed to pay over money still in his hands and due to the Parish.”

The records of the parish seem to have included the Baptismal Register since the one dating to this era is still missing today. Several weeks after his resignation he was apparently still in residence in the Rectory and the Vestry resolved

“The Clerk is directed to communicate these facts to the Reverend Terry and respectfully request that the Vestry be placed in position to give possession of the Rectory on the 1st of March”

so that they could rent it out. He finally left to become Rector of Christ Church in Hudson, New York.

If the end of his tenure at Saint John's was marked with stress, his next posting was a total disaster! Within a year or so he was the center of quite a scandal involving a young lady, 19 years of age, named Miss Ida Farron which led to his resignation there.^b

The Reverend Thomas S. Pycott was called to become the eighth Rector in February of 1874 with an annual salary of \$1800. At the same vestry meeting which issued the call another motion was passed to rent the Rectory out for \$1800 per year leaving the new Rector only a couple of rooms to live in!²³

²³ The legal document states in part that the church agrees to "*Let... the furnished house as per schedule hereto annexed and known as the Rectory of Saint John's Church, Brooklyn, N.Y. on Saint John's Place and next west of Saint John's Chapel, said Household Furniture to be returned to said party of the first part in as good condition as they are received, the natural use and wear thereof excepted, reserving for the Rector the first and second story corner rooms and also the small room in the rear of said house on the first floor.*"

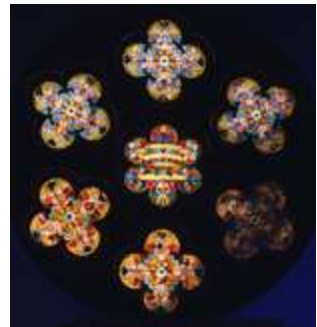


Giving up the Dream, Expanding for the Future

There is an often repeated legend at Saint John's that the parish treasurer absconded with the all parish funds in the late 1870's and lost them in the gold fields of California and that is why the large church which was to be built on Seventh Avenue was never constructed! It is a

colorful tale but so far no evidence has been found to corroborate it. However, it is clear that at least by 1885 the dream of building that larger church clearly was not going to happen anytime soon. There were just no funds available.

It is fairly easy to see what happened if you stop and do the math. Saint John's was in debt in 1868 when the old church property was sold for \$90,000. How much of that money went to pay off debt we don't know. But within a few days lots were purchased in Fort Green for \$21,000 and a mortgage or loan was taken out for \$30,000. These were later sold so probably most of the funds were recovered but it is likely that some costs were incurred. Then a few weeks later 10 lots were purchased for \$26,000 on the northwest corner of Douglass Street and Seventh Avenue in Park Slope. When the buildings were opened for services on January 16, 1870 the newspaper reports that the total cost of the buildings and ground came to about \$80,000. So even if most of the money spent in Fort Green was recovered and used to



pay off the mortgage, the \$90,000 received from the sale of the old church in 1868 was all spent and gone by 1870.

Within four years the vestry and the rector (Father Terry) were involved in a major dispute over funds and the salary of the next rector could only be paid by renting out the new rectory and leaving him only a couple of rooms for his own use!

The estimated cost of a new and larger church on Seventh Avenue was about \$80,000, far beyond the means available. So the lots on Seventh began to be sold and brownstone homes were built ending the dream of a large church on the Avenue. Along with that dream went any possibility of a major expansion which might have included offices, meeting and classroom spaces such are seen in many churches built somewhat later in the neighborhood.

But the Chapel, never intended to be the main church, was simply too small. So in February 1885 a committee was formed (composed three people, James C. Jewett, Eugene L. Herrick and Robert Bagg) to obtain subscriptions to fund the enlargement of Saint John's Church because

“we are near the point when the seating capacity of our Church will be inadequate to meet the wants of Episcopalians residing in this neighborhood. As it is, we are continually losing valuable families, for the reason that we have not a sufficient number of low-priced pews to meet the demands.”



*Church of the Good Shepherd
Hartford, CT*

The church was crowded and it needed more income. So it was enlarged in order to seat a larger crowd of people at worship who would also bring in much needed revenue. This is probably why so many churches in the city were built so large – so

they could accommodate large crowds on holy days and so that they could increase income throughout the year through the sale and rental of pews.



The Reverend George Breed,
Ninth Rector

Saint John's assumed its present cruciform shape when the chancel and the nave were added in 1885. This more than doubled the seating capacity to about 500 people. Inasmuch as the expansion followed so soon after the original construction, the plans and the stone itself matched so perfectly that it is virtually impossible to tell that the whole church as we see it today was not built at the same time and many people comment on first entering the church that it looks so much larger inside than from the street. That is because much of the sanctuary is situated behind the Rectory.

A window²⁴ was placed directly behind the high altar in 1885, which indicates that a cloth curtain (dossal) was fixed behind the altar under that window, or a wooden background (raredos) was used. In any case, the chancel-sanctuary platform was not elevated as it is today. It was no more than a small step above the nave floor, which fact was revealed in this decade when, in remodeling the sanctuary a niche was uncovered too close to the present floor to be used for a credence or table for bread, wine and water used in the Holy Eucharist.

The west wall incorporates a large Rose Window of very heavy wooden tracings, containing six quatrefoil panels of stained glass. The colors that predominate are purple, blue and amber in symmetric patterns with an overall effect of geometric or even floral design. It is not known what studio created the glass work, nor to whom the window was dedicated.

²⁴ See *Saint John's Window* bottom page 26. It was moved when chancel was redesigned in the 1970's.

In the nave were placed three prominent arched windows of geometric design on either side at pew level, and above in the roof are four triangular arched windows on each side.²⁵ Throughout the nave and in the north transept the color tones of the glass were primarily light green and yellow. The hue cast by them at midday was a pale chartreuse color, which was strongly reflected on the surrounding walls.

At the west end of the church, an enclosed porch or vestibule made of stone was to become the new main entrance, housing the original cornerstone of 1827.

The architecture has been described as "early English"; rural Gothic with a Victorian flavor. The architect was Edward Tuckerman Potter, who was engaged even before the property in Park Slope was purchased. He had impeccable ecclesiastical connections: his father was The Right Reverend Abraham Potter, Bishop of Pennsylvania; his uncle, The Right Reverend Horatio Potter, was Bishop of New York; two of his brothers, Philip Nott Potter and Henry Cadman Potter, were priests, and the latter succeeded his uncle as Bishop of New York.

The Church of the Good Shepherd, which he designed on the Colt estate in Hartford, Connecticut, is almost identical in exterior and interior design to Saint John's. Note the design of the slate roof on the picture to the left as it an excellent example of what the roof at Saint John's was like before being replaced with modern shingles in the last century. The crosses above the doorway and crosses on the roof no doubt were also like the ones lost over the years at Saint John's.

Living and Ministering in the New Buildings

Living and Ministering in the New Buildings

The Reverend George F. Breed became the ninth Rector in 1887 and served until 1903. During these sixteen years Park Slope was extensively built up as new homes, shops and churches were added. On our own corner of Seventh Avenue the Methodist Church was built on one side and the Presbyterian on the other between 1885 and 1900.

²⁵ See example of geometric glass page 26 lower right panel

As the old century ended and the new one began there was a continued excitement and enthusiasm which contributed to the growth and development of the Episcopal Church throughout the nation as well as here in Brooklyn. Sometimes in our modern world we look at the statistics of stagnant growth and think that it has always been this way. But obviously it has not. Between 1826, when Saint John's was founded, and 1869 an amazing 45 Episcopal Churches had been founded in Brooklyn! °

By 1885 the Episcopal Church was turning its attention to missionary work, both here in the United States and abroad. Missionary dioceses were founded in the mid-western and western states and territories to serve the growing population of Episcopalians moving into those areas as well as the large number of immigrants from all over Europe who went to work on railroads, farms and factories. Other missionaries were sent out to Africa, South America and Asia. All of this activity was supported by Missionary Chapters in most parishes around the nation including here at Saint John's.

A copy of a periodical entitled The Parish was found in our records. It was printed monthly by the Orphans' Press, operated by boys from a nearby orphanage which was founded and supported by the (Episcopal) Church Charity Foundation. Unfortunately all have been lost except the edition from May of 1900. It reports that there were eighteen teachers and 356 children in our parish Sunday School that year in addition to a nursery staff to care for infants during the principal Service each Sunday. That would be remarkable for any church of any denomination in today's Brooklyn! It is an example of the sort of enthusiasm which once enlivened the church. In one article which was reprinted from an English source called Saint Paul's Church Chronicle is says:

In our American Church there is equal encouragement. The growth of the Church has been remarkable. The seventeen bishops of sixty years have increased to ninety; 820 clergy to 4,800. Instead of twenty-one dioceses and jurisdictions there are now eighty. The ration of growth in communicants has far outstripped the increase in population. In the last decade the population increased twenty-four percent, while the increase in communicants was fifty-five percent.

Not until 1835 did the Church seriously undertake missionary work. Then the organization of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society was completed with a membership embracing all baptized persons. In the same year the first missionary Bishop, Jackson Kemper, was consecrated and sent to the Northwest. We need not trace the development of missionary life and work since those days, step by step, but we may well note the progress that has been made since 1885, when Dr. Langford, the late secretary of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, was called to and assumed the heavy burdens he bore with such unflinching cheerfulness.

At that time, less than fifteen years ago, the Church was represented in the home and foreign fields by 721 lay and clerical workers. Of these, sixteen were missionary bishops---three abroad, thirteen at home. The number of missionary workers has now risen to 1,630, twenty-three of whom are bishops. In 1885 the gifts for general mission work mounted to \$450, 175. The appropriations for the current years will require offerings of \$630,000.

As the church was growing it was also beginning to change liturgically. By the middle of the 19th century something that came to be called the Oxford Movement, because it began at Oxford University in England, began to influence life in the Church of England. Within a very short time that influence began to be felt here in the United States, especially in New York.

The Oxford Movement was founded upon the belief that the Holy Catholic Church is – or should be - a visible body upon earth - bound together by a spiritual unity even though divided administratively. According to this point of view, the Anglican Communion, as a part of that visible body of the ancient Catholic Church, has an intimate and unbroken connection with the early church and its teachings.

Along with this idea was a desire to revive the some of the ancient practices of that ancient church within current liturgical expression. Eventually colorful Eucharistic vestments, incense,

and bells began to return to use in some parishes in the Episcopal Church. Sacramental theology also began to be emphasized and along with that came a desire to make the primary service on Sunday the Holy Eucharist, or as it came to be called in many places, the Mass. This point of view eventually won the day in the United States, but it took over 100 years for it to do it!

In the meantime, from the mid 19th to the mid 20th centuries a conflict which came to be called High Church vs. Low Church grew ever louder in many places. Almost from its birth the Diocese of Long Island has long been called a High Church diocese by most of the rest of the church. An article by The Right Reverend Abram N. Littlejohn, the first Bishop of Long Island, is entitled "*Catholic Dogma: Its Nature and Obligations*" is an early example of why this was the case since Easter Day is referred to as "*a day of Holy Obligation*, when the Church requires every communicant to receive the Blessed Sacrament." Although most of us today see that as a simple statement of fact, the way it was phrased was perceived by many at the time as being extremely High Church, even *Romish!*

In the midst of this change the church continued to grow in numbers and influence. Architects often say that *Form Follows Function* and so it does in the Church. That is to say, churches are constructed, or renovated, to best serve the sort of worship and other activities offered there. And so it was as the great National Cathedral was planned and began to be built in Washington as a place where great and solemn Masses could be offered. Another, Saint John the Divine, began to take shape in New York City and here in Long Island a beautiful little Gothic gem was constructed and named the Cathedral of the Incarnation. All of this would eventually have a big impact on the life and worship at Saint John's. But change comes slowly in most parishes and so it was here.

Meanwhile, in those years Saint John's became noted for its music, especially for its boys choir. It was composed of both men and boys and numbered thirty-one persons, including twenty sopranos, three altos, four tenors, and four basses. The choir belonged to the Choir Guild of the diocese. Elaborate musical services were given at the "mother church," Saint Ann's in

Brooklyn Heights, once or twice a year.

The parish also continued to be very involved in outreach and concern for the poor. One aspect of that ministry was focused on the Orphan House mentioned



William Limond Guild Room

above. In 1900 it provided shelter for thirty children ranging in age from fourteen to eighteen years. They were duty-bound to attend church here each Sunday and sat in the south transept. Rather naturally, these benches were known as orphans' pews.

Saint John's choir also entertained twice a year on Sunday afternoons at Saint Giles Home for Crippled Children and at Saint John's Home for the Aged. The cost of burial was often too high for people in need so the parish also provided free burial plots for the poor.²⁶

Making Do – Doing More with Less

The first part of the twentieth century at Saint John's might be described as a time of "Making Do" or perhaps a time of

²⁶ *When City Park, near the Brooklyn Navy Yard was constructed bodies from a cemetery existing at that site were removed to The Evergreens Cemetery. To compensate the churches which had some claim to the ground where those bodies were buried, plots in the new cemetery were assigned to each denomination. The Honorable Edwin M. Grant was clerk of the vestry and also by chance city comptroller at that time and he secured a ruling that gave the Episcopal space in Evergreens Cemetery equally to Saint John's and Saint Ann's as the two original Episcopal churches in Brooklyn. Many were made available free to those in need. Up to four people could be buried in each plot and many were. There are no single plots left though there may be a few spaces available in shared graves.*

“Doing More with Less”. During this time, several new organizations were formed in the parish, but they had little room to meet or to conduct their activities. The worship space had been expanded shortly before the 19th century came to a close but as the 20th century dawned it became apparent that more space was needed for all the other activities of the parish. By then the Sunday School then numbered 349 children with fifteen teachers but there were no classrooms. There were the thirty-one choir members and no Music Office or rehearsal space. The Altar Guild, Mission Guild, and all the other organizations had to meet wherever they could find an unoccupied corner. There were only two small rooms available for all of this activity, other than the unfinished basement, where a team of men and/or boys had to work pumping the bellows during services so that the organ had enough air to play. But since the adjacent lots had been sold there was no space to build outward even if money had been available.

What money was available beyond the ordinary expenses of the parish had to be spent to reduce the debt and to keep the buildings and grounds in good condition. Without an occasional large donation few needed repairs could have been done. One great expense faced by the vestry was replacement of the public sidewalk. The old-fashioned, pot-holed tar sidewalk had to be replaced at a cost of \$1,500 – a great deal of money in those days. Luckily, an anonymous donor not only came to the rescue, but supplied enough additional funds to install a beautiful new ceiling in the church.

From 1903 to 1911 the Reverend Frank D. Page served as the ninth rector. He and Mrs. Page were both from the South, and entertained with truly-Virginian hospitality. They were also the first to raise children in the rectory. He and his family brought to the parish a great sense of hope that things would get better. The spirit of the nation itself, at this time, was one of courage and national advancement. It was characterized by the rough-riding President Theodore Roosevelt, who is remembered as the man with the "big stick."

As a result of the Spanish American War the United States came to control vast new colonial possessions and to exert power and influence throughout the western hemisphere and as far away

as Asia. New inventions including the automobile and even the airplane began to transform the way people lived. Manufacturing plants began to spring up seemingly everywhere to make new products to sell not only here but also in the new colonies and around the world. A new sense of confidence pervaded the nation and that seems to also be the case here at Saint John's.

It was during this time that Park Slope became home to an ever growing population of the very wealthy and the upper middle class. Elegance and propriety became the fashion of the Slope and it was not found to be lacking in the rectory. A lady communicant, Mrs. Marguerite Sadtler, who had been raised in this neighborhood from early childhood, remembers its gracious hospitality. She recalls visiting the Pages for high tea on Sunday afternoon as a little girl. Her place was standing behind her mother's chair in a lovely rectory parlor softly aglow with candlelight from a chandelier and wall sconces, attended by maids attired in the traditional black uniform with white, starched, lace-decorated aprons and caps. This setting would be romantic, if a bit "stiff," in any age, and one has to wonder where the funds came from for such elegant living. Perhaps the Page family were wealthy in their own rite since the salary being paid to him was not so very large. At any rate, not long after this time, Doctor Page's health began to suffer, and he returned to his native Virginia, which he loved so well.

The Reverend Thomas Bond Holland became the eleventh rector of Saint John's in 1911. The predominant worry for the new rector and his vestry was meeting the \$30,000 debt still owing on the present buildings. But the continued need for more education and activity space caused them to spend a great deal of time fund raising not only to pay the debt but to expand a bit. As we have seen, the adjacent lots having been sold, there was no place to go but down!

The parish leadership also made use of funds which had accrued in something called the Cemetery Fund to fund the repairs of the rather dark and dingy basement to create a larger, though still low ceilinged, multipurpose room and small kitchen. These had to serve as the main areas for activities and education until the more extensive renovations more than a half century later.

In 1925, fourteen years after his arrival at Saint John's, Father Holland was married a lady who was not only from Brooklyn, but also a member of the parish. It must have been a grand and ceremonial wedding that took place in the church on June 23, 1925 between T. Bond Holland, priest and rector, and Dorothy Hill Pierce. But it must have become apparent as that grand event took place that the church was in greatly in need of new paint.

Funds were raised in time for the centennial anniversary of Saint John's in 1926. An historian named Mr. Fred Clarke was asked to prepare a sermon for the 100th anniversary, which he did with great eloquence. His reflections have also provided some of the information upon which this history is based. Though finances were still tight, economically speaking, these were boon years in for the parish and many years would pass before funds would be available to do any further repairs, let alone decoration. Fortunately the rector and vestry managed to pay off most of the outstanding parish debt before the worst of the Great Depression hit the parish and nation in 1929 and the years that followed. Father Holland resigned in 1930 and died a few months later here in Brooklyn. Beautiful brass flower vases for the High Altar were given in his honor and are inscribed simply: T. Bond Holland, M.D., 1911-1930. One of these is on display in the Guild Room, the other having been lost by one of our florists.

Traditionally Episcopal Churches are not consecrated until their mortgages have been paid off. Thanks to the diligence of the Father Holland and the parish leadership the mortgage was finally paid off in 1931 just in time for the arrival of the new rector, The Reverend Gordon D. Pierce. On the Feast of Saint John, in December of that same year the Right Reverend Ernest M. Stires, Bishop of Long Island, made an official parish visitation to the parish to consecrate the building at a Solemn Mass of Dedication and Consecration.

It was a beautiful occasion and the official burning of the mortgage was joyously celebrated by all. But 1931 brought lean and tough times to the parish and the nation. Many people and many parishes were burdened with terrible financial losses and the nation was stricken with growing unemployment.

During those years Father Pierce's salary was meager and not always paid. Sometimes it was paid in foodstuffs when they were available. But it seems that God sent the right sort of pastor for those hard economic times. He was known to many as a kind and helpful counselor and always seemed to radiate a sprightly and radiant countenance to all the people he served - and they were, by no means all members of Saint John's Church.

The future for this church was precarious as the Depression squeezed more and more tightly. Offices and classrooms were still needed, but this was not a time to consider building expansion. It was more a time for meeting the needs of the hungry and needy. There was no social safety net for those who lost jobs and homes. Social Security and unemployment had not been invented yet. So the only help available to most people came from churches and the gifts of committed Christians.

A chapter of the Diocesan Women's Auxiliary was formed here at Saint John's to raise funds to feed the hungry and provide for the needs of the poor. In addition to helping those in need physically, the church also had to provide for the spiritual needs of people young and old. Father Pierce offered services of worship and Mister William S. Limond, Jr., became the superintendent of the Sunday School and became instrumental in training young minds in the church's catechism, meeting in what is now the named in his honor – the William Limond Guild Room.

Here ends the portion of the work I have completed so far. The following is not yet rewritten - so changes will be made to the text soon and pictures will be added. - Fr. Powers

The Second World War, with all its tragedy, also brought with it a prosperity which lifted the nation out of the doldrums of that terrible depression. No one who lived through those war years will forget the blackouts and brownouts, nor the air-raid wardens, who were selected from the citizenry of communities throughout the land. The Civil Defense Department used the boiler room at Saint John's as a storage place for stretchers, blankets, canes and crutches, battery-powered lights, and hard hats. The undercroft itself was

labeled an air-raid shelter and the equipment remained in place there until the early 1960s.

It is interesting to note that the parish Burial Records do not include any burials during the period of the war (December 1941 – 1945 of people who died as a result of injuries suffered in combat however, unlike today, in that war bodies of those killed in action were most often buried in cemeteries near the battlefield. A Memorial Plaque containing the names of many who served in the war from Saint John's was uncovered in the Undercroft when Father Powers first became rector in 1987. It was put aside for cleaning so that it could be hung in the Guild Room but seems to have disappeared in the clean out of the Boiler Room some years later when asbestos was professionally removed from the facility.

Though we don't have records of the names of those who served, there is no doubt that the war impacted the whole life of this parish as it did communities throughout the nation. Sons, brothers, husbands and no doubt women as well went off to serve the nation's defense. Others no doubt worked long and hard hours in the many war industries here in Brooklyn and also in the nearby strategically important Brooklyn Naval Yard. Times continued to be hard and people here rose to meet the challenges as they did throughout the nation.

Because of hard times, very little improvement was made to the property. There was no sinking fund or endowment money of any kind belonging to the parish, and it is certain that the rector endured not only a pitiful stipend, but also a rectory which was not refurbished, remodeled, or repaired in any way. After many faithful years of service during Depression and War, Father Pierce left Saint John's Church in 1950 to become rector of a smaller parish in Vermont.

The church was faced with a serious problem in calling a new rector, for the position was an important one, and yet there was so little to recompense a man for his labors, monetarily speaking. It was due chiefly to the efforts of Doctor Victor Grover, who lived just a few doors from the church, and the aforementioned Mr. Limond, that the vestry was persuaded to find funds to meet a salary of \$4,000. This, you will readily understand, is no great sum, nor was it then. But it was this situation which the Reverend Howard G.

Clark accepted in 1950. He was a man of great religious fervor, an organizer, and a planner. His accomplishments were basic and necessary, and it is difficult to realize how many good things were wrought in the space of five years under his guidance.

He began immediately to raise funds to repair and refurnish the wonderful old church and rectory buildings that had become worn and from the ravages of time. Mr. William Greve, a wealthy member of the community with a great deal of imagination led these efforts with great success.

The old church boiler was beyond repair, and money had to be found at once to replace it. So Mr. Greve's, using the bible as his inspiration, developed a rather clever device to raise funds.

Every adult parishioner was given a brand new one dollar bill and was asked to put into practice the Bible parable of the talents. Each person was told to multiply the dollar by any means and to return the proceeds on a given date. At that gathering each one was to produce his profits and explain how they were earned. Mr. Greve volunteered to match dollar for dollar. It was an enjoyable evening and a profitable one too.



Powers Memorial Window, Guild Room

The exterior of the church and rectory were also in a very sad state of disrepair and needed desperately to be re-pointed with mortar. As a matter of fact, bricks on the west wall, where the Rose Window is located, were so loose they could be removed by hand and were.

Inside the church, the old cloth-covered wiring was a serious threat to life and property and had to be replaced for a total cost of \$16,000, a very great deal of money in those days. However the cost did include the ornate iron lanterns hanging inside and those over the doors on the outside. To top it all off - literally - the old slate roof had to be replaced. The cost of a new roof is



*The Lady Chapel Altar set for
Maundy Thursday*



one thing, but the cost of removing slate is still another so the slate was removed and replaced with modern shingles.

In addition to these more mundane, but necessary repairs, Father Clark installed the chapel altar. It is still housed in the north transept and is now called the "Lady Altar" since a lovely statue of Our Lady is now in position over it. Originally it had a dossal curtain behind it, covering an existing window (which has subsequently been closed up to provide a niche for the statue of Our Lady). A cabinet maker in the parish made the altar itself, and the first dossal curtain made of deep red velvet with gold brocade trim was a gift from Saint Paul's Chapel of Trinity Church, Wall Street, and originally was used at the Blessed Sacrament Altar there. A polychrome wooden crucifix of Christ the King was given by the Women's Auxiliary as an altar piece in 1952. However, the rector received a barrage of discontent about the corpus or body clad in Eucharistic vestments, and that part of it was removed soon after. The cross has been gold-leafed and now hangs in the vesting sacristy. A wooden polychrome tabernacle, which houses the Blessed Sacrament, was given as a memorial. It also was embellished with a gold silk brocade veil. The altar was used for weekday Masses,

and there was an eight-day candle supplied, which always signifies the presence of the Holy Sacrament in the church. This same tabernacle is now placed in the sacristy and is used as an ambry or receptacle for the holy oils. It is also used on Maundy Thursday for the Altar of Repose, and on that occasion, is graced with a white silken veil and a golden crown. An extremely-heavy wrought-iron communion rail and credence table were installed at this Chapel Altar.

This chapel dedicated to the Blessed Sacrament was consecrated by the Right Reverend James P. De Wolfe, Bishop of Long Island at the time. The leaflet for that service, held on 16 September 1951, expressed the hope that the seven windows above the chapel would some day, God willing, be filled with stained glass to represent each of the Seven Sacraments. This prayer and dream came true some fourteen years later. The chapel was open to the public all day long for meditation and rest. Would that it could be today!

World War II and New Challenges

The Second World War, with all its tragedy, also brought with it a prosperity which lifted the nation out of the doldrums of that terrible depression. No one who lived through those war years will forget the blackouts and brownouts, nor the air-raid wardens, who were selected from the citizenry of communities throughout the land. During the war the Civil Defense Department used the boiler room Saint John's as a storage place for stretchers, blankets, canes and crutches, battery-powered lights, and hard hats. The undercroft itself was labeled an air-raid shelter and the equipment remained in place there until the early 1960s. It is interesting to note that the parish Burial Records do not include any burials of people killed in combat. This is not so strange since, unlike in today's conflicts when bodies are mostly returned home for burial, in



*Polychrome Cross minus
Jesus now hangs in the
Vesting Sacristy*

those days the bodies of those killed in action were buried in cemeteries near the battlefield. An old dusty plaque was found in the boiler room many years ago which listed the names of a number of people who died in that war Saint John's Church. The Rector set it aside to be cleaned and installed in the Guild room at a later date but it disappeared, probably in the clean out of the boiler room that was done to remove all asbestos from the building in 2004.

There is no doubt that the war impacted the life of this parish as it did communities throughout the nation. Sons, brothers, husbands and no doubt women as well went off to serve the nation's defense. Others no doubt worked long and hard hours in the many war industries here in Brooklyn and also in the nearby strategically important Brooklyn Naval Yard. Times continued to be hard and people here rose to meet the challenges as they did throughout the nation.

Even though the Depression came to an end as government spending was raised to create jobs in the defense industry, the sacrifices and demands of the war made it impossible to make any major improvements to the property. By 1950 the rectory and the oldest part of the church building were over 80 years old and beginning to deteriorate rapidly. The exterior of the church and rectory needed desperately to be re-pointed with mortar. Bricks on the west wall of the church below the Rose Window were so loose they could be removed by hand and some had actually been stolen when such things were somewhat rare during the war years! Inside the church the old cloth-covered wiring was a serious threat to life and property. The plaster and paint in both the church and rectory had become dingy and cracked in places.

Throughout this period of economic depression and the deprivations of war Father Pierce had conducted a dedicated ministry of pastoral care. He had come to the parish in 1929, before the Great Depression began, and left about five years after the largest war the world has ever seen had come to an end. In those years he had been paid a pitifully small salary and had lived and worked in buildings severely in need of maintenance. When he left in 1950 to go to a smaller parish in Vermont the Saint John's was in the critical situation of having virtually no funds and a dilapidated plant which would attract few applicants seeking to become rector!

Thanks be to God, some remarkably talented and dedicated lay leadership came to the rescue. Dr. Victor Grover, Mister Limond, Mr. William Grieve and several others were committed to saving the parish. Though they were only able to offer a salary of only \$4000 a year, they managed to attract the Reverend Howard G. Clark who became Rector in 1950. He was probably more attracted to the enthusiasm of these lay leaders and their vision of what Saint John's could be than he was to what Saint John's had become. It was soon clear that they had selected just the right person to lead them into a new era.

Father Clark was a man of great religious fervor, an organizer, and a planner, in short, exactly what the parish needed at that time! In the five years that he served as Rector a great many of the most necessary and costly repairs were accomplished. A variety of schemes were developed to raise funds to conduct these repairs, one that especially captured the imagination of the congregation and neighborhood was adapted from the biblical parable of the talents. Every adult parishioner was given a brand new one dollar bill and was asked to put into practice the teaching of the parable - to multiply the dollar by any means and to return the proceeds on a given date. At that gathering each one brought their dollar back along with whatever profits they had made and explained what they had done. Mister William Greve then matched their offering dollar for dollar. It was excise and a great deal of money was raised. But perhaps the best thing to come out of the experience was the enthusiasm that it produced among those who participated.

Within a fairly short time the exterior walls of the church and rectory were repaired and the electrical wiring was replaced. The electrical project alone cost over \$16,000, a very large sum in those days, but included the placement of the ornate iron lanterns that now grace the exterior of the church over the doors of both chapel and main entrance. To literally top it all off, the old slate roof had to be removed at a great expense and then replaced with less costly modern shingles. However, photos of the old slate roof were consulted when the roof was replaced once again in the early 1990's and the new shingles were designed to replicate the green and brick red slate design.

*Wooden Tabernacle for
Lady Chapel*

In addition to these necessary structural repairs, a beautiful Chapel

Altar was installed in the north transept for more intimate daily services. Originally it had a dossal curtain behind it, covering an existing window which was later closed up to provide a niche for a beautiful statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary, so it is now called the Lady Chapel. The statue was donated as a memorial to two mothers, Anna Kuhl and Deloris Derrick. A cabinet maker in the parish made the altar and the first dossal curtain (made of deep red velvet with gold brocade trim) was a gift from Saint Paul's Chapel of Trinity Church, Wall Street.

The window which had been closed up was perhaps one of the oldest stained glass windows in the church. It matches those which are in the wall separating church from the Guild room today. These Windows probably were brought here from the old wooden structure in Brooklyn Heights. Funds were raised in 2005 to have these windows taken out, repaired and then reinstalled by a local Park Slope stained glass artist.

A few years later the window long closed up window was beginning to fall apart. Father Powers and several other donors raised funds to have it removed and repaired. It was then installed in the Guild Room in memory of Father Powers' parents, Agnes and Clarence. It replaced a plain glass window in that room and provides a golden glow to enhance the beauty of the room. It was blessed by Bishop Provenzano on his first visit to Saint John's church in 2010.

A polychrome wooden crucifix of Christ the King was given by the Women's Auxiliary as an altar piece in 1952 to hang just in front of the original dossal curtain. However, the battle between High and Low Church was still being fought in those days and the rector received a barrage of discontent about the corpus or body clad in Eucharistic vestments so that part of it was removed soon after. When the statue of the Blessed Virgin was installed, this gold leafed cross was moved to the vesting sacristy.

Perhaps this is a good place to digress for a moment from the particular history of this church and consider the implications of the history of the wider Church upon this more particular history. In 1952 most Episcopalians were white, upper middle class, and conservative. Morning Prayer (a service that most of our young people today have rarely even seen) was the major service of worship most Sundays in most of our parishes.

Eucharistic vestments were seldom used most places and incense was a rare and exotic substance! All of this began to change in the decade of the 1960's as the Church became involved in the civil rights movement. Many conservatives left the church and many liberal Roman Catholics and others joined the church. This editor was one of them, having converted to the Episcopal Church in 1968 while in college.



Father Donald James
Gardner

Converts brought their own history and spirituality with them. At the same time Vatican II began to have a great influence not only on the Roman Catholic world but also on all other liturgical churches, each of which began to experiment with new versions of liturgical expression. As the Church began to embrace the anti-war movement of the late 1960's and early 1970's more conservatives left and more liberals joined.

Statistics of those days indicated that the Episcopal Church did not grow in numbers. But as is often the case, statistics failed to show what was really happening in the Church. In fact the decades of the 1960's and 1970's were a time of great change as the Church became much more racially and economically diverse. By 1976 the Episcopal Church had experimented with a variety of liturgies which had produced the most radical change ever seen in its new Prayer Book. After the adoption of the new Prayer Book in 1976 change accelerated even more.

For the first time the Prayer Book declared that the major service on Sunday in all parishes would be the Holy Eucharist. As parishes celebrated this Sacrament week after week most began to adopt Eucharistic vestments and some of the other trappings once known only in so called "High Churches". Within a few years the once familiar terms "High" and "Low" were almost never used since the liturgical traditions that they described merged together to form something new and more vibrant.

All of these changes on a national level had their impact upon this parish of Saint John's in Park Slope. Having moved into a prominent neighborhood of upper middle class people, for awhile Saint John's forgot its roots in that small wooden church built by a radical liberal priest who welcomed everyone to its altars. In the early 1950's when the greatest subject of discussion in the parish was whether or not to have a crucifix of any sort in the church, immigrants from the West Indies were beginning to arrive in ever increasing numbers. But, to our shame, they were not always welcomed by everyone in the parish. Of course they could come to worship and they did in slowly increasing numbers. But they



***Father Clifford Buck
Fifteenth Rector***

were often subtly reminded that they should remain in their "place".

One dear lady named Ismay Watson told this editor that she came to Saint John's in those days and wanted to join the Altar Guild. After a bit of discussion the good ladies of the Guild agreed to hire her to be the Guild "Laundress". That way she could serve and they didn't have to officially make her a member of the Guild. But they underestimated Mrs. Watson and they misread the future of the church. Mrs. Watson stayed and in time





Tabernacle Door in Chancel

became a beloved member of the Guild and of the parish even as most of those white ladies moved away or died and were replaced by one of the most diverse congregations in the Diocese of Long Island.

Today Saint John's is once more the racially diverse parish it was initially built to be. At the same time as that change in demographics was taking

place the way worship was shared here also began to change, slowly at first. The controversy over the crucifix was only one of the battles in the struggle that change was begetting.

A wooden polychrome tabernacle, which houses the Blessed Sacrament, was given as a memorial. It also was embellished with a gold silk brocade veil. The altar was used for weekday Masses, and there was an eight-day candle supplied, which always signifies the presence of the Holy Sacrament in the church. This same tabernacle is now used on Maundy Thursday for the Altar of Repose, and on that occasion, is graced with a white silken veil and a golden crown. An extremely-heavy wrought-iron



communion rail and credence table were installed to complete the appointments of this Chapel and it was originally dedicated to the Blessed Sacrament.

Bishop James P. DeWolfe consecrated the Chapel Altar on September 16, 1951. A leaflet from the service expressed hope that the seven windows above would one day be filled with stained glass to represent each of the seven sacraments. This prayer and dream became a reality some fourteen years later in 1960 when the current lancet windows were installed with symbols of the sacraments in the lower panel of each with images of seven beloved saints above.²⁷

²⁷ See windows page 28

Father Clark was also interested in the ministry to children and helped to form a chapter of the national Brotherhood of Saint Andrew for teenage boys who met weekly in the undercroft. The big event of the year was a George Washington's Communion Breakfast held in the diocesan church of Saint Ann.



In many ways their activities resembled those of the Boy Scouts with the added practice of prayer and devotion.

The Girls Friendly Society was also founded around the same time. It is well known to many Episcopalians who come from other parts of the Anglican Communion and its activities may be compared to that of the Girl Scouts. Saint John's girls delighted in performing a play each year or a show composed of various skits. Then too, there was a Young People's Fellowship for older teenagers was started which met weekly on Fridays or Sundays. At one point in the 60s the group attracted so many young people from the neighborhood that it had to be limited to thirty-five active members. There were more than one hundred others who wanted to join. Perhaps its popularity had something to do with the fact that there was a juke-box dance held every Friday night in the Undercroft, open to all the youngsters of the community!

All this was accomplished with God's help and the generosity of the people of the congregation and the community. As a result of the huge amount of work done on our buildings in this period and the needs for further improvements which were discovered, a building fund was initiated. Ever since a special envelope for each month is distributed with the regular offering envelopes to provide funds for Building Care. This fund continues to be a very important

part of the church's operating expenses inasmuch as it does provide funds for the constant repairs needed to the building.

These were five very busy years of ministry and building. The rectory was also a rather busy place, for Father Clark and his wife had five young daughters. Upon meeting Father Buck for the first time, Mrs. Clark made a comment which he will never forget. She said, "*We love this rectory because it always sings.*" Father Clark left Saint John's to become Dean of the Cathedral in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania in 1955. He later joined the staff of the Philadelphia Divinity School and he eventually was made executive director of the Episcopal Church Building Fund. He died at an early age in the springtime of 1975.

In the year that Father Clark left, the Reverend Donald James Gardner was elected and came to Saint John's as thirteenth rector. He continued to foster the progressive and exacting work so ably undertaken by his predecessors, especially in regard to the youth programs. A highlight each year for the children was Cathedral Day when Bishop De Wolfe invited all Sunday School children of the diocese to meet with him in Garden City on the cathedral grounds. That day always concluded with devotions in the cathedral and the bishop's warm greeting and blessing from the main steps, at which time he awarded banners to deserving Sunday Schools for their attendance during the year. Like the Brooklyn Sunday School Union, mentioned above, this too disappeared a few years ago and is also relegated to memory.

The lovely old brownstones of our neighborhood were beginning to show signs of age and in many cases neglect by time Father Gardner arrived here in 1955. Many were becoming apartment buildings and rooming houses, which increased the population of Park Slope but at the same time altered the character and social life of the neighborhood. The church and rectory were deteriorating along with the other buildings in the community and sorely needed plaster and paint and those other things that are needed to restore old buildings to their former greatness and beauty. It was with this task that Father Gardner and the vestry busied themselves. They established an Interior Decoration Fund, which eventually reached the sum of \$21,000, part of which was spent on needed repairs to the Rectory while most went to redecorate the Church worship space.

On 14 April 1956 Father Gardner was married in Engelwood, New Jersey, to a Miss Janet Elizabeth Washburn. He left Saint John's in 1958 to become rector of Saint Barnabus in Ardsley, New York and within the same year, The Reverend Clifford Allen Buck was called as the fifteenth rector of the parish in May, 1958. The work of redecoration continued as Father Gardner left and Father Buck took up his duties.

The month following his arrival, and after over two months of holding services in the undercroft while work was being done, Saint John's opened its doors to a beautifully-decorated edifice. The building had not been painted since the parish's 100th Anniversary, thirty-one years before. Extensive repair work to the plaster was necessary and the color chosen was a very pale green.

The sanctuary ceiling arches, where three glorious angels are painted in oil were embellished with twenty-two carat gold leaf by two artisans from Italy. This, of course, made the sanctuary wood look much darker because of the many coats of stain and varnish that had been applied over the years. Therefore, in keeping with the style of the day, the high altar itself and its oak-wood reredos were bleached to a honey color and at a cost of about \$1,000. In 2008, when the chancel was repainted a deep blue color some of that wood was restored to its darker color. As of the time of this printing plans have been made to restore the rest of the woodwork in the altar area to something closer to its original color.

At the same time, the hand-carved panel of da Vinci's Last Supper which is now displayed about the choir was cleaned and also lightened. The wooden tabernacle door was replaced with a golden door depicting the Lamb of God holding the Resurrection Banner, seated on the Book of Life with its seven seals, so beautifully described in the Apocalypse or the Book of Revelation by Saint John the Divine, our own patron. In each corner of the door there is a sparkling amethyst stone, again mentioned by Saint John.

Then, finally, the offerings and donations made possible the purchase of new red damask cushions for every pew.

The newly renovated worship space looked great, but was also greatly in need of a new musical instrument. In 1960 a gift of \$20,000 was received from an anonymous donor supplied the funds to replace the old Jardine tracker pipe organ, built and installed in

1893. A contract was made with the Hillgreen-Lane Organ Builders of Ohio for a two-manual, fourteen-rank pipe organ with two sections exposed in the sanctuary arches, a solid oak console with draw-knobs, a set of tubular chimes.

The organist, Mr. Keith Verhey, agreed to play the dedication recital in true classic style, as he had been taught at the Julliard School, if money could be found and a new organ procured. He was staging and directing two night-club shows in Manhattan and had temporarily moved away from classic organ repertory. The installation of the instrument covered a span of nine months, far longer than expected, but it was finally dedicated by Archdeacon Saunders at a Sunday afternoon recital on 1 April 1962, much to our relief and joy. A careful observer will note an unpretentious little brass plaque on the console bearing this inscription: "In grateful memory, William M. Blake, R.I.P., 1963," the name of the donor who made all this possible.



In 1966 the organ console was moved from the chancel to the south transept. The choir, of course, was moved to that area also. The reasons are both aesthetic



and acoustical. With the advent of plainer and freer sanctuaries and free-standing altars, it was believed that this church would be enhanced with a spacious sanctuary, one that would afford the worshipers a feeling of closeness to the altar, not separated from it by choir and acolyte pews. The music and the choir itself would be an auxiliary or adjunct to public worship and not a focal point of every service. In addition to that, the acoustics of the building, which are really quite good, would be far better utilized from the transept walls and ceiling, rather than from the sanctuary arches where the sound was in part confined.

The director of music at the time was Mr. Steve Empson, whose pleasure with the new arrangement inspired him to seek any means possible to enlarge the size, tone, and scope of the fairly new organ. To that end he applied his talents and most generous and painstaking labor. Ambitious specifications were drawn up. The two largest factors contemplated were the erection of a third division or housing which would utilize a large section of the sacristy above head level and become the "swell" or "enclosed" organ. The chancel organ could then be divided into two divisions, one called the "great organ" and the other the "positif." This in turn necessitated the re-doing of the console, from which the music is played. Three divisions in an organ require three keyboards or manuals. Fund for this project were provided from the Book of Remembrance, some from quiet individual donations, and an additional \$10,000 was donated by the Reverend Clifford Buck, then rector of the parish, from funds he had received as a personal bequest.

No company name can be attached to the present organ, for it represents a compilation of many sources, and though it is unique for that reason alone, it is nonetheless one of great beauty. A series of Sunday afternoon recitals with guest organists from such divergent places as Rochester, New York, and Liverpool, England, was presented almost hi-monthly for a span of two years. All of this led the rector and vestry to contemplate for Saint John's and its people a major renovation, creating, hence, an expanded sanctuary area.

Also in the 1960's three stages of redevelopment were planned for the undercroft. In Father Clark's time that part of the church was modernized with up-to-date kitchen facilities, which for the most part are still in use. The main room was painted and

decorated with murals, the then existing stage was supplied with theatrical curtains, and handsome easy chairs, folding chairs, and tables were procured.

Nearly every undertaking has a pitfall or two, and the undercroft renovations were no exception. In creating the new stairway and door to be found near today's restrooms, a very large boulder was found in excavating and breaking through the original thirty-six inch foundation wall. After three days of attempting to break it up with air hammers, the workmen gave up and instead dug a hole great enough to bury it below the needed space. In all it required six working days of three men! The auditorium was divided into three sections with Philippine mahogany accordion folding doors. The entire undercroft was provided with recessed lighting, tile flooring in every room and the hallway and choir room were covered with pecan wood paneling. The total cost was nearly \$40,000.

Along with all this building and repair activity, in 1960 Park Slope suffered a great tragedy only a few steps from the entrance to Saint John's Church. In December a United Airlines and a TWA jet collided in mid-air over Staten Island on a dreary icy morning. The



United jet made it to Brooklyn, perhaps heading for a clearance in Prospect Park. It nose-dived, however, into the Pillar of Fire Church, which was located on Sterling Street directly behind Saint John's Church. One hundred and fifty people were killed in the crash which destroyed the Church on Sterling Place

as well as a brownstone funeral parlor and three stores. The Reverend Harry Stirling, an elderly Curate at Saint John's, was finishing an Ember Friday Mass when the explosion hit, and thought at first that the boiler had blown up. He rushed to the scene, and attended in his characteristic fatherly and gentle way, the only survivor, who was a young boy from Illinois. The news media made

much of this incident and followed it to its sad conclusion, when the lad died twenty-eight hours later.

Repairs and renovations to our buildings continued during these socially turbulent years. In 1963, the beautiful old rectory was in need of immediate repair. The kitchen floor was dangerously weak, so much so, in fact, that the contractor advised that the clothes washer not be used for fear of its dropping to the cellar! The metal ceiling had rusted and given way in places, and immediate attention was absolutely necessary. A bequest of \$10,000 from William Greve was earmarked for that purpose. After six months of extensive remodeling, Saint John's Rectory had a new and completely modern kitchen complete with panel walls and appliances. In 1972 a new heating boiler was installed in the Rectory, bathrooms were modernized. Like so many other repairs to our historic buildings over the years, this was accomplished by means of an unexpected and very generous legacy, about which there is a brief but interesting story.

The first funeral conducted by Father Buck, a few days after he arrived in 1958, was that of a man in the parish who was survived solely by his elderly wife. Her circumstances thereafter seemed so meager, both socially and financial, that he encouraged her to become actively involved in parish activities, especially in the Women's Auxiliary, and she was invited to call at the rectory any day at noontime to share a bite to eat and a bit of socializing. After a year or two she disappeared, and the church knew nothing of her circumstances or her whereabouts. Fourteen years later a lawyer contacted the rector, asking for his services in the burial of Mrs. Agnes Brown. It was then revealed that her monetary assets had been bequeathed to Saint John's. This \$27,000 inheritance was used in good part in the renovation of the rectory, which had been offered to her so long before as a place of respite.

Nearly every year has brought with it a need for repair or improvement to this property but few years have seen the needs met by such generosity and from such an unlikely source! In 1971 the former altar was moved forward and crowned with a polished marble slab, and placed on a re-designed floor of blue carpeting. The center of attention or focal point of a church is always the altar. Behind and above our altar is placed a nine-foot crucifix of the Risen Christ,

carved of linden wood and fashioned in Oberammergau, Germany, in the year of the Passion Play, 1970. The figure is slightly highlighted in pastel colors to dramatize the role with which He is most often depicted. This now hangs in the place of the former reredos, all the heavy wood paneling of that area was removed to afford a sense of loftiness and simplicity. The arches containing the organ pipes were covered with a rich blue damask and the dark and cumbersome chancel rail is supplanted by hand-crafted iron with shining brass caps. The communion rails were moved to sides so that they no longer separated the people visually from the holy space. All this was done to create a feeling of closeness to the Lord's table.

Also 1971, a shrine of the Blessed Mother housed in the west wall of the church directly beneath our Rose Window. It is a warm and lovely representation of Our Lady, standing serenely with the Christ Child in her arms. Again, it is sculptured in wood by craftsmen from Germany, with a light oak triptych-like background. It was given by a man as a memorial to his mother, Anna L. Kuhel. It was later moved to its present location just over the Altar in the Chapel.

The need for adequate meeting spaces and classrooms continued to be unmet and to address this need in a small way the large room which adjoined the main floor of the church, known for many years as the memorial room (no one seems to know just when this flat roofed addition to the Church was built nor to whom it was designed to be in memory of!) was divided in 1974, with the larger section being paneled in wood, carpeted, and graced by an oriental rug and two magnificent brass and crystal chandeliers imported from Spain. One of these fell a few years later and was placed in storage in the boiler room until it could be repaired. It is still there! The other however was moved to the center of the room and provides lovely and adequate lighting. A family in the parish presented a splendid heavy oak break-front and a huge mirror-backed china cabinet to the parish which are now beautifully placed in this room. The newly decorated and furnished room was blessed during the Solemn Mass of Palm Sunday in 1975 and named the William S. Limond, Jr. Guild Room. In 1989 a beautiful Tiffany Stained Glass window (see details below) was donated to the Church by Mrs. Jill Reintjes. Funds were donated to restore this window and place it into a light box in the inner wall of the Guild Room by Mrs. Ivy

Latchman. This beautiful room still serves the parish as a much needed meeting area and is now an attractive walk through to the staircase connecting the Church floor to the Undercroft.

As can be seen, a great deal of energy was expended in the mid years of the 20th century to repair our aging buildings and to renovate them for ministry in the modern world. All of this took place in spite continued financial difficulties which faced the parish. Church attendance always drops after a war, and consequently, income does too. The ethnic composition of the Slope was changing radically, and with it, religious affiliations and fiscal circumstances. The depression and this consequent change put the church in a precarious situation. A very modest endowment fund accumulated during the first part of the 60s, amounting to roughly \$13,000, which was invested in the diocesan mutual fund. In the summer of 1963 a lady, Mrs. Palen B. Nelson, who was born two blocks away on Park Place eighty-seven years before, died, leaving half her fortune to Saint John's Church, and half to Saint John's Home for the Aged. Her will was written in 1960. After the estate was settled, Saint John's received its portion of the legacy in the amount of over \$400,000. This was the seed long prayed for from which Saint John's current Endowment Fund has grown.

After a few years of expensive investment counseling service, the vestry elected to handle the account, exercising the right of the Rector and a Financial Advisor to buy and sell investments with vestry approval. Today the Rector, Wardens and Treasurer share investment responsibility with the Financial Advisor with the approval of Vestry as a whole.

As in most other parishes, financial difficulties continued to plague the parish but it is worthwhile noting that at least since the early 1980's the vestry has been pleased to point out at Annual Parish Meetings that, though there may be some difficulty raising funds from time to time to pay regular expenses, the parish has been and remains debt free, owning no mortgage or other such financial obligations.

The History Book of 1976 states that "It was the stubborn determination of the rector with the absolute concurrence of the vestry that this money should be placed in an inviolable endowment fund, the principal of which could be expended onl if the survival of the parish itself were at stake." Alas, this never seems to have been

practiced at Saint John's. By the time the current Rector, Father Powers, was called to the parish in February of 1987 fully one half of the regular expenses of the parish were paid from Endowment Funds. Within a couple of years of his call to the parish the floor of the Church itself had to be shored up with steel beams to ensure the integrity of the building at a cost \$35,000. Within another few years another \$35,000 or so had to be expended to repair the old drainage system of the Church which was causing frequent severe flooding in the Undercroft. Sometimes down, sometimes up due to extraordinary expenses and the vagaries of the market place, over the years the Endowment Fund has grown due to solid investment practices and the addition of further bequests received from members of the parish. It continues to provide a cushion in emergencies and the bit extra which is usually needed each year to pay for the daily upkeep of the buildings and for the overall ministry of the Parish.

Korea, Civil Rights, Vietnam, Stonewall, The Women's Movement

Parish History books are often silent on the great issues and struggles which forge the society in which the church lives and works. Hopefully the parishes whose history is being recounted were not so silent on the issues of the day. The Gospel is the Good News of Jesus Christ freely offered to peoples of all times and places and received by them within the context of their struggles and their joys. Parish History books however, are based upon the available records maintained within Church offices and this usually consists of Vestry Minutes augmented perhaps by a few old newsletters and other documents which some secretary or rector decided were worth sticking away in a file cabinet somewhere. Saint John's Church history is no exception. Although research continues, most of the information available to form the basis of this history comes from Vestry Minutes and the Vestry is primarily responsible for the Finances of the parish and the upkeep of its Building and Grounds.

The period of time from the end of World War II through the 1970's included major sociological struggles within American society which resulted in the most dramatic changes in the history of that society – and in the Church which lives and operates within the social

structure. From the sources currently available to us, we know nothing about the sacrifices of the people in this parish during the Korean War and the subsequent communist fears of the McCarthy Era. In the mid 1960's the war in Vietnam began to escalate as did the anti-war movement within the nation as a whole. Though it is assumed that members of the parish served in Vietnam during this era, the war and its devastating cost to the people of the United States and to Saint John's is not mentioned in previous history books of the parish and little can be gleaned from Vestry Minutes on this topic. The Civil Rights struggle which transformed our nation and society and the Stonewall riot here in our own New York City which led to the struggle for the rights of Gay and Lesbian Americans are never mentioned within those pages. Those minutes also are silent on the struggle of women for equal rights in society and for ordination within the Church.

Surely sermons were offered which addressed all of these issues and struggles. There were no doubt deep discussions within Bible Study classes and with the Rectors of the parish as people sought to help each other understand and deal with war, civil liberties and change. But little of that oral history remains. Further research will be conducted which may lead to later revisions of this History of Saint John's as, hopefully, more resources become available.

Preparing for the New Millennium

After 28 years of faithful service to the parish, Father Clifford Buck died in 1985 while still in office as Rector. Father Buck was cremated and his ashes now rest in our Memorial Garden. Father Clarence H. Powers was elected Rector and took up his duties on February 1st, 1987. Father Powers was born in Memphis, Tennessee, graduated from Memphis State University, served in the Army during the Vietnam War. He completed his studies for ministry at General Theological Seminary in New York and was ordained Priest at Christ Church, Nashville in 1977. He served as Vicar of Saint James Church, Dickson County, Tennessee for three years. In 1980 he returned to New York and began studies toward a Doctorate

at New York University. During this time he also served as Editor of the Ecumenical Bulletin, a publication of the Episcopal Church Ecumenical Office at the National Church Center. At the time of his election he had served in the Diocese of Long Island for almost seven years as Rector of Saint Stephen and Saint Martin's Church in Brooklyn.

When Father Powers came to Saint John's in 1987 the only office space was a small room in the basement of the Rectory. That office was equipped with a typewriter and a rather ancient copy machine. Soon after his arrival new offices were constructed in the undercroft for the Secretary and the Rector. Computers were purchased and a database was created including the parish membership records to facilitate communication and administration. Within a short time the office was also equipped with a new copy and fax machines and a full time Secretary was hired.

In 1988 an Outreach Committee, called the Social Concerns Committee, was formed to participate with other churches and non-profit groups in identifying and meeting the needs of people within the community. This group has organized ministry to people with AIDS, the gathering of food and clothing for the poor, toys and gifts for the needy at Christmas and much more. As a result of the ministry of this Committee within the parish Father Powers and other parish leaders sought and received a small grant from the Diocese to form the Brooklyn Episcopal AIDS Committee, the first such structure within the Diocese of Long Island. That group operated from Saint John's for several years and later led to the creation of the Diocesan AIDS Commission.

Evangelism and Congregational Development were priorities for the new Rector. Father Buck had been seriously ill for a number of years before his death and the parish had been vacant for two years. As a result, except for Sunday Services (and one 10 am Mass on Wednesdays, the Church building was only open a few hours a week when AA met in its undercroft. The rest of the time it was locked up. Since it is on a side street off the main route (Seventh Avenue) many people in the community thought that it had closed with the death of Father Buck! To address this issue Father Powers began to seek out and invite community groups to meet at the parish. Within a few months these groups began to include Block Associations, Hand Gun Control Advocates, community Theater

groups, Girl Scouts, and many more. These people began to spread the word that Saint John's was not only open, it was available! During this same period around \$5,000 was raised from donations to install an electronic Carillon with speakers on the roof of the Rectory to ring out the hours and to play hymns each evening. Around \$2,000 was donated by one generous member of the parish to install flood lights in the garden to light the exterior of the building so that it was visible from Seventh Avenue. It was visibly clear to the neighborhood that Saint John's was open for business!

In 1992 the Rector and Vestry moved at long last to address the often expressed need for classroom and meeting spaces at Saint John's. A fire damaged brownstone building was purchased at 38 Seventh Avenue for \$325,000. It was immediately behind the Church and was a part the original Saint John's Church property which was sold during financial difficulties mentioned above in the latter part of the 19th century. At long last our Sunday School had a home base! Six classrooms were laid out, one on the ground floor, the front parlor room of the first floor and four rooms on the third floor. The top floor of the building was a sort of loft space and was used for awhile as home to our Youth Group and for rehearsal space for several community theater groups as well as for Yoga and Dance classes offered to the community. The second floor was already a complete apartment when we bought the building and after a minimal amount of work it served to house our Parish Sexton. Later the Ground floor was converted into an apartment for our Assistant Priest.

However, renovation of the building was stalled for a lack of funds. After 10 years in which the building hosted all the activities listed above in spite of its only partial renovation, it was sold for just over \$1 million, over twice the amount invested. The Endowment Fund was replenished and funds were made available for long needed repairs and renovations to the Church and Rectory buildings

Making use of some of the funds received from the sale the Vestry carried out a number of projects in a campaign called "***Making Old Things New***". Asbestos was removed from both the Church and Rectory buildings at a cost of \$24,000. A new boiler replaced one that had become dangerous in the Rectory for a total cost of \$5,500. The old sound system in the Church was replaced

with excellent modern equipment for around \$15,000. Air Conditioning was installed in the Church for another \$15,000. One of the most expensive projects in this time was the repair of the Rectory Gutters.

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Reopening of Saint Johns Church — Reminiscences of Old Brooklyn

The old "*Church in the Meadows*" endeared to us by so many pleasant associations and regretful memories was re-opened yesterday by the memorable Bishop Potter, in the presence of a full congregation. Just before the sermon, the Pastor, Mr. Guion, in brief and appropriate words, welcomed his parishioners back to, their old homestead, and commended their liberality In the reconstruction of the good old Church, which had been effected without any great burden of debt. Bishop Potter, on taking the pulpit, congratulated the congregation and its beloved pastor on the consummation of their labors, and delivered a most impressive discourse. At evening services, the Reverend E.M. Johnson spoke in eloquent words of the old times before us. The historical portion of the Domine's sermon is all we can find room for:

Twenty three years ago, after having, been admitted to orders about a year before, your preacher came to reside upon this island. Saint James' Church, New York was the scene of his labors for twelve years. Private business calling him frequently to visit Brooklyn, he became convinced that the growth of this place would soon warrant the erection of a second Episcopal Church in the spring of 1828, he caused a church to be built at an expense of \$3,600, on this spot. At the laying of the corner stone, it was called Saint John's, which name was determined upon by lot. This was done without any previous, conference with any of the inhabitants, for fear of exciting the jealousy of the members of the old church.

The church, and most of you saw it before its' first enlargement, was opened by your preacher on the 24th of September, 1826 the first time for divine service. The services of the Reverend J. Hicks were procured, and during the fall and winter the pulpit was alternately supplied by him and myself. I do not think the number of families who attended was more than

eight or ten, individually 'from twenty to thirty. In the spring of '27, I removed with my family to Brooklyn, and resigned the charge which I had so long held and left New York, and with it a salary that had hitherto, from necessity, been my chief support. The communion was first administered to nineteen communicants at Easter, '27, of whom six are now of our number—two only having died—and the rest, have removed away or left us.

The first election of wardens and vestrymen was held on Easter Monday, '27; of those who were elected, one warden and three vestrymen are at present members, and have continued to belong to this corporation. One of the first efforts made to enlarge the usefulness of this church was the establishment of the Sunday school in this neighborhood. It began to be thickly settled, and by a class of people whose children much needed instruction. A few were found who volunteered their aid, and a Sunday school for children was then established.

The year after its establishment the school house was built by subscription at an expense of \$600. Since then there has been at different , times connected with this school 77 teachers and 909 children; the present number of conductors is 21, and of children 272. Many of those who have been teachers, and some who have been scholars are now settled in life—some heads of families and members of this congregation. One is in the University, another a candidate for the same and two others having that in view.

A valuable library, which I wish were larger than it is, belongs to the school, consisting of 400 volumes. This School has been supported by collections and subscriptions; the whole amount for the school and for the library is about \$800, an amount of money well laid out yielding an usurious interest. In the year 1831, (through the, instrumentality of my late lamented wife) the ladies of the congregation formed a Benevolent Society. This Society has held its regular' meetings and an annual fair. It has been instrumental in promoting a spirit of active benevolence among those who are disposed to the exercise of this Christian grace. It has enabled its members to extend aid to the distressed, and has afforded succor to many, very many, needy individuals. It has for the last two years consisted of 92 members, and during its existence has distributed \$1,500 in various acts of charity and mercy. It has been doubly useful to those who have contributed and to those who have received of its funds. During each year since its existence collections have been made for various objects connected with our missionary establishments: our Bible Society, the Colonization Society and Tract Society. In June, 1833, a Missionary Association was formed in the congregation. Since that time there has been collected for various objects the sum of \$842, and it is believed a sum not much short of that had been previously collected, making in all about \$1,500 for these commendable objects. In the spring of 1832 it was determined by the vestry to enlarge and beautify this temple of the Lord—the building, originally 50 feet square, was extended to its present length, 85 feet, the tower built, and the church as we now see it; a bell and organ procured. This was done at an expense of about \$8,000- \$4,000 of which was generously advanced by Trinity Church, upon condition that at the expiration of ten years

the church should be placed out of debt. The debt of the church is now \$5,000, being its original coat together with the, ground on which it stands. The only method to pay it is from the sale of pews, the weekly collections, and the saving of its pew rents during the incumbency of its present Rector. I would at this time most respectfully urge upon this congregation the importance of extinguishing this as soon as possible, while the demands upon the funds are comparatively small. The future permanency of the church calls for this measure, and there is abundant ability with the members of the congregation to effect this object at once if they so determine. There have been, united in holy matrimony by the minister of this church since its organization, 215 couples. There has been baptised: adults, 31; children, 427; in all 458. There has been 4 confirmations, in the church, of which 114 persons have received that holy rite.

<u>Baptisms</u>	
1826 to 1837	458
1837-1847	888
Total	1346
<u>Marriages</u>	
1826-1837	215
1837 -1847	372
Total	587
<u>Communicants</u>	
1827-1837	213
1837-1847	286
Total	499

There are now 125 communicants belonging here and have been since we commenced, 213 in all; some have died and others removed. I have not the means of ascertaining the precise number of families who consider themselves belonging to this congregation, for many do not either own or hire pews; and as long as we have vacant room so ought we to be glad to accommodate such. I should think as many have belonged here and have removed away as now compose the congregation. Thus much has been accomplished in ten years. This vine planted in dependence on the rains and dews of God's providence has continued to grow and flourish. The Lord has built up this house - He has blessed the means, and to Him be all the praise. It is of course a source of gratification, to your preacher that this (as was deemed by many) experiment has succeeded. He has already abundantly been rewarded for all his exertions. He has received his reward in that which it far better than any wordly consideration—the approbation of his own conscience and the belief, that he has in some small degree been of service to the souls of many of his fellow creatures. Though there has been at no one time any great or sudden revival among us, yet there has been a gradual advance and growth in piety and grace; he has indeed cause to mourn that many, many have sat under his ministry and seem to be where they were. Yet he cannot see the heart; of one thing we may indeed be thankful- we have enjoyed a great degree of peace and union. No disputes or jars have at any time disturbed our quiet intercourse, and perhaps in few congregations are the families which compose it more in the habit of social intercourse. It has hitherto been necessary for me to devote more attention to

the secular affairs of the church than I will be able to do for the future. I shall expect hereafter that those measures which we find to be necessary for the outward establishment of this church shall be the special care of its vestry. The payment of the debt; the securing of more ground around, the sale of remaining pews; (provision for the support of its assistant minister)—these are all intimately connected with the 'permanent building up of this Lord's house. To you brethren of the vestry and congregation the care of these things is committed, and I am well persuaded you will attend to them and put this church upon so stable a foundation that it will continue to be a blessing to your children's children. It remains for me to consider our text in a higher and spiritual sense. Unless there be here an increase and growth in grace; unless the standard of moral virtue be high; unless we find the ordinances of preaching the sacraments are here the means of making us better and fitting us more and more for eternal bliss—unless, I say, these things be so we cannot say, the Lord prospers this work. It is one thing for a congregation to grow in numbers and in its outward state, another for its members to grow in the graces of the spirit. While then each one who belongs to us strives to do good to this Zion, to advance its outward interest, let everyone also strive by his own example, and by increasing knowledge and virtue, to make ours to be a city set on a hill. Let us be thankful to God for the good which may hitherto have been effected, and remember that to relax our exertions in His cause or service is to betray our trust. To you, my hearers, who are heads of families and have children, I say, let your desire and exertions be to establish firmly this house of God, as a means of affording to posterity the opportunity of His worship. What you leave them invested in the treasury of the Lord will not be the least valuable of their inheritance. Finally, my dear brethren, you who have here taken in full the Saviour's name, much depends on you. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and see your Father which is in heaven." We have a right to expect your best exertions and your warmest prayers for this Zion where you placed your names. May you be enabled, by your walk and conversation to recommend others the way you have chosen. May the opportunities for spiritual communion which you here enjoy be faithfully improved, so that at last we may all gather around our Father's board in that kingdom where there shall be no more need of outward tabernacles or carnal ordinances.

b

[1. St. Ann's founded 1795](#)

[2. St. John's founded 1826](#)

[3. St. Paul's founded 1833](#)

[4. Trinity founded 1835](#)

[5. Christ Church founded 1837](#)

[6. Church of Our Savior founded 1860](#)

[7. Christ Church Red Hook Mission](#)

8. St. Mary's founded 1840
9. Emmanuel Church founded 1841
10. Calvary Free Church founded 1840
11. St. Luke's Church founded 1842
12. St. Thomas's Church founded 1844
13. The Church of the Holy Trinity founded 1844
14. Grace Church founded 1847
15. Protestant Episcopal Church of the Reformation 1847
16. St. Michael's Church founded 1847
17. St. Peter's founded 1847
18. St. Paul's Church, Clinton and Carroll sts. founded 1849
19. St. Mark's Church founded 1850
20. The Church of the Messiah founded 1850
21. St. George's Church founded 1852
22. Church of the Redeemer founded 1853
23. Emmanuel Church founded 1853
24. Christ Church Mission Chapel founded 1857
25. The Free Church St. Matthew's founded 1859
26. The Church of the Reformation founded 1866
27. St. Thomas (now Guion Church) founded 1868
28. St. Andrew's Church founded 1859
29. Church of the Atonement founded 1864
30. The Church of Our Savior founded 1867
31. The Church of the Evangelists founded 1867
32. Chapel of the Holy Trinity Church founded 1867
33. St. James's Church founded 1868
34. St. Stephen's Chapel founded 1869
35. All Saints Chapel founded 1867
36. Church of the Mediator founded 1869

Eastern District Protestant Episcopal Churches

37. St. Mark's Church, E.D. founded 1837
38. Christ Church, E.D. founded 1846
39. St. Paul's, E.D. founded 1846
40. St. James's Church, E.D. founded 1846
41. Calvary (Free) Church, E.D. founded 1849
42. Church of the Ascension, Greenpoint founded 1846
43. St. John's Church, E.D. founded 1851

[44. Ascension Church, Bushwick, E.D. founded 1852](#)

[45. Grace Church, E.D. founded 1853](#)

[46. St. Barnabas Chapel, E.D. founded 1851](#)

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UNMINISTERIAL

Too Warm a Relationship Between a Pastor and a Lady.

A Clerical Scandal at Hudson, New York.

The Reputation of a Former Brooklyn Episcopal Clergyman Involved - How Rev. Robert E. Terry Stepped Down and Out.

Christ P. E. Church, at Hudson, New York, is one of finest in the diocese of Albany. The edifice is a handsome brown stone structure, and stands on a commanding site at the head of the park. Its membership includes some of the best persons in Hudson, both as regards social and professional position and fortune. For a few weeks past the church has been passing through a painful experience, the cause whereof was nothing less than the fall of the rector, Rev. Robert E. Terry, from the proud position he held in the esteem and affections of his flock. In fact the church has been the scene of a painful clerical scandal, one of the actors in which has been the eloquent preacher who Sunday after Sunday laid down a high standard of moral precepts to his congregation.

THE AFFAIR HAS A LOCAL INTEREST, Rev. Mr. Terry, the inculpatated gentleman, having been for several years pastor of St. John's P. E. Church in this city, and one of the most active workers in the Episcopal denomination in the parish of Long Island. On resigning his charge in this city he went to Philadelphia where he supplied the Rev. Dr. Hoffman's church during the absence of the latter abroad. His next charge was Christ Church, in Hudson, and from the developments which have been referred to it is likely to be his last.

Rev. Mr. Terry, it will be remembered by those who knew him here, has a fine commanding presence and is pleasant in his manners and pleasing in his conversation. He is about fifty years of age, and his family consists of a wife and four children, two of the latter being grown up daughters. It was not until the middle of last month that the storm burst on the head of the reverend gentleman. On the 18th ultimo it was announced that la consequence of serious illness he had tendered his resignation of the rectorship and that it had been accepted, and since that time he has taken no part in the services or appeared out of doors. He offered as a reason for his action, that the air of the Hudson is too severe for himself and family. It has been ascertained, however, that there was another and more potent cause for the surrender of his important charge, and in spite of all the efforts at suppression, the main facts have come out and are the town talk. It seems that a few days before his resignation was tendered, a young lady of his congregation, while slightly sick, was being attended by her sister. The sister had occasion to get some articles f w m a bureau drawer used by the sick girl. In the search a package of letters, carefully done up, attracted her attention. A glance at these showed the sister that they were the production of Rev. Mr. Terry, and they were immediately handed over to her father, who read them with growing rage and indignation. The name of the young lady is Miss Ida Farron, a charming girl in her 19th year.

Her father is an Englishman, a well to do farmer, living a mile and a half out of town. He and his family have been active member of Christ Church for several years. Mr. Farron immediately sought an interview with the rector, who, it is said, made a full acknowledgment of his transgression and expressed his willingness "to step down and out," denying, however, that his impropriety extended further than the epistolary correspondence referred to. An understanding was arrived at between the enraged father and the rector that all the facts should be laid before Rev. Dr. Doano, the Bishop of the Diocese. The result was

THE RESIGNATION OF REV. MR. TERRY without a dissenting voice or a word of protest or regret. Such is the state of the case to-day, and it is expected that the disgraced minister will

take his departure as soon as his health, which both physically and mentally is said to be much shattered, will permit.

This trouble, however, will not end here, as the Bishop will likely degrade him from his ministerial functions, Only a few persons have seen the letters, but it is said at the worst they are simply silly and full of love making.

A lady, who professes to have seen them, says that they are just what they ought to be if the writer were engaged to the person addressed. She would not like her husband to write such epistles to anyone than herself. The manner in which the correspondence was carried on was peculiar. It was the custom of the rector to secrete the letters to his fair parishioner before service on Sunday, under the cushion of the Farron family pew, from which hiding place the young lady took them as opportunity offered. In one letter he wrote that not seeing her in the pew one Sunday morning he could hardly go through the service, fearing someone would discover the letter. Occasionally Rev. Mr. Terry and Miss Farron took short carriage rides, but their love, making had never been so open as to excite any remarks and the above disclosures have proved a genuine surprise and sensation to the whole congregation.

Addendum

History of Episcopal Churches in Brooklyn Saint John's Church from

<http://www.panix.com/~cassidy/STILES/EPISCOPALCHURCHES.html>)

St. John's Church, on the corner of Washington and Johnson streets, was erected during the summer of 1826. This parish owes its origin and maintenance during many of its earlier years, to the foresight and liberality of its first rector, the Rev. Evan M. Johnson. ¹ The edifice, built by

¹ Rev. Evan M. Johnson, was born June 6, 1792, at Newport, R. I., to which place his Quaker ancestors had been driven by the religious intolerance of Massachusetts colony where they first settled. His mother was of a Virginia family. After obtaining a classical education, he passed one year at college, in Rhode Island, and two years at Cambridge, Mass., where he became a candidate for orders, and received ordination at Trinity church, Newport, from the hands of Bishop Griswold, July 8, 1813. Residing, after his ordination, with his mother at Plainfield, Conn. he was invited to preach for a short time at Norwalk, Conn., and while there accidentally met the Rev. Dr. Bowen, rector of Grace church, Now York, who shortly after invited him to come to that city as his curate. A year of service at Grace church was terminated by a can from the Episcopal church at Newtown, L. I., where he went in 1814, and remained until 1826. In 1814, lie married Maria L., daughter of John B. Johnson, of New York, by whom he had one son, still living. This lady dying in 1825, be soon afterwards married Maria Purdy, of Newtown, L. I., by whom lie had three children. By his first marriage lie became associated with the interests of the large estate of his father-in-law, which was left by will to his children. While at Newtown, he owned and managed a farm, which lie endeavored for a time to sell, with out finding a purchaser. He then resolved that, if lie could sell his farm for \$4,000 he would devote that sum to the building of a church. An opportunity of sale won after occurring, he left his church in Newtown, in 1826, much to the regret of his parishioners, and removed to Brooklyn, N. Y., where he erected St. John's church. His personal history thenceforth, to the day of his death, is inseparably interwoven with the spiritual and material interests of the city of Brooklyn. In addition to building St. John's, he undertook the establishment, in 1847, of St. Michael's amid a crowded and neglected population, and 11 it was his peculiar and honorable record, that for services in that church and all other churches, for forty years of his ministry, he never received a cent of remuneration. And this not because he was rich. The property which came to his care, had to be improved by building and other loans, which required large realizations to pay the interest, and nothing but great attention and good management could have kept it from becoming submerged by taxes and assessments, in the advancing progress of Brooklyn.

the Rev. Mr. Johnson at his own expense, on his own land, and for several years generously furnished to the congregation free of cost, was first opened for divine service on the 24th of September, 1826 ; and for a few months he was assisted in the services by the Rev. John A. Hicks. On Easter day, 1827, there were nineteen communicants.²The day following, Theodosius Hunt and William Furman were elected church-wardens, and Evan Malbone, Joseph N. Smith, William A. Sale, Henry Dikeman, Isaac Odell, Gabriel Furman, John Taylor, and Nathan B. Morse, vestrymen. On the 10th of July, of the same year, the church was consecrated by Bishop Hobart. The attendance continuing to increase, it was considerably enlarged and improved in 1832, and purchased by the congregation. In 1835, the Rev. Jacob W. Diller became assistant minister; and in 1841, the Rev. Stephen Patterson officiated in the same relation for a year, and was followed by the Rev. Caleb S. Henry, D.D., Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of the City of New York. A few years later, still further quite extensive repairs and improvements were made in the church especially in the arrangements of the chancel. In July, 1847, the Rev. Mr. Johnson withdrew, after the long period of over twenty years of faithful services, without remuneration; in order to establish a free mission church, St. Michael's. in a neighborhood destitute of all church privileges, where he gratuitously and successfully labored for the remainder of his days. He was succeeded in St. John's by the Rev. Samuel R. Johnson, D.D., also a devoted pastor and liberal benefactor of the parish; who, however, resigned on the 18th of November, 1850, having been elected Professor of Systematic Divinity in the General Theological Seminary in New York.

The Rev. N. A. Okeson, D.D., next filled the rectorship, entering upon his duties on the first of January, 1851, and witnessed a considerable increase in the numbers and strength of the congregation, but removed in October, 1852, and became the pastor of St. Paul's church, Norfolk, Va. His successor was the Rev. Thomas T. Guion, D.D., who commenced his labors on the 1st of February, 1853, and remained in charge until his death, in the autumn of 1862. At the end of two years, by a judicious arrangement of systematic offerings, the debt was entirely extinguished. Six years afterwards, in 1861, "a plan was resolved upon for a renovation" of the church, so extensive as to amount almost to a

² The church was named by lot, at the time of laying the corner-stone, - which was done," says Mr. Johnson's manuscripts, " without any Previous conference with any of the inhabitants, for fear of exciting the jealousy of the members of the old (Reformed Dutch) church."

reedification of the decayed and unsightly structure. He lived to see that plan fulfilled, together with the erection of a new chapel, at a total cost of about twelve thousand dollars. For a few weeks only was he permitted to minister in this beautified sanctuary, when unexpectedly he was smitten down." He was buried from the church on the 24th of October, 1862, amid a large concourse of the clergy, and of his parishioners and friends.

For a few months, until permanent arrangements could be made, the Rev. George W. Nichols took charge of the services, aided by the Rev. Henry A. Spafard, before and since an assistant minister of the parish. In June, 1863, the Rev. George F. Seymour, D.D., accepted a call to the vacant rectorate, visiting the church once a month to administer the holy communion, until the first of October, when he removed to Brooklyn and took charge. Called to the Chair of Ecclesiastical History in the General Seminary in 1865, he terminated his connection with the parish on the feast of Epiphany, 1867, when the Rev. Alexander Burgess, D.D., assumed charge.

From 1826 to January, 1868, there were two thousand four hundred and thirty-one baptisms, nine hundred and twenty-seven marriages, and one thousand seven hundred and ninety-nine communicants; four hundred and eighteen being at present connected with the parish. A rectory has of late been enlarged and fitted up, adjoining the church.

In 1868, the old building, corner of Washington and Johnson streets, was sold for \$90,000; and the corner-stone of a new chapel was laid, at the corner of Seventh and Douglass streets, on the 15th of June, 1869. This chapel is of red sandstone, and will accommodate about four hundred persons; a new rectory adjoins the chapel of the same material, the cost of both being about \$40,000. (Read More at <http://www.panix.com/~cassidy/STILES/EPISCOPALCHURCHES.html>)

Parish Rectors

1.	The Reverend Evan Malbone Johnson	1826-1847
2.	The Reverend Samuel Roosevelt Johnson	1847-1850
3.	The Reverend N. A. Okeson	1850 - 1853
4.	The Reverend Thomas F. Guion	1853-1862
5.	The Reverend George F. Seymour	1863-1866
6.	The Reverend Alexander Burgess	1867-1868
7.	The Reverend R. E. Terry	1869-1874
8.	The Reverend T. S. Pycott	1874-1887
9.	The Reverend George F. Breed	1887-1903
10.	The Reverend Frank D. Page	1903-1911
11.	The Reverend Thomas Bond Holland	1911-1930
12.	The Reverend Gordon D. Pierce	1931-1950
13.	The Reverend Howard G. Clark	1950-1956
14.	The Reverend Donald James Gardner	1956-1958
15.	The Reverend Clifford Allen Buck	1958-1985
16.	The Reverend Clarence Powers	1987 –

Parish Anniversary Fund

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