

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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CHRIST CHURCH



A recently erected New York State Historical Marker in front of Christ Church in Albion denotes:

CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Since 1844, ERECTED IN 1830
BY PRESBYTERIANS, IT IS THE
OLDEST CHURCH BUILDING IN
ORLEANS COUNTY STILL BEING
USED FOR WORSHIP SERVICES

According to *The Story of the Organization and First Fifty years of Our Parish*, published in 1894, the parish in 1844 lost their temporary place of worship when "The Trustees of the Gentleman's Academy unceremoniously shut the Academy against the Services of the Church, without giving any previous notice of their intention ... The Congregation met on the common, and retired to a private house (the residence of the late Chas. A. Harrington, then residing on Bank Street opposite the school grounds) where Divine Service was celebrated ... frustrated... the congregation was dismissed without knowing where to meet again.

"Public sympathy in favor of the Church is freely expressed. The friends of the Church rally - rent a room in Swan's block, 56x25 feet - and contract to fit it up with seats, railing and an Altar and Pulpit."

"Not too much later the Vestry executed a bond for the purchase of the lot next west of Mrs. Cantine's late dwelling, and opposite the Court House ... plans were secured, and material for building were drawn to the newly acquired site."

"However a short time later the Presbyterians needing a larger house of worship proposed that they trade their existing Church for the lot and building materials that the Episcopalians had in their possession.

"The building at that time was comparatively

new, and was fashioned after the most approved model of Puritan architecture. Bishop DeLancey in a sermon thus described it "It was a brick building 44 by 50 feet, encumbered with a high old-fashioned gallery, with desk and pulpit arrangements, unsuited to our services."

Since 1844 many changes have taken place within those old brick walls. The gallery was eventually removed, and many additions were built on to the church including a pipe organ room in 1877 a sacristy and parish house in the 1880's and an outstanding wood ceiling was added in 1889. Memorial windows over a time span from 1889 to the mid-1980's. In the 1960's the undercroft was totally renovated into offices and class rooms. An old wooden bell tower was removed in 1911 and replaced by a brick one which was again rebuilt in the early 1960's.

Indeed, it would be hard for any of the first people who worshiped there in the 1830's to recognize anything about the church. The additions which have come about to this historic church have all added richness and character ultimately portraying the people and their times.

It is interesting and certainly worth noting that the last vestige of anything original to the interior which was Presbyterian had now been removed. Last week new pews were installed taking the place of the original ones from 1830. While I'm not in favor of meddling with the original fabric of hisotric structures, the new pews are aesthetically pleasing and in keeping with the interior. Comfort and safety were the major criterion for the change, making this newest addition to Christ Church a very fine enhancement to a church edifice which continues to tastefully evolve.