

Reminiscings of Old Orleans

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140 YEARS OF RESIDENCY FOR EPISCOPALIANS AT CHRIST CHURCH

"For other foundation can no man lay
than that is laid, which is JESUS CHRIST."

1. Corinth: III II.

On March 31, 1985 Episcopalians at Christ Church in Albion will mark 140 years of occupancy in their church edifice. The history of this particular church building is a unique one which actually begins with Presbyterians. The earliest church to be formed in the Village of Albion was the First Presbyterian. Its roots go back to the First Congregational Society of Barre which was organized in the home of Joseph Hart in 1816. Some members of this society preferred the Presbyterian form of government and so the Albion Presbyterian Church was organized in 1824. In February 1830 it was voted to erect a brick church edifice at a cost not to exceed \$4,000. A lot on the west side of Main Street between State and Park Street was purchased and work begun. Services were first held in the basement in the Fall of 1830. The church was completed and dedicated in the autumn of 1831. It would then be twelve years before an Episcopal Church was formed in Albion.

The first record of any Episcopal preaching in Albion took place on June 14, 1843. This service was conducted by Bishop DeLancey in what was the Presbyterian house of worship, use of which had been kindly granted by the Presbyterians. A year later on June 7, 1844 Rev. Orrin Miller, a missionary, came to Albion to ascertain the prospect of establishing an Episcopal Church. Determined in his efforts, the Rev. Miller laid the foundations for a solid congregation. Services were first held in the Albion Academy on June 16, 1844 but due to public opposition the trustees of the Academy unceremoniously closed its doors to further services. A room was immediately rented in downtown Albion and fitted up with seats, altar, altar rail and pulpit. At a meeting on July 29, 1844 Christ Church was formally organized. By autumn of 1844 the parishioners decided to erect a church edifice and had progressed so far as to procure plans for a church and select a lot on which to build. This building site was located on East State

Street between Main and Platt directly opposite the Court House. Building materials were even drawn to the site but then a change in plans occurred. During the winter of 1844-45 the Presbyterians decided that they needed a larger church edifice to accommodate their growing congregation. Overtures were then made to the Episcopalians about swapping their church in return for a pretentious building lot and materials. This exchange took place on March 31, 1845.

The Episcopalians at the time actually acquired a relative new building which was a model of Puritan architecture totally unsuitable for their form of worship. Bishop DeLancey in a sermon, described it as follows: "It was a brick building 44 by 50 feet, encumbered with a high old-fashioned gallery with desk and pulpit arrangement unsuited to our services." Throughout the years many changes, alterations and additions, too numerous to mention, have been made to Christ Church. In 1860 the gallery was removed and an alcove or recess chancel and vestry room were added. Perhaps the greatest addition came about one hundred years ago with the erection of what was then a chapel. It was built in memory of Mrs. Abby Lord Bruen and is now known by many as the space used for Christ Church dance school. In 1898 the Bruen Chapel was made larger with the addition of a kitchen and dining room. The photo shown here depicts the dignitaries who were involved in the laying of the cornerstone for the Bruen Chapel on September 10, 1885. Front row seated left to right: Wm. J. Hannington, Clerk of the Vestry; Rev. C. T. Seift, Rev. W.W. Walsh, Rev. S.H. Cook, Rev. G.W. Southwell, W. D'Orville Doty, D.D.; Rev. Noble Palmer, Rev. Sidney Wilbur and Zephaniah Clarke, Sr. Warden. Back row: Howard Abeel, W.C. Ramsdale, Jr. Warden, W.S. Danolds, R.C. Tobias, J.H. White, Rev. F.S. Dunham, Rector; Jos. A. Wall and Geo. M. Thatcher.

Indeed, the parishioners of Christ Church in 1985 can note 140 years of occupancy of their edifice and the centennial of Bruen Chapel. It should also be noted that Christ Church is the oldest church structure in Orleans County having been used continuously now for 155 years as a house of worship. When Bishop Harold B. Robinson makes his visitations on April 21, 1985 to administer confirmations it can also be noted that on May 5, 1845 that the Rt. Rev. Wm. H. DeLancey was the first Bishop to make a visitation for that purpose.