

THE FIRST 150 YEARS OF ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

1798-1948



BY D.H. KILLEFFER

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T . . .

Perhaps the most important debt of the writer of history is to those persons who have lived it and who have left behind mementos of their lives from which he can materialize past events in his mind's eye. But no one lives his life with the least thought that some future time will be interested in him or his doings. That is the reason today's historian must rely upon yesterday's and on the many painstaking souls who commit events...witnessed to paper.

Without the patient labors of the clerks of the vestries of St. John's, Yonkers, and St. John's, Tuckahoe, there would be little to record here. But these good men have recorded many minutes that do not belong in a history written today. That is the reason this writer is deeply indebted to those who have patiently dug the nuggets of interest out of the great mass of records. The Rev. Mr. Buckmaster, rector of St. John's, Tuckahoe, 1892-1905, gave a basic history in his addresses at the centenary of the building of the church in 1898 and at the golden jubilee of the parish in 1903. These have been freely used here. Mr. William Stevenson, late senior warden of the parish, brought together the first draft of this history, which has been much enlarged as here presented. Mrs. John B. MacAfee, Mr. LeRoy Lockwood, and Mr. Robert Tienken assisted in collecting and sorting material. Mr. George Hollrock made the drawings used in the text; Mr. J.G. Schuhmann drew the plans of the church in its several stages; Mr. Clarence Epstean, of Walker Engraving Company, gave the cuts of these. Mrs. Irene Ammann typed the manuscript. To all of these, the author's sincere thanks.

D.H.K.

IN THE BEGINNING . . .

This is the story of a little chapel which grew into a parish church: St. John's Church, Turkeyhoe. It was built in 1798, only nine years after this nation had become independent by the final and formal ratification of the Constitution. The times were still troubled. Men had not yet become accustomed to the ideas of freedom they sought to realize through the new government. Too many still construed freedom as license, and freedom to worship God as they chose was widely interpreted as freedom not to worship at all. The old "Duke's Laws" governing the colony of New York had required holding and attending divine services at frequent and stated intervals, but the new government soon abrogated them. Many people fell quite naturally into the easy habit of neglecting their religious duties. Even at best they were desperately hard to perform in the rough country of that day when places of public worship were few and scattered.

From our earliest beginnings, Westchester County played an important part in forming our country. Stalwart farmers from England and Holland dotted the valleys with their homesteads, and traders to and from the West Indies and their home countries anchored their vessels in the safety of New York Harbor and the Hudson River.

During the Revolution, several important battles were fought here. While the battle of White Plains was going on, George III wrote angrily to General Howe, demanding why he did not sail the British fleet up the Bronx River and attack from that direction.

Apparently the early settlers, like many of their descendants, were too busy supplying material wants to pay much attention to their spiritual needs. When Colonel Heathcote arrived in 1692, he found Westchester County "the most heathenish country in my life among people who called themselves Christians." A start to improve these conditions was made in the early eighteenth century, when the Church of England sent missionaries over from the mother country under theegis of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. One of the first missionaries wrote from Westchester that the people were "prejudiced, poor, and irreligious. . . more apt to receive than to give." With such raw material these courageous men had to work. In addition to this difficulty, the population was widely scattered, and travel was of course, primitive in the extreme.

Out of these efforts came the establishment of an Episcopal church in Yonkers, in 1727, later known as St. John's. At that time the city of Yonkers numbered hardly more than a few hundred inhabitants, and most of the surrounding countryside was owned by the Phillipse family. Since the Phillipse brothers were all Tories, all their holdings were confiscated by the State of New York at the close of the Revolution and sold by the Commissioners of Forfeiture.

On the other side of the hills to the east of Yonkers was a little settlement made up of nineteen buildings, sixteen of them small houses. The other buildings were a public house known as Underhill's Tavern, a blacksmith shop, and a schoolhouse. This was Turkey

Hoe (or Turkeyhoe or Turkeyho), or “Turkey Hill,” so named because wild turkeys abounded all through the woods.

To this little hamlet in 1789 came the energetic and determined young rector of St. John’s, Elias Cooper, to bring the Gospel. He was then in his 31st year, the son of Warmolders Kuypers, a Lutheran minister from Amsterdam, Holland. He was a man of great energy, and he commanded respect in a rough country. Out of his efforts came the building of the new chapel.

With men’s minds and hands occupied with the urgent problems of gaining a livelihood and with the exciting hopes of the new political world, there is little wonder that the building of churches was put off year after year. The impoverishment of the country by heavy taxes laid to support the Revolutionary Army and to meet the expenses of creating the new government left little that could be devoted freely to purposes not immediately pressing.



That made the building of St. John’s Chapel, Turkeyhoe a matter of some note. It was not the first church building erected in the United States after the Revolution, but certainly it was one of the first half dozen and probably one of the first three built in what actually is the United States of America after it formally became so in 1789.

The first chapel built on the high hill of Turkeyhoe during the fall of 1798 has since grown in size, in influence, and, we verily believe, in grace, during the century and a half of its mission.



THE CHAPEL ON THE HILL

I was glad when they said unto me,
We will go into the house of the Lord.

The psalmist might have been right there beside Elias Cooper, sharing the parson's joy and gladness that morning of the Christmas, 1798. As the parson readied his thoughts for the first service in the new chapel on Turkeyhoe, the psalmist's words ran through them, a recurring refrain, a rising obbligato. From here was something to be glad about, something around which one's spirits could rise up in great thankfulness to God for His great glory. Here hope long deferred was achieved. Here in this modest little chapel was newly built an outpost of the Church to carry the heartening words of a triumphant Christ, the comforting words of a compassionate Jesus, to sorely tried people in a pioneering community.

Surely God was good and would bless the continuing of this house as he had its beginnings. Nine years had seemed long, even at times interminable, to the doughty, determined, and energetic young rector of St. John's as Sunday after Sunday he traveled the six weary miles over the hills to Turkeyhoe. Here he had held divine services in the homes and even in the barns of the faithful few who now made up the small congregation gathering about the new chapel.

But nine years was not long for a labor of love as this had been, and especially for the labor crowned with such success as this one was today. In a very real sense this was a day of triumph for Pastor Cooper. Had not Francis Asbury needed twenty-six years to bring

his Methodist flock together and to build for them a house of worship? Surely God was good that He let Elias Cooper stir His people to build a fine little chapel in barley more than a third of that time.

Perhaps the reason was that the success of the rival Methodists below the hill had stirred his people, but more likely it was that Elias Cooper preached an aggressive Gospel. He was an aggressive person and young and vigorous; he sat his horse well, the envy of many young blades. At the age then considered mature of 30 years he was called to be rector of the Church in Yonkers at the mouth of Nepperhan Creek. That was already an old church then, but it still had no name beyond that it was the Established Church. It scarcely needed one, since there yet were no other churches in all of Yonkers. We can imagine the young pastor conferring upon it some part of his own determined spirit when at last it was named St. John's Church, actually for the divinely gifted friend of Jesus, St. John of Patmos, but, perhaps also in his own private thoughts, for the rugged and pioneering St. John the Baptist. For the Baptist's spirit might better have suited both Elias Cooper and the temper of those troublous times of the new country lately emerged from the War of Revolution and still not at all sure of itself.

Among the young rector's first cares, once the affairs of the parish church were running smoothly, was to see to the spread of the Kingdom. Yonkers then, as now, was a great expanse and sprawled over the wide countryside. The actual town itself comprised only eleven hundred persons clustered around the mouth of Nepperhan Creek in what is now the heart of the city, but its territory spread far. Elias Cooper's parish and cure embraced all that vast territory of Yonkers, wild and barely inhabited, extending from Spuyten Duyvil Creek north to the Greenburgh town line and from the Hudson River on the west to the Bronx River on the east. It thus included much of today's Bronx. Within that wide area was included on the east what was then called Turkey Hoe, the area now known as Colonial Heights and Mohegan Heights.

But there was no place of public worship anywhere within the reasonable range of this section. The establishment of the new American Republic encouraged men to seek new homes. Sixteen families already lived in the western section of Eastchester just across the Bronx River from Turkey Hoe, and a number of substantial farmsteads were established west of the river on the lands deeded to patriots by the Commissioners of Forfeiture from those seized from the loyalist Phillipse family. Others were sure to join them. Among them were families forming the small congregations under the cares of both Elias Cooper from Yonkers and Francis Asbury, the Methodist circuit rider (later bishop) who came up to Turkeyhoe from the Mosholu district. John Bowne, Frederick and Nicholas Underhill, Thomas, Abigail, and Stephen Sherwood, Dennis and Abraham Lent, and Thomas and Harry Valentine, each procured land from that seized from the Phillipse Manor and these were the substantial citizens of Turkeyhoe who formed the backbones of the two congregations.

Elias Cooper greeted each newcomer arriving for that first service in the new chapel, most of them by name. From all over they came: Episcopalians, Methodists, Lutherans, men and women of every shade of opinion joined in this "house-warming for the Lord." Soon the little building overflowed with people, and Elias' heart overflowed

too with joy to the Lord that the end and object of his labors was so bountifully accomplished. All the old familiar faces were there and many new ones. A bountiful harvest surely for the Lord! A great satisfaction that he, Elias Cooper, should bring the word of the Lord to so many and with such effect that this fine chapel could be build for the service of God on this high hill!

“Except the Lord build the house, their labor is but lost that build it.”

Surely the lard *had* built the house with them. Surely He had given to His minister that zeal and power of preaching that had moved the people. Surely it was God’s will the half acre of ground for the building and for the graveyard that would be. Surely God’s spirit moved the Odells, the Underhills, the Flowlers, the Williams, and all the other good people to give of their substance and of their labor to their God. Some help and with some support for the undertaking had come from the parent church, but very nearly all had come from the “wilderness” itself. Surely this, of all houses, was builded by the Lord and by His spirit working through His servants.

Could anyone think on these things and not feel great pride and a tightening of the throat that God had been so good?

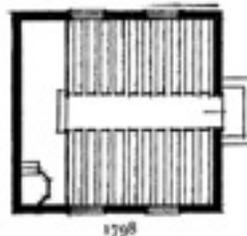
“The Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him.”

The service progressed; surely the Lord was there with His people. Their spirits welled up in gladsome song; their hearts bowed with their heads and spirits in penitent prayer; their souls rose to the parson’s stirring call to zeal that a full harvest of the spirit might be reaped form the s new blessing.

“...and give us peace both now and evermore.”

John Bowne himself struck the tuning fork and called for the final hymns. “Glory to God in the highest...” – that was the joyous hymn for this triumphant occasion. Then, “Hark the herald angels sing...”

NOTE: Arrangement of the pews in the earlier days of the church could not be determined from the present building; and so the plans here given merely suggest what might have been and may be far from the fact.



No procession marched from the little chapel. Indeed there was no room in it for a procession or a nything else; and now that the first service was over, all stayed to hear Mr. Bowne. He more than anyone else, except possibly the rector himself, had carried the burden of the work. His land supplied the site for the chapel, his generosity

gave largely to the funds, and his supervision had carried the work through the long fall months while the house was abuilding.

John Bowne, always deeply serious of manner but today infected like everyone else with the spirit of joyous achievement, rose and adjusted his steel-rimmed spectacles. Peering alternately through and over them, he read in a deep, resonant voice a brief account of his stewardship.

2500 Shingles	@ 95/-	£11/17/6
300 Boards	1/-	15/0/0
50 Planks	1/8	4/3/4
Cartage, & freight, Planks		14/0
Freight, Boards & Shingles		3/0/0
80 Planks	@ 2/4	9/6/8
100 Boards	@ 1/3	6/5/0
50 lbs Nails	@ 1/2	2/18/4
2 lbs. do	@ 1/4	2/8
3 Galls Rum	@ 10/-	1/10/0
4 lbs Nails	@ 1/3	5/0
25 lbs Nails	@ 1/3	1/8/6
21 lbs Nails	@ 1/3	1/6/3
2 lbs Glue	3/-	6/0
229 Brds		2/5
24½ lbs Nails		1/6/3
Putty & Glass		8/14/8
Paint		9/10/7
Brads & Nails		1/6/4
Nails, Paint & Glass		5/4/2
Spindle		1/12/0
Ball		8/0
1 Lock		17/0
Bolt		3/0

"The monies paid out for labor on the building:

Joseph Odell	75 days work	£24/0/0
Benj. Fowler	30 do do	15/15/6
Barthol. Smith	31 do do	10/1/6
Elisha Williams	9½ do do	3/16/0
John Williams	21 do do	7/7/0
Jonathan Odell	3½ do do	1/1/0
Wm. Devonshire	7 do do	1/8/0
Isaac Dickerman	5 do do	1/0/0
Thos. Sherwood	2 do do	13/0
Lewis Debois	2 do do	13/0
Elisha Williams		10/16/0
Benj. Fowler		3/12/3
Joseph Odell		15/14/0
John Bowne Boarding workmen		10/0/0
Frederick Underhill do		10/0/0

"And the total of all that is £203/4/11.

"But the best part of it all is that as we stand here today in this new house of God, we have paid all these monies and there is no debt left to plague us!

"All of which is respectfully submitted by

Your obedient servant,

John Bowne.

This twenty and fourth day of December 1798."

Of course everyone knew that only by the great generosity of Mr. Bowne himself and of some of the others was any such thing possible. It was all right for him to report that he had paid himself ten pounds for boarding workmen, but that didn't hide from anybody the truth: that it was his own money he paid himself. So it was with Frederick

Underhill. Maybe his purse was not as long as John Bowne's, but at least he reached as deep down into it to pay himself the board for the workmen who ate as his place. So too was it with all the people even though their names were not read out in the meeting. All of them had given to the common fund, each as much as he was able.

Soon the meeting was over, and the people departed. Only Elias Cooper himself remained to pray out of the overflowing fullness of his heart.

The rector, that is his faithful negro servant and companion, Charles. Charles waited on the pastor hand and foot. Charles had lately been freed from slavery through the strange workings of fate in the troubled days following the Revolution, but more because the Reverend Mr. Cooper had intervened in his behalf with the Commissioners of Forfeiture. For Charles had been part of the goods and chattels of the great Phillipse Manor and thus forfeit to the Revolution. Later when the time was right, he would adopt the name Phillipse. Now, free though he was in law and in fact, in spirit he had become through his gratitude a slave to Mr. Cooper and his church. Charles took the greatest pride, the pride of a free man, in sweeping and scrubbing the church to spotless cleanness and in waiting on his master and benefactor whenever he could. Always he had accompanied Elias on his long journeys to Turkeyhoe to preach in the houses of the people, and now he was with his master in the joy of the new chapel. Charles saw to the horses when they came horseback or to the sled when, as now, snow covered the ground and made that the best way to travel.

"Marse Elias," said the negro, "us better go on over to Mr. Bowne his house. Elsewise us be too late for dat big dinner."

"Yes, Charles, yes. I had nearly forgotten. Surely no man's cup was ever so bountifully filled as mine this day. May the Lord keep me humble."

And with that he rose and went into the house of his great friend and benefactor John Bowne.

It is hard to overemphasize the splendid work of these two good men and fast friends. Where Elias Cooper supplied the zeal and spiritual power, John Bowne provided the material essentials to make the parson's dreams and visions come true. Between them they laid a deep and strong foundation for a church that has endured through seemingly endless trials and dissensions for now a full century and a half, continually doing good.

IN 1798 . . .

In 1798, when these events happened, New York City was far away. Its northern boundary was Chambers Street and it had a population of only about thirty thousand.

In 1798, there were five Episcopal churches in New York City: Trinity on Broadway, Saint Paul's Chapel on Broadway, Saint George's Chapel on Beekman Street, Christ Church on Ann Street between Nassau and William, and Saint Mark's in the "Bowerie."

In 1798, eight other Episcopal churches served Westchester County: at Bedford, Eastchester, New Rochelle, North Salem, Peekskill, Rye, Westchester, and Yonkers.

In 1798, the first President of the United States was living the last year of his life, as a private citizen, on his farm at Mount Vernon on the Potomac. John Adams was nearing the middle of his term as second president of the new government of the United States. Thomas Jefferson was its vice-president. The Right Reverend Samuel Provost was then Bishop of the Diocese of New York, which at that time included the whole vast area of the state of New York.

In 1798, travel by land, when one was not "minded to go afoot," was by horseback, by springless wagon, or by oxcart. Traveling by water was restricted to sloop or schooner. Houses were heated by wood in open fireplaces. Sleeping rooms were not heated. The people of this section were farmers. They raised largely what they consumed. They raised their own beef and mutton and pork and poultry, their grain and general produce.

Clothing was homemade. Flax was raised to give linen for sheets, tablecloths, pillow cases, towels and underwear. Wool was woven into cloth for clothing the household. Families were large, and indoor and outdoor work was performed by the members of the household. Possibly there were a few slaves.

In 1798, there were twenty thousand slaves in the state of New York. Slavery only ceased as an institution on July 4, 1827. At an auction sale of "goods and chattels," held in this neighborhood in 1823, an aged negro was sold for fifty cents. This negro, "Cuffie," was sexton of this church, first at a salary of two dollars, and then at the salary of three dollars per year.

A farmer of the neighborhood might have come to the new chapel in his best attire: His blue "shad-belly" coat had a buff vest. His knee breeches were black. His woolen stockings were blue. His shoes were low with huge silver buckles. His linen shirt was ruffled. His neck cloth was white. His long hair fell over his shoulders from beneath his three-cornered hat. He entered this church to take part with his household in the worshiphere. His wife, sons, and daughters too were attired according to the fashion of the day.

The thrifty housewife of 1798 – what shall we say of her? When Solomon wrote the thirty-first chapter of the book of the Proverbs, he evidently foresaw the farmer’s wife. Was it of her that he penned that apt description?

“She seeketh wool and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She layeth her hand to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed. Her husband also, and he praiseth her.”

Surely the wives of the men who founded this church – the dames and damsels, the mothers and the daughters of 1798 – they deserve a large share of our praise and of our grateful remembrance.

The first building to house the Methodist congregation at the foot of the hill – now long since replaced – was built at about the same time as St. John’s Chapel. The members of the two churches were, as we have noted, friendly, attending each other’s religious services and helping in the singing. In those days there was no chanting, only the use of the metrical Psalms and Hymns. The music was started by a precentor, and the nearest approach to a musical instrument was a tuning fork, which gave the pitch.

The Methodist service was held in the morning, and the Episcopal service in the afternoon, so there was an opportunity to exchange friendly visits. At least one of these visits has withstood the tests of time. In our church yard rest the mortal remains of the Reverend John D. Bangs, at one time Pastor of the Methodist Church here. He died in his twenty-fifth year, July 21, 1838, following his young wife of twenty, who died on July 15, 1838. They both died of what seems to have been an epidemic of scarlet fever in that year.

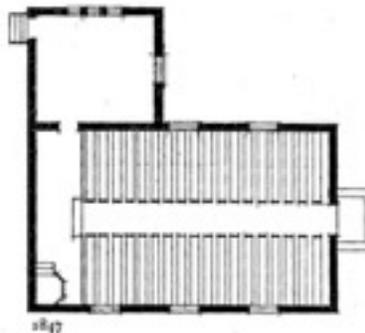
None of the great inventions and conveniences we take for granted today had yet come into existence at that far day, and life from today’s point of view was crude and rough almost to the point of being unbearable. The light in our farmhouses in the evenings came from the feeble flames of tallow or wax candles and from the blazing hearth fire in the winter. Farmers used sunlight liberally, rising betimes in the morning before it was full day to save and use every precious moment of light. The farmer who later on put a grate in his fireplace and bought a bushel of coal was deemed wonderfully extravagant, for coal was very much a curiosity. Farming implements were simple, and the farmer undertook a long journey to transport his produce to the market place in lower New York. The first railway train came to Tuckahoe in 1844 and reached Yonkers only in 1849. Indeed, the coming of the railroad finally settled the highly variable spelling of the word “Tuckahoe” when it named the station and entered the name in its timetable. Before that everyone had spelled it as he pleased and derived it from Indian words or from the wild turkeys that were supposed to be plentiful on the hill of Turkeyhoe, or Turkey Nole, as some had it. Only then in 1844 was the area in Eastchester now embraced within the village given the name of Tuckahoe instead of the region west of the Bronx River that had had it before.

And yet the good people of the past lived comfortably and happily and prolonged their years. As the records in our cemetery will show, they died “full of years,” some over eighty, some over ninety. Descendants of some of the founders of this church in the fourth and fifth generations are still active in the work of the parish.

Hundreds have crossed the threshold of this building. They have come from the East and the West, from the North and the South, through summer’s heat and winter’s cold during now one hundred and fifty years. Other eyes have looked out upon the landscape. Old houses have disappeared; great numbers of new houses have been erected as new generations have come from far and near. Old roads have been closed; new roads have been opened. Old customs have vanished with old conditions of life, giving place to the new.

Yet the purpose for which the building was erected has never been forgotten. There have been Baptisms and Confirmations and Holy Communions. There have been Prayers and Hymns and Sermons. All these ministrations have had the one object: to upbuild Christian character.

The appointments of this house in the beginning were simple, but the Gospel of our blessed Lord, preached here, has given dignity to the place and the surroundings. In the olden days Sunday came as a benediction. From long distances, persons came to this church, bringing the news of their neighborhood, exchanging greetings. Then, as now, this building stood as the gathering place of the people, a place where they could receive as now comfort and courage to bear and to conquer the trials of life. Here people gained strength for their daily tasks from close and hearty association with each other, but above all they gained strength and wisdom from the Divine Presence and the Holy Spirit here in God’s house.



G R O W T H . . .

“Happy the people whose annals are blank.” – CARLYLE

During its first fifty years little disturbed the tranquility of St. John’s Chapel. The faithful rectors of St. John’s Church journeyed each Sunday over the hills to Turkeyhoe and ministered to the simple wants of the farm community around the chapel. The community followed the seasons with their regular rounds of farm duties, and the services of the chapel kept pace with the recurring feasts and fasts of the church year. The needs of its people were met, and no urgings of ambition disturbed the serene life of the little congregation living in the more or less complete isolation of the Turkeyhoe Hills.

But outside this little farming community great things were forming; tremendous forces of growth and development and new ways of life were coming into being and means of transportation and communication over great distances and between remote points. Isolated as Turkeyhoe seemed to be from the great forces at work shaping the nation and the world, it could not long continue so. In 1844 the railroad pushed north along the eastern edge of the Bronx River, which brought the community around St. John’s Chapel into comparatively intimate touch with the lustily growing city of New York, already important in the world’s trade.

Most obvious and immediate effect of the coming of the railroad was to settle once and for all upon the spelling of Tuckahoe. All the uncertainty and disagreement on this question was resolved among those who would trace this place name to different origins. Those favoring an Indian origin gave it a meaning connected with turnips, potatoes or some other root crop, since in the Indian language the root word was found to mean, “it is globular.” A more numerous school believed it came from the simpler notion that turkeys abounded on this hill or hoe or nole and that this fact had suggested the name to some early visitors to this section.

This trivial matter typified many other developments that grew rapidly out of the closer contact the railroad brought with the outside world. So long as only the residents of the community were interested, the spelling of its name was a matter of no concern whatever. Undoubtedly good-natured discussions among the neighboring families of Bownes, Lents, Dederers, Fowlers, and other set forth divergent views on this subject around farm firesides, but only the railroad had really cared enough about it to decide anything. So it was too about many another thing; in the isolated community it was unimportant, but contact with others, particularly with strangers brought into the small world of Tuckahoe by the railroad, put each aspect of the life of the farms in a quite different light. Many decisions must be reached and actions taken to adapt the life of the chapel’s community to that of the world at large.

Perhaps the most significant of these developments was the interest of others, strangers from outside the tight little community, in the chapel itself and in its services.

At the same time there was a corresponding and welcoming interest of the congregation for newcomers. Never before had there seemed to be any way for the congregation to grow beyond its natural boundaries. But now in the fiftieth year of the chapel that was changed and something should be done about it.

First need was to provide more space in the chapel itself. The whole chapel as originally built was scarcely larger than a generous room in one of the farmhouses of the time; and while that was enough for the small congregations of the early days, the coming of strangers made it seem completely inadequate. After much scheming and planning on the part of the members of the congregation and by the vestry of St. John's Church, the decision was reached to add space to the north of the building for a chancel and to the east for a vestry room. The cost was estimated to be \$900, nearly as much as the cost of the whole original building 50 years earlier. Subscriptions yielded \$795 of this amount, and that left only a minor amount to be provided by the vestry. That work was duly undertaken and completed; and on June 29, 1847, the Right Reverend William Heathcote deLancey, Bishop of Western New York, consecrated the building to its intended purpose. This rite had apparently been omitted earlier but was now performed probably for the laudable purpose of calling the attention of the whole countryside to the growth of this congregation and the improvement of its facilities.

Two other events of the period point in the same direction. The Vestry of St. John's Church took cognizance of the growing needs of the chapel by this action at its meeting of April 22, 1847:

“Resolved that from the first of May next the Rector be invited as far as practicable to open this Church twice each Sunday and the Chapple at Tuckaho every Sunday afternoon for Devine Service.”

Probably while the enlargement of the chapel itself was in progress, Mr. John Bowne (the second of the name) authorized the construction near the chapel, but on his land, of a carriage shed for the protection of the horses and vehicles of those coming to the chapel services from afar.

One can imagine that the first of these actions was taken because the duties of the Rector of St. John's Church had grown with the growth of the population of Yonkers near the church itself and that on that account he might give the remote chapel and its people less pastoral care than the people themselves felt was needed. Clearly the needs of the chapel had grown too; and instead of serving only its immediate neighbors, others from some distance were coming to it for spiritual sustenance. The erection of the carriage shed, later to become the focus of some disturbance, supplied a very real need of these people coming from a distance.

At the service on Christmas Eve, 1847 commemorating the fist service held in St. John's Chapel by Elias Cooper and also beginning the fiftieth year of the chapel's life, a new silver communion service was used for the fist time. This was the gift of Miss Caroline Jones and consisted of two chalices, three patens, and a flagon. This communion service was used in the services of St. John's both as chapel and later as parish church for nearly a century and was taken from its honorable retirement to be used again in the

service just 100 years later, on Christmas Eve, 1947, which opened the sesqui-centennial year of the church building.

Miss Jones appears in the records of the church only as performing this pious and kindly act, and our best efforts have failed to reveal any further facts about her. One can only hazard a guess that she was a member of St. John's Getty Square, from which the chapel in Tuckahoe was soon to separate itself as an independent parish. Possibly she was a relative of the Reverend Charles Jones, then assistant rector of St. John's Church, but soon to become the first rector of the new parish. The records of the period are not clear on many interesting points having to do with the chapel, since many of these had no connection with the parent church and the chapel at the time had no clear and continuing records of its own.

Clearly the growth of the chapel's congregation and influence continued, and its needs as well. In the minutes of the vestry of St. John's Church many entries refer to the affairs of the chapel, but most of them are not clearly differentiated from the affairs of the mother church. Finally in 1852 the problem of supplying the needs of the chapel from the mother church reached such a point that the vestry undertook to do something about it. The solution seemed to be to provide someone, possibly as an assistant to the rector of St. John's Church, to live near the chapel. And that required that the church provide a parsonage. The minutes of the vestry meeting on December 14, 1852, contain these entries:

“The committee to confer with Mr. John Bowne reported that Mr. Bowne offered to give the church a lot of ground near Chapple at Tuckahoe and to lend to the Vestry the amot necessary to build the parsonage upon the same, the Vestry to give a Bond and Mortgage upon the same for the cost of said Parsonage 7% per annum. It was then:

“Resolved that the Vestry accept the liberal offer of Mr. Bowne and that the sum of Fifteen hundred dollars is the amot necessary to build Parsonage.

“Resolved that the Treasurer be authorized to execute the bond and mortgage and complete the arrangement with Mr. Bowne.’

Rates of interest in 1948 are certainly not what they were in 1852, when 7% was considered generous to the borrower!

Later it developed that \$1500 was not enough to build the parsonage, and apparently the matter was postponed in view of the expected independence of the Tuckahoe Chapel as a new parish. The new parsonage was expected to be an important part of the recompense of the Reverend Charles Jones, who had charge of the chapel and was expectant to become the first rector of the new parish.

THE NEW PARISH...

July 1853, was notable in world affairs for the highly significant visit of Commodore Matthew C. Perry to Japan, a visit that later opened up the ports of that strange people to commerce with the world. In the city of New York, it was notable for the opening of a great world's fair in the Crystal Palace out in the northern edge of the city. But the life of St. John's the week that these events occurred was notable because it fell between the two Sundays on each of which Mr. Jones made from the pulpit the formal announcement of the first parish meeting. This must be in the precise legal terms laid out by Mr. Peter Morgan: it must be made on two successive Sundays, and it must be made from the pulpit of the chapel and not from anywhere else if the legal need was to be met. Its purpose was to give everyone due notice that important events were afoot in their individual lives, for the voters of the parish were to decide finally on that Monday, the 18th of July, 1853, whether or not St. John's Chapel was yet ready to become a self-sustaining and self-governing parish.

No one seriously doubted that it could succeed, least of all the young assistant rector of St. John's Church, Yonkers, whom the Rev. Mr. Carter had put in charge of the chapel. Certainly 37 families would form a large enough congregation to guarantee the success of the new venture, and certainly, too there were many others who needed only a visit and an invitation to join them in the new parish. The enlargement of the church building completed only a few years ago and the building of a parsonage were not small undertakings, and their accomplishment certainly showed the spirit of the people.

But as he paced to and fro in the churchyard thinking out his sermon for the Sunday morning, probably his last as assistant, the Reverend Mr. Jones found his heart filled not with misgivings for the future but rather with a surging spirit of triumph. If he could only carry that to the people tomorrow, surely the new parish would succeed abundantly. Surely people would come to the new parish from all the countryside, from Greenburgh, from Nepperhan, from Hartsdale, from Bronxville. Surely no one could resist the power of the word of God as he would preach it in this new parish.

Much would depend upon just how he conducted himself in the service tomorrow, his sermon, his text, his reading of the lessons. Too bad this was not October so that the lesson could come from Joel. He remembered how Joel had said "Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly..." Perhaps he should take that for his text: "Blow the trumpet in Zion..." That was exactly his mood, call the people together for a great triumph. Even though one had to be the Reverend Charles Jones, Assistant Rector, or member of the chapel congregation for the triumph to be truly great, yet that was just what he was, and certainly it was his great triumph that he should so soon have a church of his own and one with such expanding opportunities as this.



In such a mood he could not but preach a sermon full of inspiration for his people. But he must not forget that legal announcement. Mr. Morgan had been critical of the way he had paraphrased it last Sunday; this time he would give no grounds for complaint; the formal announcement would be formal indeed with all its stiff legal wording.

“*Notice* is hereby given, That a *Meeting* of the adult Male Members of this Congregation will be held in this place of Public Worship (known hitherto by the name of St. John’s Chapel, Tuckahoe, Westchester Co. N. Y.) on Monday the 18th day of July 1853 at 9 o’clock A.M. for the *purpose of Incorporating* themselves as a *Religious Society* for the worship of Almighty God according to the rites and usages of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the State of New York; and also for the purpose of electing Two Wardens and Vestrymen.”

* * *

(Illustration of certificate to come later)

A new beginning indeed, and auspicious! The new parsonage was built and ready for the new rector. Reverend Charles Jones already knew the people of his flock from having been some time in charge of the chapel. Further more, the mother church had already agreed to contribute as it then seemed, quite liberally to the financial support of the new parish during its formative years. The arrangement between the new vestry and its rector provided:

“Resolved, That the Rev. Charles Jones be elected Rector of St. John’s Church, Tuckahoe, and that he have the use of the parsonage buildings and glebe attached to said church, and the annual salary of four hundred dollars for two years.”

The term “glebe” sounds strange to modern ears, but in 1853 in Westchester there was no uncertainty about its meaning. From time immemorial churches had owned land, and such parts of it as were under the direct control of the church itself were called the glebe. The produce of this land, whether it was cultivated by and for the pastor and church officers or rented to others, formed an important part of the revenue of the parish. This was at the disposal of the churchwardens and vestry and was often as in this case made a specific part of the rector’s income and recompense. While the original St. John’s Church, Getty Square, had had a glebe consisting of some 200 acres of good farm land.

St. John's Church, Tuckahoe, had only the churchyard (an unproductive piece) and the yard of the rectory or parsonage, which was barely better. Nevertheless, time-honored custom required specific mention of the glebe in the agreement with the rector.

When the little chapel took this great step forward, the mother church agreed to appropriate \$200 annually for three years and \$100 for each of the next two years to help the offspring become established. This agreement the vestry later abrogated, which brought on a lawsuit that dragged on for several years. A most unfortunate result was that an entire year of the rector's salary was unpaid. Half of this was eventually advanced by four members of the congregation to be repaid to them when, as, and if the suit was satisfactorily settled. A Supreme Court decision some years later recognized the indebtedness of the Yonkers church to Tuckahoe, and \$500 was deducted from the salary of the rector of St. John's Getty Square, to settle the claim.

Three years after its establishment as an independent organization, St. John's received its first chance to share the responsibilities of the diocese as a whole, when it was assessed \$10 toward the payment to the provisional bishop for "suitable residence and his salary."

Any new undertaking is usually marked by severe growing pains; and although the five-year rectorship of Charles Jones was marred by the lawsuit, his difficulties were mild compared with the stormy and somewhat mysterious one-year career of the Reverend Augustus St. Clair, who succeeded him. The financial condition of the parish was apparently bad, and the salary offered the rector was only \$250 a year plus any surplus from the penny collections with the further provision that he might use the parsonage to conduct a school during the week to add to his support. St. Clair made it clear in his letter of acceptance that although he would conduct two Sunday services, morning and evening, he would preach only one sermon and furthermore that he expected the vestry and members of the parish "to influence all pupils possible for my school." He arrived at St. John's in October, 1859, and the following ominous note appeared in the minutes of a vestry meeting in December: "Arrangement provided not satisfactory." Nothing more than that, no explanation.

At this meeting, the vestry considered placing the parish in nominal charge of a near-by minister who was Presbyterian. The step could not be taken because of the recapture provision in the deed to the church property in the event of a break with the Episcopal Church. Finally, they duly appointed Mr. St. Clair rector.

Four months later, the parsonage was destroyed by fire, and the vestry demanded that the Bishop withdraw St. Clair from the parish, which was done forthwith. The unhappy man left, in debt in the town and with salary due him. His final letter, written almost a year later and apparently only one in a series of unanswered letters, pathetically sought to find out in what way he failed and bitterly complained of the vestry's treatment. In this letter he ceased to call himself Augustus St. Clair and "resumed my father's family name: William A. Doolittle. He was so embittered that he was led to "regret having entered the Episcopal ministry." We are left in the dark as to the fate of the unfortunate Mr. St. Clair and can feel at this late date only sympathy for his misfortunes.

Reverend David Doremus next became rector for only a year. The financial affairs of the parish had gone from bad to worse. High hopes of a few years before were disappointed, and in 1861 the church was closed and remained closed until the end of the Civil War. Some men of the parish went off to war, and the women of the church were unable to support it alone. Even though fifty-five years were still to elapse before women were even allowed to vote in church meetings, permission was given by the vestry in 1860 for the "Ladies Benevolent Society" to meet in the vestry room of the church. Apparently this group represented an important, if unsuccessful, effort on the part of the women of the parish to unite in good works and to bring peace and harmony into the stormy affairs of St. John's. It was the first of a succession of earnest and valuable organizations of the women of the parish to exert major influence from time to time on its life.

Affairs had reached such a pass that even these determined efforts could not suffice to mend matters and the church was closed in 1861 to remain closed for four long years. Some of the parish activities continued sporadically, but no services were held and no rector officiated during the period 1861-1865.

Thus the early high hopes of the new parish of St. John's ended on a note of failure and frustration. But the little church had filled a real need and had exerted a profound influence on the lives of its community and its parishioners, and soon they found that they could not get along without it.



THE CHURCH RESURGENT...

A church is much like a family, its history tells of helps and hindrances, of victories and defeats, of gladness and tears, of successes and disappointments. Old faces and old friends pass out of memory, and new ones take their places. Only change is constant. From the depths of defeat and despondency can only come a better day, a new life.

So it was with St. John's Church and parish. In 1865, the church had been without a rector – almost, it seemed, without life – for four years. Then the Reverend Angus Morrison Ives was called to the parish and accepted. He assumed his new charge on June 18, 1865, and at once the parish awoke from its lethargy.

Mr. Ives was a man of winning personality and great personal charm, coupled with a natural leadership and a strong and abiding faith. These were just the qualities needed in the young parish to reknit the bonds of harmony between the discordant personalities which had caused the many little – and come not so little – irritations which had so nearly cost the its very life. And too, Mr. Ives was a man of great energy. Like Elias Cooper, whom he resembled in a great many ways, Mr. Ives came to St. John's, Tuckahoe, as a young man of thirty in the prime of his manhood. The year before, he had become rector of the young parish of St. John's Wilmot. Since his salary was shared

between the two churches of St. John, the two parishes could survive and share in the energies of this remarkable man. By supplementing this with further income which he derived from teaching a small private school of his own, Mr. Ives was able to live in some comfort. Angus Ives was born in Mobile, Alabama, in 1835, the son of the Reverend Caleb Smith Ives, who shortly thereafter was appointed a missionary at Matagorda, Texas. Later the family moved to Vermont, where the father died. Young Angus was graduated from Trinity College, Hartford, in 1856 and from General Theological Seminary, New York, in 1860. Several brief charges preceded his coming to St. John's, Wilmot, in 1864 and the beginning of his school in New Rochelle at that time.

It was well that the new rector did possess the energy and enthusiasm of comparative youth, for he faced a seriously tangled and involved situation. Disputes over the number of matters arising out of the independence of the new parish had stirred deep animosities and antagonisms between the parishioners of Tuckahoe and the vestry of the mother church. At the same time, differences, many of them initially trivial, among members of the new parish grew in the absence of a rector to reconcile conflicting views, and some of them reached almost feud proportions. Questions of titles to the church's real estate, which had been vested in the Yonkers church before the division, long continued sore points to both. The churchyard itself with its graves, the carriage house presumably belonging to the church but standing on ground that was owned by the Bowne family, and the plot given by John Bowne for the erection of the parsonage that had burned down in 1860, all of these were under clouded titles because of the careless habits of that time (as of this) to neglect as unimportant crucial details of property transfers. Much of the trouble started when the Yonkers vestry agreed to contribute money to the support of the new parish before it was formed. When the Yonkers church called a new rector and elected what was probably a much changed vestry between the promise and its fulfillment, the promise was abrogated, as we have seen, and the whole matter was dragged through the courts. Out of the irritations stirred up on this account grew further trouble because the Yonkers vestry assumed control of the rights of the young parish to burials in its own churchyard. Gifts of additional property by the Bowne family to the church had been made with the apparent understanding that certain parts of the churchyard would be reserved as a private burial plot for the Bownes, an obvious conflict of rights hard to reconcile.

All of these and other less important, but nonetheless irritating, differences came to a head during the rectorship of Messrs. St. Clair and Doremus; and since neither of these men was strong enough to resolve and reconcile the differences, the church was closed, as we have noted. Throughout the four years following, disputants had opportunities to reflect upon their respective crotchets and the folly of keeping differences alive; cooler heads were able to conciliate quarrels and to suggest middle courses to peaceful settlements; and time worked its well-known magic to soothe ruffled feelings and soften hurts to flouted sensibilities. Perhaps the time was ripe to bring all disturbed elements together when Mr. Ives became rector; but even though that were so, his strong character was needed to restore peace and set the young church again on its way.

The parish was much older and wiser in 1865, when this turn came in the tide of its spirit, than it had been in 1853. Its people rejoiced in the privilege of having the church open again, in the happy occasions of the familiar services, and in the satisfaction of bringing their children together for proper Christian instruction. With new energy and reawakened spirits, the congregation rallied around the new rector to work and to pray together in a new consecration.

The problem of finances was apparently solved by cooperation with the other St. John's Wilmot, whose small congregation faced an identical situation. St. John's, Tuckahoe, voted Mr. Ives the magnificent salary of \$25 per month and forthwith proceeded to raise \$225 to cover his appropriation by subscription. Presumably the Wilmot church did the same, and these amounts, increased by the tuition paid by Mr. Ives' pupils, gave the young rector a living that at the time was adequate, if not munificent.

The action of the vestry in raising the budget of the parish by subscriptions represented an important departure from tradition, undertaken to avoid for the future some of the troubles of the past. Previously custom from time immemorial had dictated that parish expenses be met from the rental of pews. That had seemed a reasonable way to approach the subject, but apparently it involved at least one serious flaw, which disturbed the good people of St. John's, Tuckahoe. The renters of the pews, like persons who held what they considered special privileges of burial in the churchyard, assumed that they had a moral, of not a legal, interest in the church property; and when these private rights crossed the will of the majority, trouble was inevitable. Obviously this action of the vestry that elected Mr. Ives to abolish pew rents, and with them any suggestion of special rights, was an important move toward peaceful progress.

That the actions of the vestry at this time, August 17, 1865, in appointing Mr. Ives and initiating these reforms were salutary and in every way helpful was at once evident. At the next annual meeting in April, 1866, the financial condition of the parish was reported in the minutes of the accounts of the moneys received.

Subscriptions for minister's salary	\$227.50	
Paid to Rev. A. M. Ives	225.00	
	<hr/>	
Balance		\$2.50
Collections not including Communion Services	\$46.79	
Paid for coal, sexton and sundries	30.71	
	<hr/>	
Balance		16.08
Collections Communion Sundays	21.24	
Out of which paid Rev. A. M. Ives	13.94	
Out of which repaired Bible	2.28	
	<hr/>	
Balance		5.02
Received from burial fees	7.00	
Paid clearing grounds	6.00	
	<hr/>	
Balance		1.00

Clearly an important change is reflected in these figures. A balance of a little over 8 per cent of the total income of the parish after expenses were paid represented a significant improvement from the time when Mr. Jones received no salary for two years.

At this same meeting, burial fees were fixed at \$7 for persons residing in the neighborhood and \$15 for others. A year later the fee for all burials was set at \$15.

The question of the carriage shed, still in 1865 and for many years afterward an essential convenience for a horse-and-buggy congregation, was settled for the time being by a lease entered between Elias Cooper Bowne and the vestry under which the church agreed to pay a rental of ten cents a year for ten years for the use of the land on which stood the carriage shed belonging to the church. That definitely settled the ownership of both the land and the carriage shed at that time. But questions continued to arise about it until its usefulness over, the shed was finally torn down some 54 years later and the material of which it was built used to construct a garage for the rector's automobile in 1920!

A man of great energy himself, Mr. Ives firmly believed that working together was the best possible remedy for the ills that afflicted his congregations. For himself, he ministered to two congregations and taught a school. But beyond these activities he found time to take an important part in founding the Masonic Lodge, Marble Lodge, in what had by that time become the present village of Tuckahoe; he was its first Master. For his congregation at St. John's, Tuckahoe, he seems to have been full of plans for cooperative endeavor. First, there were repairs to the church building and to the carriage shed, including painting and puttying the glass in the windows. Next came consideration in 1868 of a proposal to build a chapel at Bronxville, which was rejected after investigation, probably on the grounds of the ability of Bronxville people to care for themselves. Then came the great project started in the summer of 1870, the substantial enlargement of the church building itself.

Even at this late date, it is easy to imagine the great enthusiasm that attended this work of enlarging and improving the church. When the previous enlargement was undertaken, the chapel was very much the special and personal care of John Bowne; now a further enlargement of the congregation of the independent parish required more space and moved the undertaking into a community affair. Furthermore, the possibility of a choir and an organ to beautify the services of the church with music seemed now for the first time to be within easy reach. No longer would the services depend only on a precentor with a tuning fork to lead the singing. Miss Ives, sister of the rector, was willing to undertake the work of organist and presumably choir directress, and an organ was certainly possible to procure if space could be made in the church for it. Room for the larger congregation was to be made by adding a recessed chancel to the north end of the church. Space for more pews would thus be available in the nave after removing from it the altar and other furniture properly belonging in the chancel. The choir and the hoped-for organ were to be given space in the newly built gallery at the back of the church, and a small vestry room and study for the rector. To these quite utilitarian improvements were to be added a tower where at some future time a bell might hang and

a porch or vestibule before the door of the nave. These, while far from useless, were primarily intended to add to the churchliness of the structure and to improve its beauty.

The while program was completed by August 15, 1870, and of a total cost of \$1256, \$1109.06 was paid on that date, leaving an indebtedness of less than \$150. So completely were all concerned impressed by the newly improved church that insurance of \$3000 was placed at once on the church building, its furniture, and its carriage shed. The uplift this gave the spirits of all concerned and the intent it stirred in bringing new people to the church were promptly reflected in the greater prosperity of the church and led the vestry to consider building a new rectory in 1872. A committee of the vestry was appointed at that time to find a suitable site. A small organ had already been placed in the newly installed gallery in 1871.

It was certainly a time of great expansion for the little parish of St. John's, Tuckahoe, as it was for the whole country. But in the parish, as in the country, expansion and prosperity were neither regular nor uninterrupted. By the time of the annual meeting on April 19, 1873, it seemed wise to reestablish the rent on pews and to allocate this revenue to the rector's salary. This was done, and the practice was continued for many years afterward until replaced in 1906 by the envelope-and-pledge system, which still maintains.

A near misfortune threatened in the resignation of Mr. Ives presented in January of 1874. No specific cause for this disturbance of otherwise harmonious relations between rector and parishioners appears, and obviously it was not of great consequence, since Mr. Ives was persuaded to withdraw it two months later.

Mr. Ives possessed great ability as an organizer, and under the stimulus of his inspiring personality the several existing organizations of the parish assumed new and vigorous life. Where there was need for a new organization, his enthusiasm inspired its beginnings.

As one indication of this, we find the church school assuming new life and vigor under his leadership. In those days libraries were far less numerous than today and their shelves contained meager offerings, but the church school of St. John's had acquired a lending library made up of gifts from the congregation both of books and of money to purchase them. While many of those gifts, as well as others to the parish, were never recorded except in the minds of contemporaries, we find the vestry in its minutes of 1866 acknowledging with thanks the liberal donations by Edgar W. Whitney of books to this library. The titles of these particular books are not recorded, but we do have a record that in the Sunday school library of that time were such titles as: "No More Crying," "Falsely Accuse," "Lizzie's Visit to New York," "Ready Work for Willing Hands," "Time as it Flies," "Vanity Punished," "Not a Minute to Spare," "Better than Diamonds," and "Idols in the Heart." Strange as these sound today, in that day they were quite the correct reading material for young people.

The name of Whitney appears in this connection, but also as one of the many new families added to the register of the parish by the efforts of Mr. Ives directly and through the help of his parishioners inspired by him. The register of the new parish showed only

37 family groups entered in the record between 1853 and 1862, but 60 new families were added to the parish during the first four years of Mr. Ives' rectorship.

If that were the whole record of accomplishment by this remarkable man, it would easily place him in a class alone. Actually it was only one phase of a busy and extremely useful life which he devoted to this church and its community.

Mr. Ives, honored and beloved by all in the parish and in the community, continued to minister in the church until his death on March 21, 1880. His mortal remains lie in a quiet corner of our churchyard, and his memory is preserved in countless tokens of his labors in the church itself as well as in a memorial and tablet commemorating him now set in the wall of the sanctuary. Certainly his boundless energy had set the weak and wavering young parish on its feet and had started it on its long career of service.

THE CHURCH'S FAMILIES...

Perhaps no other pursuit in which men engage is so completely a family matter as their religious lives. Father, mother, children, grandchildren, all participate according to their several abilities and interest in the religious life of the group. By the same token the life and vitality of the church is intimately wrapped up with the families that form its congregation – not, of course, that individuals cannot accomplish great good for the church, but rather that the continuity of the family enables its members cooperatively to achieve far more than most individuals possibly can within their personal limitations.

So it was with St. John's Church and the chapel that preceded it. Many families have given to it of their strength of spirit, and many, too, have drawn spiritual sustenance from it. Most of these have been mentioned appropriately in this brief history by the names of their members most prominent in the affairs of the parish. It is hardly practicable in a brief history of this kind to name every individual who has given of himself to the parish; to do so would require that this become, instead of a history, a roster and a biographical dictionary of all the parishioners of the church throughout its century and a half of life. Manifestly that is so, for nowhere better than here does Milton's idea fit: "They also serve who only stand and wait."

But it would be equally unfair not to call special attention to certain of the church's families that have been most important in its affairs over long periods of time.

The Bowne family especially has made its influence felt over the whole life of the church. John Bowne gave the original land for the churchyard out of that he had bought from the Commissioners of Forfeiture at the close of the Revolution. His son, John Bowne, was elected the first senior warden of the independent parish. Elias Cooper Bowne, also a son of the first John Bowne and namesake of Elias Cooper whom we have met before, was elected a member of that first vestry and warden in 1855, after the death of his brother John the year before. He continued as warden until his own death in 1881. At the same time, the will of Elias Cooper Bowne added, to the many previous gifts of his family to the church, its first endowment fund, a sum of \$3000. The interest from this was to be applied to the salary of the rector.

A grandson of the first John Bowne, Charles R. Dusenberry, brought another family name into the church as vestryman (18 years), as warden (46 years), and as superintendent of the Sunday School (36 years).

In this same family group belong the Ives family and the Underhills, since both married into the Dusenberry family. Each of these, too, contributed outstanding individuals to the work of this church.

One could easily prolong the list. The earliest families in the initial founding of the chapel – and communicants before the actual building was erected – included, as we

have noted, the Odells, the Fowlers, the Williams, the Smiths, the Dederers (one of whom was also named Elias Cooper Dederer in honor of the first rector of the chapel), in addition to the Bownes and the Underhills. Later the Lents, the Valentines, the Morgans, each supplied important persons from more than one generation of the family to the progress of the parish. Of those family names represented in the records by only one active generation, the number is legion, a list far too long and representing far too many services to the church to be repeated here.

It seems befitting to note at this point an unique characteristic that persists to this day among the parishioners of St. John's Church, Tuckahoe. The congregation, in spite of its nearness to the world's greatest city, retains to a striking degree in these modern times the characteristics of a country parish of long ago. When things are to be done for the church, the people still follow the ancient pioneer habit of organizing a bee among themselves to do the work with their own hands. Where no special skill is required, or where the special skill needed can be found somewhere in the parish or community – there is never a thought to call in someone from the outside. No outside caterer serves church suppers; no outside coach supervises parish dramatics; only under unusual circumstances is a professional carpenter, painter, electrician, plumber, or handy man called in to perform parish tasks and then only under the supervision of someone in the parish who is expert in that particular field. With the true spirit of Christian cooperation, members of the parish are accustomed to accomplish with hard work and strong faith what often seem to others to be miracles.

To carry out this idea of parish bees and at the same time to provide a social life to the church community, the parishioners organized in 1890 what was known as St. John's Legion. This group engaged in many important fund-raising enterprises for the lasting good of the parish and in many parties, amateur theatricals, and other social events for the immediate amusement of themselves. For a period of nearly twenty years beginning in the early '90s this organization was an important force in the parish.

That is the kind of parish family that we have at St. John's

THE BEGINNINGS OF SUBURBIA...

During the period we have just considered, ending, shall we say, about 1880, the whole character of the countryside around St. John's Church showed the first signs of a new age. Its progressive transformation had begun from a group of more or less isolated farms, first to the outskirts of a village in whose life and activities it shared and finally to its present state as a thriving part of the suburbs of the great metropolis. In these as in all other human affairs, movement and changes have been slow, and even today all of the aspects of each stage in the evolution of the community still exist side by side.

The advent of the railroad, as we have noted, initiated many changes both for St. John's and for its community. Quite naturally new people preferred to live near the convenient transportation of the railroad. At the same time the old established families, living on the farms around the church, were reluctant to change their long-established ways of life and to part with their lands to newcomers who might prove to be uncongenial as near neighbors. Quite naturally, too, the newcomers whose interests were less of this community than of New York now within easy reach, preferred locations near the stations and not far off on a relatively remote hilltop. The demand for the product of the Tuckahoe marble quarries (opened first in 1833) for buildings in New York, and the development of the Hodgeman Rubber Company, which had grown up in the old stone cotton-mill buildings by the Bronx River close to the Tuckahoe station, contributed further to shift the center of population in that direction. These forces gradually developed the Tuckahoe on the east side of the Bronx River and left St. John's semi-isolated on top of its hill.

Then about the turn of the century the Yonkers Park Association undertook the development of what is now Crestwood. Originally, Yonkers Park was a summer colony of the type common throughout the country in the last year of the nineteenth century and the beginnings of the twentieth. Groups of families joined together in a summer colony consisting usually of a group of cottages clustered about a central meeting house or hall. Most often this central focal point possessed a religious aspect, and great preachers were drawn to these communities to preach on Sundays to large groups of people with leisure to digest and intelligence to appreciate the best sermons and lectures that could be put before them. During the week, these meeting houses – sometimes they were tents but always they were capacious – provided platforms for outstanding lectures and stages for music and drama that could be enjoyed otherwise only during the winters in the great cities. The summer closing of theaters and the social activities of the cities, universal until well along in this century, gave national celebrity opportunities to appear before large sections of the people outside the cities through these summer colonies. Outstanding in this field was the Chatauqua near Jamestown, N.Y., which gave its name ultimately to this kind of entertainment. Lake Mohonk and Lake Minnewaska, also in New York State,

even today retain their great hotels, which are still operated much as those colonies of half a century ago preserving the same customs, now considered quaint in the extreme.

Regular visitors to Yonkers Park prolonged the season, and finally a considerable nucleus adopted the habit of staying the year around. Partly this grew out of the improving convenience of the community as its development called for more and more services, and partly it came from the increasing numbers of people who adopted the life of the true suburbanite with its constant dependence on the railroad into and out of New York. Obviously nothing much was to be gained by going back to Yonkers, for instance, for the winter when commuting to the city was just as convenient here. Those interested in Yonkers Park seized upon this idea and further promoted the community as a commuting suburb, later renamed Crestwood, in large part to avoid confusion in the delivery of mail, which often under the old name landed in Yonkers Post Office six miles away.

All of these forces were drawing interest away from the little church on the hill. The success of Mr. Ives in developing the parish hardly survived him, for these forces and trends were too fundamental and had grown too strong to be reversed or stemmed more than temporarily by even so determined a person as he was. His successors lacked something of his great vigor and strength of spirit, so that after his death the parish suffered a serious decline. The salaries that could be offered by the vestry were far from adequate and apparently the various incumbents could realize only trifling return from the "glebe," which had now become the community rather than the farm lands as it was in pioneer days. A succession of short tenures of the rectorship, resigned quite uniformly because of the poor living offered, and a further succession of rejections of calls from St. John's by other clergymen for the same reason finally forced action. The project of building a new rectory had lain dormant for many years since the first burned in 1860. This was obviously necessary to provide a house for the rector in lieu of higher salary which the parish could not pay.

In June of 1888, Charles R. Dusenberry, then Senior Warden, presented to the vestry a deed to the lot on Underhill Street on which the rectory now stands. Richard Bennett, a vestryman, prepared the plans for the rectory, and during the following year funds to pay for it were raised. Building was begun forthwith. It was first occupied by Reverend John W. Trimble who came as rector in 1889 at a salary of \$700.

Apparently the new rectory added the necessary attraction to the rectorship of St. John's, for after Mr. Trimble presided as rector for four years, Mr. Buckmaster came and remained for thirteen years. From that time on there seems to have been much less difficulty in securing and holding rectors, in part at least because the church was able to supply a comfortable place to live. As time went on, the rectory was improved and enlarged to meet the needs of successive rectors.

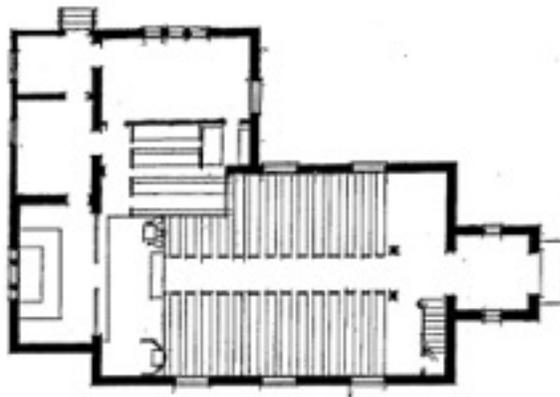
Just before the parish celebrated the centenary of its building as a chapel, it embarked upon a third program of enlargement. The small space provided in the gallery added in 1870 rather seriously limited the size of the choir, and the organ that could be accommodated there was also definitely limited. These limitations irked the growing parish, and so the enlargement undertaken in 1896 was an addition to the east side of the

church which would make space for the choir and for the organ, as well as for a library and a vesting room for the choir's use. This addition was designed to form an east transept that might later be balanced by a west transept when and if growth of the parish required it. When the work was completed on the structure, the old organ seemed less than adequate to the new situation; hence it was completely rebuilt and somewhat enlarged to fit both the expanded ideas of the congregation and the choir and the greater space available in the new location.

The whole work was completed before the centennial celebration November 10, 1898. Then Reverend Mr. Buckmaster presented a thoughtful history of the parish from its earliest days when Elias Cooper first came over from Yonkers. That history has served as the most fruitful single source of material in this one. Indeed, much of the material presented here is taken directly from Mr. Buckmaster's work. He also presided at a second celebration of the parish in honor of its golden jubilee as an independent church on July 19, 1903.

With all the succession of improvements and the growth of the parish it was increasingly evident that the heating arrangement in the church failed to meet the need. Finally in 1899 the original stoves were removed and heat supplied by a central furnace installed in the newly excavated cellar. At that year in spite of everything, the parish showed a balance in the treasurer's hands of some \$200!

All of these improvements put the parish in step with the times, at least for the time being. But those were times of great and swift development of the whole of Suburbia and so required the continuing attention and interest of all to maintain the church in its proper position.



1896



GROWING PAINS...

As we have been at some pains to point out, the trend of population in the suburbia of the earliest years of this century was away from the area surrounding St. John's Church and toward the more convenient neighborhoods nearer the railroad stations. That was before the day when travel by automobile flattened hills and annihilated distances. While there were automobiles about, they were still far from being the universal means of transportation that they became in the '20s. Something needed to be done to draw the new people now coming to this area in large and growing numbers to church.

The problem was far from simple. The carriage shed, which had served well the convenience of people grown up in a farm area and hence naturally provided with horses and carriages, meant nothing to city people who moved to suburban homes and with neither the old horse-and-buggy nor the new automobile transportation. By 1910, the principal use of the carriage shed was to house a hose reel for fire protection of the neighborhood. Even the carriage step of white Tuckahoe marble placed in front of the church by Richard Thompson had little meaning for the new suburbanites. The hill on which the church stood remained high and steep.

One obvious move to be taken was to hold services where the people could come to them easily. The people of Bronxville had lately built a church there for just that

reason; and since it was built after the move to the suburbs had started, it was located where the people needed neither carriages nor automobiles to attend its services. So when Mr. Behringer was rector of St. John's (1906-1908), he held services with some success in the lodge room of the Royal Arcanum in the Lyceum Building on Columbus Avenue in Tuckahoe.

When these services proved attractive to the people, Mr. Behringer followed up with the matter by seeking a more convenient location on which a chapel might be built. His views are set forth in a letter sent to Mr. John B. Morris, one of the developers of Yonkers Park:

"I am writing you relative to the matter of securing some property on which to build a church in Tuckahoe. The old church on the hill is not and has not been for 20 years at least convenient to the people, and we are desirous of building on a new site somewhere between Yonkers Park and Tuckahoe Station. Your property on Scarsdale Avenue has been suggested by many of our people (including Mr. W. R. Watson), as a very admirable location, as there seems to be no other location as desirable as this one.

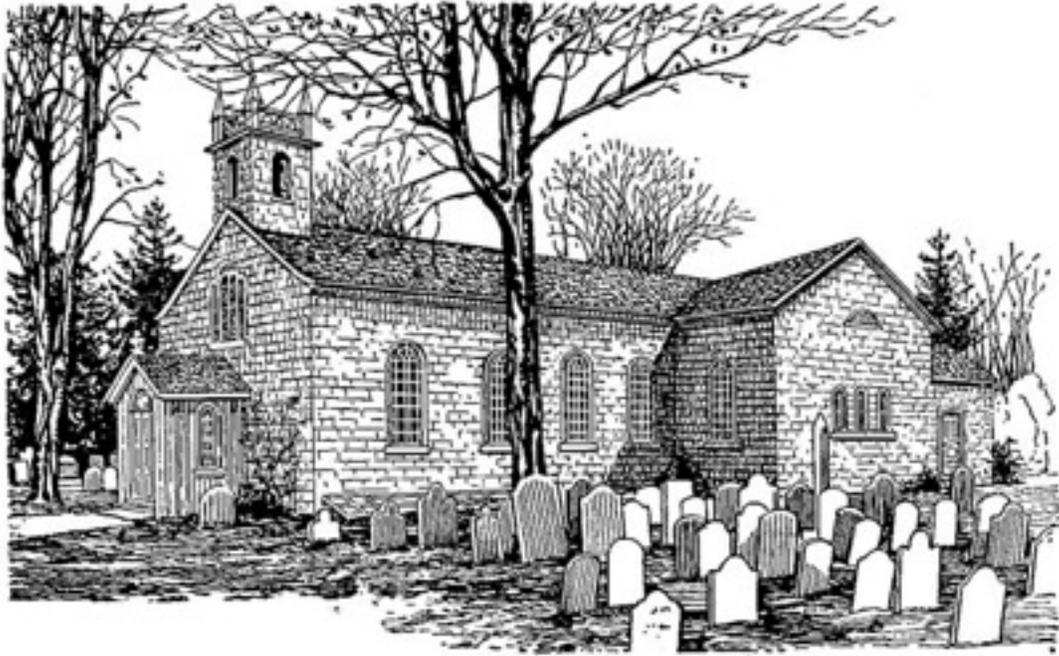
"Our plan is to put up a building of stone, churchly and attractive, and a double lot would be required. Such a building, according to the opinion of several of several real estate men and others who live in that neighborhood would be a decided improvement to the property along that road and a very desirable convenience. It has been told me that you are to some extent interested in the Episcopal Church and would be willing to consider the matter in question, thereby meriting the grateful appreciation of more than 100 of our people in the parish.

"I shall be pleased to hear from you about it, or discuss it by appointment at your convenience, and I assume you of my hearty thanks for anything you may be able to do for us."

Some consideration seems also to have been given to the possibility of building on a lot on Lake Avenue, Tuckahoe, and this project seems to have been put into definite form and laid before the vestry. But for what seemed at the time good and sufficient reasons the whole proposition was rejected.

That action, however, solved nothing, and we find a few years later – in 1911 – a new proposal aimed quite in the opposite direction. If the church could not be taken to the people, then why not bring the people to church? On that not unreasonable basis, the vestry spent some time considering the proposition of buying a team of horses to bring Crestwood communicants up the hill to church. Apparently that proposal received careful consideration and was abandoned at last reluctantly, as we may imagine, because the care of the horses presented a difficult problem in a neighborhood no longer made up of farms.

Finally, the whole problem was left, as most problems are, to solve itself. The advent of the automobile and the coming of a day when no house in Suburbia was considered complete without a garage conspired together to flatten the hill and make way for a new set of problems.



‘‘AS A GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED’’

If any one thing can be said to characterize St. John’s Church, it must be faith like the mustard seed in the parable; it surely grows great through cooperation. The people of St. John’s have always liked to embark upon great projects from small, even tiny, beginnings and to nurture them with faith until they have grown to fruition. Never has the congregation been large of powerful in a worldly sense, but always it has assumed with faith undertakings that seemed beyond its powers and carried them through to splendid conclusions.

The building of the parish house to meet the expanding needs of the parish and the community is the case in point. In 1910, Mrs. Harlow R. Brown started the fund for building the parish house with a collection of four Lincoln pennies, then still new and far less common than today. The idea was that members of the parish should give to the fund for the parish house all coins of this kind that came into their possession. Certainly that was a modest start for an ambitious project, but by faith and cooperation it succeeded. By 1922, this fund had reached such size that measures were taken to secure a site for the building. This was given by Mrs. Wilbur S. Underhill and Mrs. Caleb A. Ives as a memorial to Mrs. Emily M. Dusenberry and Reverend Angus M. Ives. The building was started in June of 1923 and completed for occupancy by fall of the same year, grown by faith from four cents.

This happened during the rectorship of Reverend Frederick A. Wright, whose tenure of 20 years was not only the longest in the parish's history but was also the most faithful. The parish house was built from small beginnings under Mr. Wright, and under him it proved too small and was enlarged. By 1932 the need of kitchen and dining-room space became evident. These had not been included in the original plans, and so it was decided to complete the basement of the parish house and to add to it a complete kitchen with all the necessities for serving meals to considerable numbers of people. The Woman's Guild and Auxiliary undertook this project in the spring of 1932 and completed it the same year.

As if these were not enough to keep the small but growing parish occupied, during the same period it undertook to enlarge the church building for the fourth time since its original erection in 1798. This enlargement, by all means the most pretentious undertaken up to that time, involved cutting the nave of the church in two and building 25 feet of new nave between the two pieces. Actually this was the second enlargement of this kind undertaken with this church building. It increased the seating capacity of the church from about 125 to 225, and expansion very badly needed to care for the growth of the congregation under Mr. Wright. The project was undertaken by Mr. and Mrs. Caleb A. Ives in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Charles R. Dusenberry, Mrs. Ives' parents. The whole project, including added windows and pews and redecoration of the interior of the church as well as its enlargement, was completed in time for the first services on March 3, 1929, and the building was rededicated by the Right Reverend William T. Manning, Bishop of New York, on June 16 of that year.

When the enlargement of the church had been accomplished, the inadequacy of the old pipe organ then in use became more and more evident. The instrument that still served the church in 1929 was the organ put into the church in 1870 after the second enlargement. Not only was it too small for the much larger church of 1928, but the ravages of time and continual patching had conferred upon the instrument certain wheezes not required by any of the chants of the church and a decrepitude that minimized the effectiveness of subsequent patching. This was undertaken under Reverend Orin A. Griesmyer. The same methods of faith, prayer, and penny-saving employed in raising the parish house effectively provided a fine new organ in 1941. The initial funds were gathered in penny banks set on the tables of parishioners, who put a penny for each person each meal. This fund grew like the others raised in the parish at other times for other purposes just as did the mustard seed in the parable and within a surprisingly short time gave the committee in charge a basis to proceed with the project.

Also characteristic of the people of St. John's is their willingness, almost their eagerness, to give the work of their hands to their church, as we have noted before. Innumerable instances of this occur throughout the long history of the church and chapel, but most of them escape the record for the quite obvious reason that they involve no official action by the vestry. One such enterprise that does appear in the records was the installation in 1911-1913 of electric lights in the church and in the rectory and of an electric blower to operate the church organ. These important gifts were given and

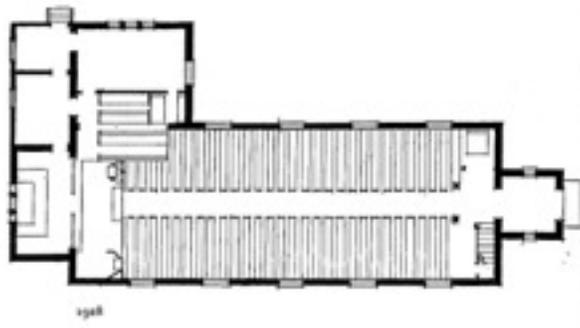
installed by the work of the hands of Maynard C. Underhill, who served the parish both as vestryman and warden.

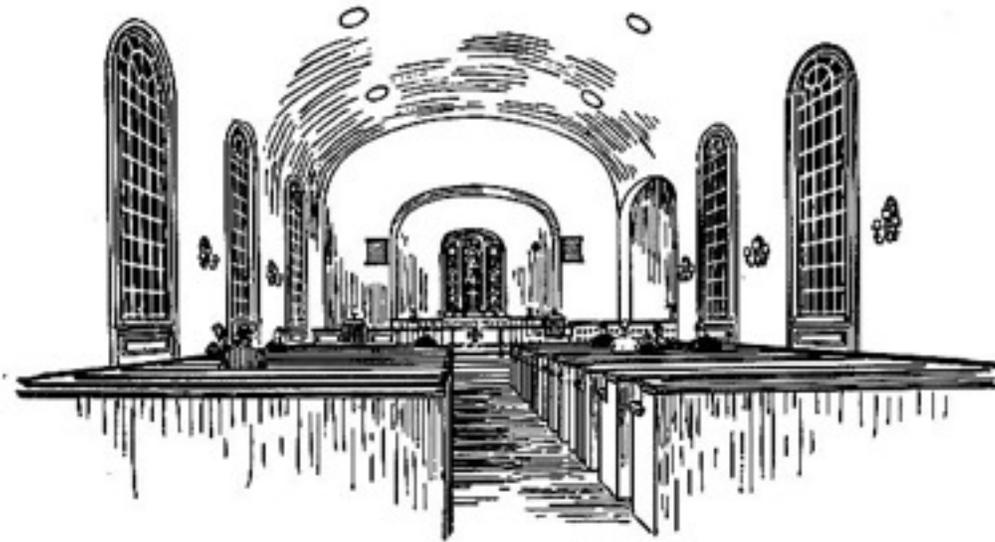
On numerous occasions the church has been painted by members of the vestry and congregation in the manner of an old-fashioned bee. Repairs, too, to the church, rectory, and parish house have often been made in the same way where they have come within the range of skill of persons available.

Finally the church undertook in 1948 the ambitious program of restoring its church building, already four times enlarged, to the atmosphere of the time when it was originally built. While this plan as originally conceived was not particularly pretentious and was undertaken in large part to celebrate the sesqui-centennial of the building, it rapidly assumed major proportions as the details were matured. The building still embodies almost, if not quite, all the material that made up the original chapel, and it is possible to discern in the building itself sections representing each stage of its growth. At each stage, the builders have wrought soundly and well, so that the restoration program has been concerned primarily and almost exclusively with the refinishing of the interior and practically not at all with the fabric of the building itself. This has been planned and carried out to preserve the many memorials bequeathed to our care and at the same time to make of St. John's Church a shrine in keeping with the quaint beauty of its exterior, and as a secondary but important advantage it has somewhat enlarged the nave. This has been accomplished by the earnest labors of many members of the parish, each performing those tasks for which his skill was best adapted. Men, women, and children, all have contributed to the cost of this enterprise and have helped to forward it to gratifying completion.

The sesqui-centennial program has been in charge of an executive committee guided by the Reverend Osborne Budd, and consisting of: Arthur Tienken, *Chairman*; Leslie G. Holleran; H. George Harris; D. H. Killeffer; and Charles Nodder, *treasurer*. Working committees were headed by: H. George Harris, fund-raising; William N. McDonald, publicity; Leslie G. Hollarn, restoration; Helen Budd and the Turkeyhoe Players, pageant; Edgar G. Wilson, banquet; John G. Schumann, architect. Each of these activities utilized the talents and efforts of many other willing workers.

Like all enterprises of the kind in which many persons participate, this one has engendered a contagious enthusiasm both in the congregation and the community. The result is that many persons have been attracted to the church, which is the objective of all such efforts: to bring people to the church and the church to the people.





TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW AND TOMORROW...

And so this history ends with the events of today, events that point surely to a happy and a useful future. From these brief glimpses into the past of our beloved church, its image emerges full of courageous and cheerful yesterdays facing forward confident of tomorrow. Surely the trials of this church and of its congregation through the decades have engendered in it a sturdy spirit to persevere and a serene confidence to face forward toward the future. If, as Shakespeare has it, the past is but prologue, then we of St. John's can be grateful that our past has given us strength to meet whatever the future may hold for us as individuals and as a congregation.

Here today are preached, as by Elias Cooper in the beginning, the encouraging words of a triumphant Christ, the comforting words of a compassionate Jesus. Here is preached, too, and practiced that "faith as a grain of mustard seed" the which if you have, "nothing shall be impossible unto you."

As our sesqui-centennial year draws to a heartening and inspiring close, our restored church building, old but again new, becomes a strong symbol of our lives and our religion. As we face each new day's problems, we are sustained by an enduring

tradition left us by those who have passed this way before us, old but forever new. Just as there is no art to read the future but in the past, so too no surer strength of faith and spirit can be found to face tomorrow's problems than in our inheritance from our forefathers.

THE RECTORS OF ST. JOHN'S, TUCKAHOE

The Chapel of St. John's Church, Yonkers...

Elias Cooper	1788-1861
William Powell	1816-1819
John Gregg	1820-1823
John West	1823-1828
Alexander H. Crosby	1828-1839
Smith Pyne	1839-1840
Henry Lemuel Storrs	1841-1852
Abraham Beach Carter	1853 (at the time of the division)

The Parish of St. John's, Tuckahoe...

Charles Jones	1853-1858
Augustus St. Clair	1859-1860
David Doremus	1860-1861
Vacant	1861-1865
Angus Morison Ives	1865-1880
Samuel B. Moore	1881-1884
Charles Ferris	1884-1885
James B. Nies	1886-1887
John W. Trimble	1888-1892
John W. Buckmaster	1892-1905
Charles A. Behringer	1906-1908
Henry N. Wayne	1908-1916
Frederick A. Wright	1917-1937
Orin A. Griesmyer	1937-1942
Douglas B. Northrup	1942-1946
Osborne Budd	1946-

WARDENS AND VESTRYMEN

The names of the sixteen wardens are starred ().*

Present vestrymen are shown in italics. All but the first two wardens, John Bowne, Jr., and Christian Dederer, also served as vestrymen. Ninety-nine men have served the church as wardens and vestrymen in 95 years.

Baker, Edward L.
Bell, John W. R.
Benedict, Charles A.
Bennett, Richard G.
Blauvelt, Charles A.
*Bowne, Elias Cooper
*Bowne, John, Jr.
Boyden, O. Wallace
Braisted, Thomas H.
Bramley, Clement
Browner, Zeb H.
Brown, Clarence H.
Brown, Harlow R.
Brundage, Joseph S.
Burrage, Rober R.
Clark, Clinton
*Conklin, Frederick D.
Courter, James C.
Crowell, Arthur B.
Davis, Burr
*Dederer, Christian
Dederer, George H.
Dederer, Henry
Dederer, William R.
Dunn, Thomas
*Dusenberry, Chas. R.
Ellis, Moses 3d
Fee, William J.
Finley, Andrew
Forbes, Alexander
Fowler, Caleb

Gulick, Karl
Hamilton, Frank E.
Hammond, John A.
Harris, H. George
**Holleran, Leslie G.*
Horton, Samuel S.
Iffla, George Haskins
**Ives, Caleb Angus*
Johnson, Robert
Jones, Samuel B.
Kemp, John A.
Killeffer, David H.
Kittell, George
Klahn, Louis P.
Kreuger, Howard L.
Lange, Herman
Lent, Benjamin
LeRoy, Gibson
Morgan, Abijah
Morgan, A. G.
Morgan, Peter U.
**Nodder, Charles*
Nordquist, Charles I.
Odell, Cornelius M.
Odell, Henry B.
Otto, Walter, I.
Platt, Charles T.
Puppo, Joseph A.
Quimby, Louis Sands
Raisbeck, Samuel M.
Rappolt, Herman G.
Roberts, William
Rutherford, Wm. F.
Schumann, John G.
Slater, Charles Isaac
Sloat, Charles H.
**Smith, William D.*
Smythe, George W.
Snow, George S.
Speckel, Gustave T.
Squires, Donald
Stevenson, Henry C.
**Stevenson, William T.*

Taylor, John
Thedford, Robert
*Thompson, Richard
Treadwell, Lyman B.
Tucker, Edmund T.
Umderhill, George W.
Underhill, Henry M.
Underhill, John F.
Underhill, Lancaster
*Underhill, Maynard C.
Underhill, Wilbur S.
*Underhill William H.
*Valentine, Nathaniel
*VanDusen, Frank B.
**VanHorne, J. Harold*
Vermilya, Benjamin
Vermilya, Isaac
Waite, Rupert T.
Waring, C. Edward
Whorlow, Robert T.
Williams, Frank A.
Wilson, Edgar G.
Wiswall, Thomas C.
Woodward, Thomas
Young, Albert O.

—

GIFTS AND MEMEORIALS

(to be included at a later date)