

## OUR ONE HUNDRED YEARS

### Part I

Bishop Hall, Mr. Cobb, other members of the clergy, guests, members, and friends of Trinity. Many of you remember our good friend Mrs. Willis Bryant, who played an important role in civic affairs and was noted for her ability as a speaker. She often told the story of the times she was a little girl and the teacher would call upon her to recite a poem, or read a story, or perform in some way before the public. She said her mother would be so proud of her and said to her, "Oh, Noreen, the teacher just knows you are the best."

"Oh no, Mama." she would reply, "she didn't say I was the best, she calls on me because she says I'm the loudest."

Well, I know I was not called on to write the history of the church because I was the best, and I don't think that I'm the loudest, but as much as I hate to admit it--alas, I was called on because I am the member of longest standing--"The last leaf upon the tree," as Oliver Wendell Holmes so aptly put it.

It was in the year of 1652 that Lancaster County was formed. The Lancaster County Court was also organized in 1652. The Reverend Alexander Cook was accepted as the minister of the parish by the County Court on October 6, 1652, and is therefore known as the first official minister of St. Mary's White Chapel Parish. The Parish was first called "the Upper Parish on the North Side." The name St. Mary's White Chapel Parish first appears in 1669. The Lower Parish was known as The Great Christ Church Parish. By 1742 the union took place between these two parishes and Christ Church Parish was formed.

In the early days there was no rectory, but a glebe fund consisting of 100 to 300 acres was owned by the church, and a minister might make a good living if he were a man with a family. An unmarried minister was apt to rent his glebe land for the income and make his home with a neighborhood family where he might teach the young members of the family in his spare time.

In 1702 there were 37 ministers and 51 parishes in the colony. It was because of the scarcity of Anglican ministers that sometimes men of other faiths filled the pulpits. A Presbyterian minister by the name of Andrew Jackson, not the Andrew Jackson of historic fame, was minister of Christ Church Parish from 1686 to 1710. Thus the early churches had their problems, but in spite of hardships the churches never lost faith and continued to prosper and grow until the present day.

By 1852 Grace Church in Kilmarnock had been completed. Thereafter Christ Church was abandoned as a place of worship until the early 1880's, when the Reverend Henry Landon Derby, the rector of Christ Church Parish from 1873 to 1888, reopened the lovely old church for evening prayer on the

fourth-Sunday afternoons in July and August. Ever since that time the rector in charge of the parish has held services there in warm weather.

It is this same Henry Landon Derby to whom we owe the birth of our own "Little Trinity," as our church is affectionately called.

In a letter dated December 21st, 1881, written by Miss Hattie Derby, Mr. Derby's 19-year-old niece who lived at the Rectory with the Derby family, she wrote to a cousin who lived in Sussex County, Virginia; Keep in mind that this letter was written three years before Trinity Church was built, but by this time the parish had purchased a lovely old home here in Lancaster to serve as the Rectory. This property was acquired in 1843, so you see that many rectors had lived here before Mr. Derby came. I quote from Miss Hattie the following:

"The members of White Chapel met yesterday to decorate the church for Christmas. Those around Heathsville decorated St. Stephen's today. Wicomico and Grace are to be decorated this week also.

"We are preparing for Christmas on all sides. Let me tell you how I expect to spend mine. As it comes on the fourth Sunday, Uncle Henry and I will go to Wicomico and Grace as usual and will take lunch to eat in the buggy. Mama and the children will stay at home and have Sunday School as usual, then at night we will have Christmas dinner and supper all at one time.

"Our organ at White Chapel is a magnificent one. I like it better every time I play on it. They have a splendid organ at Heathsville too. I go to Heathsville regularly once a month. We have a long trip every Sunday now. On the first Sunday Uncle Henry preaches at White Chapel in the morning and Heathsville at night. The two churches are 18 miles apart. On the third Sunday he preaches at White Chapel in the morning and Millenbeck in the afternoon. That is one part of Lancaster County I would like for you to see. Right now they hold services in a hotel room. Some day they hope to build a chapel."

Right now I want to add that they did indeed build a chapel at Bertrand, and the altar and chairs that are now used in our parish hall came from that chapel after it was finally closed.

Again quoting from Miss Hattie:

"I forgot to say that Millenbeck is about ten miles from White Chapel. After going there we returned by way of Merry Point, have to cross a ferry there, making the round trip for the day about 30 miles. Then to Grace and Wicomico on the second and fourth Sundays, so you see we have plenty of riding. I enjoy it as much as ever. We are fixed very conveniently for traveling. I believe I told you that Uncle Henry has bought a top buggy. Our horse, Little Sophie, takes us around in that and holds out splendidly."

In answer to a question so often asked, namely, which was established first, the church or the Sunday school--our Sunday school can, perhaps a little boastfully, reply that the Sunday School was first. We are indebted to Mr. Derby's daughter, Mrs. Ayres of Accomac, for much of our information. I quote from Mrs. Ayres:

"The old Rectory at Lancaster Court House was the scene of the beginning of Trinity Church. Mrs. Henry Landon Derby, the wife of the rector of Christ Church Parish, having a family of small children of her own, started a Sunday School in the Rectory for children of the neighborhood and her own. There was no church in the village and our nearest church was Grace Church at Kilmarnock, a distance of seven miles. In the opposite direction there was St. Mary's White Chapel some miles farther away.

"The Rectory Sunday School grew and flourished. Our charter members being our neighbors from across the road--the Greshams, who had a large family. Then there was Lela Tompkins, whose mother became a teacher in the school. Soon children began to come from the neighboring homes. In a short time the school outgrew the Rectory's capacity to house its members. It was then that the Reverend Mr. Derby said, 'Why not have a church building that will take care of these children and their families?' Thus, Trinity Church, the present building, was the result.

"Mr. Archibald Moody and his wife were the pillars of Trinity Church from the beginning and through many, many years. Mr. Moody was superintendent of the Sunday School and Mrs. Moody a faithful teacher and worker in every way. Their nieces, who lived in their home, were Lulie, Rosa, and Edna George. All three girls worked and added their musical talent to the Sunday School. I do not recall the names of all the families who became identified with Trinity. Some I remember were from the Methodist Church--the Robinsons, Simmons and others.

"Colonel Robert Mayo and family moved into our neighborhood. They belonged to the Episcopal Church and were a big help to Trinity. Later George Mayo, one of the sons, entered the ministry and did such fine work in the Blue Ridge Mountain Missions.

"Mr. and Mrs. Mottram Sanford were loyal and earnest church workers. Mr. Sanford was Mr. Derby's lay reader and helped in the evening services when the rector had been through a long day with two or more services.

"The architect who built Trinity Church was a Mr. Montgomery from Essex County. He and his son Victor lived with the rector's family while they worked on the church and in that way helped to lessen the expenses, which were heavy for our small and not wealthy group of church members.

"I also recall the Christmas programs. At Christmastime there was always a large cedar tree placed in the church and a program of Christmas music was gotten ready for the entertainment, which was always held on December 28th, the Holy Innocents. It was looked forward to by the community. There would be candy, nuts, and so forth. For each child there would be a gift. Mrs. Derby and Mrs. Moody worked untiringly dressing dolls and making appropriate gifts for the boys and girls of the school. In those days we made our own gifts for the tree and for each other. Money was not plentiful and the stores did not carry a display of things for Christmas as they do today. We appreciated what we had and our little homemade articles were always acceptable and well loved."

These events took place in 1884 and during the intervening years our Sunday School and church have had their ups and downs. We have had years of growth and years of stagnation, but through these years we have survived.

Time does not permit me to read the beautiful letter written by Mr. Derby to the children of the Sunday School, but the original may be seen in our exhibit in the Parish Hall. A copy may be seen in the Book of Remembrance.

The next rector to come to Christ Church Parish was the Reverend Edward B. Burwell, who served from 1891 to 1899. He and his lovely wife Rosa had a house full of small children. According to a scrapbook, which I have in my possession, Lancaster and Trinity really came alive when the Burwells were here. Mrs. Burwell's sister, the former Emily Sneed, became my aunt-in-law when she married my uncle, Harvey Stuart Gresham, in 1896. Aunt Em and Uncle Harvey continued to work and worship at Trinity until their deaths in 1939. The Burwell family never lost contact with Lancaster and Trinity as they returned every summer to visit my aunt and uncle.

Mr. Burwell was followed by the young Granville R. Micou, who was ordained deacon in 1899 and served as rector from 1900 to 1901. He married my aunt, Mary Norma Gresham, and brought his bride to live in the Rectory. Mr. Micou was an avid amateur photographer, and some of his pictures of the old Rectory are on display in the Parish Hall. Unfortunately, those that hung in the vesting room were lost when the church was undergoing repairs. In 1902, death cut short Mr. Micou's promising future and left the Parish shocked and grieved.

#### Part II

In 1902, the Reverend Lawrence Rousseau Combs came to Christ Church Parish and remained a faithful servant until he retired in 1933. No words can express the respect and admiration his congregations felt toward him. He and his attractive wife, who later became a complete invalid, had five lovely daughters. Many of you present today remember them. "Miss Bessie" became the wife of Dr. Chichester Tapscott Peirce. "Miss Sadie" married Dr. Maryus C. Oldham. Helen married Leland Robinson. Lila married Oscar B. Chilton and Marguerite married Laurie Brown of Lancaster.

Mr. Combs was a scholar, philosopher, and almost a prophet, for some of his predictions have become very real to us today. I can remember his talking of "the Great White Bear." At the time I did not understand, but my father explained to me that he was referring to Russia. His prediction has proved to be correct.

In 1933, on July 1st, the vivacious Reverend William Byrd Lee Milton came to serve as rector of the Parish. When Mr. Milton first arrived he boarded in Kilmarnock, but after his marriage to the beautiful Frances Thornton of Fredericksburg, the Parish decided the old rectory in Lancaster was in need of repair. There was no electricity or plumbing, as the village at that time had acquired neither. Thus, in 1936 the Parish vestry voted to sell the old rectory in Lancaster and to buy a small new rectory in Kilmarnock. There the Miltons lived until 1937, when he left to accept another parish. He was killed later in World War II.

The Reverend Frederick Griffith succeeded Mr. Milton, and served as rector from 1938 to 1942. He and his sweet Polly lived in the new rectory in Kilmarnock, and in spite of the six churches that he had, he served each well. It was under his guidance that Trinity began to grow. He organized the first women's group the church had ever had. It was known as the Ladies'

Guild of Trinity Church. In 1953 it became The Woman's Auxiliary and the same organization is now known as The Trinity Episcopal Church Women.

Up until this time we had only a small table that served as the altar, and a wooden cross, candlesticks, and collection plate were used. Mr. Griffith designed the altar that you see today. He had Mr. Albin Chinn Elmore of Kilmarnock make it by hand. A dorsal curtain was made to cover the window, which was then behind the altar, and new brass altar furnishings were given as memorials by members of the church. The little oil lamps on each side of the church were replaced by electric lights, since by this time the town of Lancaster had acquired electricity. All members of Trinity were devoted to Mr. Griffith and many tears were shed when he left us to go to a church in Salem, Virginia.

From 1942 to 1944 we evidently had guest ministers, as it was not until 1944 that young Dorsey G. Smith and his accomplished wife Dorothy came to us. He was a devout Christian leader and served the parish with distinction. We were sorry to lose him in 1947 to a larger parish in Texas.

Again, for a short time, we were without a minister, but the Lord heard our prayers and sent us the Reverend Morton Townsend. Evidently, funds had become available by this time and instead of six churches the previous minister had served, Mr. Townsend had only three. He and his attractive little family were housed in the same very small rectory. This must have been a hardship, but there was never a word of complaint. He and his family soon won the hearts of all the members of the parish, and under his guidance our little Trinity started building the Parish Hall. He reorganized the Sunday School, worked with the youth, started a junior choir, and was always on call when needed. When he left us to go to King George in 1954 we felt devastated, and he and his family remained in our hearts.

We were not long without a rector, and again the Lord sent us an outstanding leader. The Reverend James F. Ferneyhough came to us in 1954 at just the time our parish house was completed. He and his wife Fern soon won our hearts. He was a teacher as well as a preacher, and it was he who organized the first Altar Guild in 1955. He had monthly meetings and gave us instruction in altar guild work. He solicited the help of Miss Marjorie Eastwick of Foxhill Plantation, and she gave unstintingly of her time and knowledge to help Trinity in every way she could. The interior of the church was changed to a great extent when Miss Eastwick secured a handsome walnut bed, a gift of Mr. and Mrs. William Platt, and had it made into a reredos. She also designed the cabinet for altar furnishings in the sacristy and labeled every piece of altar linen and left instructions how each was to be folded and cared for. Mr. Ferneyhough celebrated the completion of the restoration by having an all-day service and luncheon in 1958. He called this celebration Trinity Day.

The new Grace Church in Kilmarnock was also built during his ministry as parish rector. He was in every way a gentleman of the old school, a scholar, and indeed a gentle man. He left us in 1962 to move to a church in Triangle, Virginia.

In 1962 we were fortunate in securing the services of the Reverend Frank L. Smart. Chaplain Smart had retired from the Navy and was making his home near Whitestone. He was a dynamic leader, and no one could have been more faithful to his congregation than he. No longer did we saunter into church

at a late hour. He made it known that we were to be on time, and we knew he meant it. Although we were a little in awe of him, we respected and loved him. We did not want to give him up, but with his recommendation we secured his friend from Hawaii who soon became our friend as well. The Reverend Robert Sheeran, his wife Jane and family, came to us in 1963. By this time the parish had grown and an assistant was needed.

From 1963 to 1966 the Reverend Charles D. Aiken served as assistant rector for Trinity and White Chapel. Sometimes he and Mr. Sheeran would exchange pulpits.

Mr. Aiken was young and full of enthusiasm. He worked diligently to help build up Trinity. The parish now acquired a home in Lancaster known as the Vicarage, and here Mr. and Mrs. Aiken and little son lived among us. "Buck," as he was known to all of us, was a young man with a mission and a vision. One Sunday morning, while in the midst of an enthusiastic sermon, the roof of the church caught on fire. In the back of the church was a big wood stove with a long slim pipe that went from stove to ceiling. When someone noticed the fire, someone had to relate the news to "Buck," who was so engrossed in his message that he had failed to notice the flames. Forthwith the fire department was called and the damage was minor. Unfortunately, we never heard the rest of Mr. Aiken's sermon. From then on we affectionately named him "the fiery parson."

From 1966 to 1970 the Reverend Benjamin Campbell was assistant. Mr. Campbell, with his youth and charm, worked well with children and young adults, and his scholarly mind was admired by all who knew him. He was eager to have the interior of the church improved. His dream of making improvements came true when he arrived at the church one Sunday morning and found that an automobile had run off the road and reposed within the church. The occupants of the car dismounted within the building and came out through the front door leaving the car in the church and the side of the building in shambles. Hard to believe, but not a glass in the windows was cracked. This event in 1970, however, brought the renovation of the church to a point of necessary action immediately, but Trinity won the distinction of being the first drive-in church. Mr. Eugene White III gave his services as a planner and designer of the interior or "new look" which you see today. We shall always be indebted to Mr. White for his interest and accomplishments.

Much to our delight, in 1970 the Reverend Morton Townsend returned to Christ Church Parish as Associate Rector, and in 1973 the churches of Trinity and White Chapel were officially separated from Grace and Christ Church by the Diocesan Council and became an independent parish. The Reverend Morton Townsend became the rector of Trinity and White Chapel, and Mr. Sheeran was rector of Grace and Christ Church. Mr. Townsend served these churches with the same success as before, and although he retired in 1977, he is a faithful member of this congregation and we very keenly feel the loss if he is not present--a man and his music--he is our Frank Sinatra.

In 1978 we were fortunate in securing the services of the Reverend Sydney C. Swann, Jr. He and his Becky had retired to their lovely home on the river, and for two years Mr. Swann was a faithful rector and counselor. He retired from active duty in 1980, but both he and his wife continue to play an important role in the life of the church.

This brings us to the present day and our present rector and his charming wife Helen. If we had searched the world over, we could not have found a more suitable rector. Under his guidance the church is moving slowly but surely ahead. We are thankful and grateful to have the leadership of the Reverend Louis M. Cobb.

In closing, I should like to read several verses from a poem written in 1884 by a special little lady, my grandmother Mary Stuart Harvey Gresham-- the title, "Trinity Church":

Not a costly pile, where loud debate  
And fierce dissensions rise;  
Where party feud and bitter hate  
Ascend, to shame the skies;  
A grander cause calls us today,  
To lay this corner stone;  
In reverence--we--our homage pay--  
To God alone!

Lean down, our Father! Bless this day!  
Thou art strong, and we are weak,  
That future generations may  
Rejoice in the God we seek.  
Throw down thy mantle from Above.  
of faith and charity;  
The semblance of thy perfect love  
We would invoke of Thee.

.....  
The evening orisons--always--  
To Speak of peace and love;  
Sweet children's notes will blend in praise  
to the listening One Above!  
When high above the organ's peal,  
The solemn chant will soar,  
They who listen and love, will feel--  
Christ is theirs evermore.