

# **Trinity Episcopal Church**



**Fishkill, New York**

A  
Brief History of  
**TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH**

Fishkill, New York

by

Shirley B. Bergmann

Trinity Church Historian

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*Shirley B. Bergmann*

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## 1. THE BEGINNINGS

**D**utchess County was the last of the Hudson Valley counties to be settled by Europeans. The Dutch had not regarded it as valuable farm land, but beaver and other furs were a different matter. The area was populated by peaceful Indians who trapped and traded willingly. Francis Rombout, Gulian Verplanck, and later Stephanus Van Cortlandt were partners in this business.

In the late seventeenth century the royal governor of New York became worried about possible encroachment on New York lands by Massachusetts and Connecticut. Their charters entitled them to otherwise vacant land as far west as the Pacific Ocean. Between 1685 and 1697 the whole of Dutchess County, which included all of present day Putnam County and a portion of Columbia, was patented. Patents were licenses to negotiate with the Indians for the purchase of the land, and were usually granted in large tracts to wealthy or influential people. The very first patent went to Rombout and his partners, who showed no inclination to settle the land, and just continued their fur trade. Rombout died in 1691, and had willed a house in New York City and his share of the patent to his daughter Catheryna, then four years old. At seventeen she and her husband Roger Brett mortgaged the house for 240 pounds and moved to "The Fishkills." They mortgaged the land, some 28,000 acres, to obtain additional capital to build a mill and miller's house and then a house for themselves. They had to sell farms as quickly as possible to pay their debts. Eight to ten years later Brett was killed accidentally, leaving Catheryna, with three young sons, to carry on.

In 1700, Dutchess had only a handful of European inhabitants, and in 1715 about 450. Forty years later there were more than 14,000. Originally administered from Kingston in long settled Ulster County, it now had a county seat at Poughkeepsie. The good land had been cleared for farming and there were courts and lawyers and artisans, inns, schools and churches. The fur trade had declined, but there was a ready market down river for the wheat, fish, timber and charcoal that the area provided. Poughkeepsie and Fishkill were the two villages.

Originally Fishkill had the higher assessment roll, but geography dictated different futures for them. Poughkeepsie had the more central location and the local government. The river bank there was moderately steep, but there was good usable land to the north, east and south. The Albany Post Road ran within a mile of the river, and there were roads leading to New England. The development of Fishkill was limited by the mountain barrier to the south, and there is little good land in that direction. The river bank was steep, and the mountains forced the Post Road well inland from the river. As a result, three settlements grew up, Fishkill Landing for the port and ferry dock, Matteawan for a mill and housing, and Fishkill as a center for land transportation and for the social and commercial needs of a prosperous farm area.

With the increased population came churches. In the county were Quakers, Lutherans, and Moravian missionaries. Fishkill itself had a Dutch Reformed and a Presbyterian church, and there was a Baptist church not far to the east. The Church of England was not represented.

## **2. THE COMING OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND TO DUTCHESS COUNTY**

The growth of the Anglican Church in the colonies was varied, ranging from Virginia, where it was tax supported, to Massachusetts, where it was allowed only because the Puritans couldn't keep out the established church. Where religious toleration existed, growth of the different denominations depended on the makeup of the population of settlers, the system of government of the sect, and the financial resources of the people. In the colonies north of Maryland there were, at the time of the Revolution, only eighty Church of England priests, and with the exception of the cities of Boston, Newport, New York, and Philadelphia, all of the churches were supported in part by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG). It was responsible for encouraging the growth of the Church of England in the colonies. In 1769 it paid almost 4,700 pounds toward the salaries of 83 missionaries. There was always a shortage of clergy, as church rules required that every priest be ordained by a bishop, and there was no bishop in America. Not too many Englishmen wanted to settle in the wilderness at low pay, and Americans had to travel to England, remain there at least a year, and be ordained by the Bishop of London. This was expensive and took the life of one man in four who attempted it.

When Episcopalians hear the name, Samuel Seabury, they think of the first American bishop. His fame tends to obscure the achievements of his father, also named Samuel. The elder had at an early age been licensed to preach, but was not ordained, in the Congregational Church. He was a student at Yale during a period of great religious controversy, and became interested in the Church of England. He transferred to Harvard, married an Anglican, and in 1730 went to England for Anglican ordination. Returning to America in 1732 he served successfully in New London for ten years before coming to St. George's Church, Hempstead, Long Island. In addition to fulfilling responsibilities there, he traveled all around Queens preaching and baptizing. He was highly regarded by his congregation, but was not paid a great deal for all his efforts. He received a library grant of 10 pounds and 50 pounds a year from the SPG, some money and a modest house from his congregation. For a number of years he

operated a boarding school to help support his wife and seven children. Several of the settlers at Fishkill had emigrated from Hempstead, and it is likely that the first invitation to visit Dutchess County came from them. In November 1755 he arrived at Fishkill on horseback, and spent several days baptizing, preaching and conferring. In four services over a period of six days, he had a total attendance of about 600. The first service overflowed the house of Captain Henry Terbus (or Ter Boss), so that people were grateful for the generosity of the Dutch minister, who allowed the Anglicans to use his church after his own service was completed. Of course there was some grumbling that he preached so long that the Anglicans were hard put to finish their service before dark.

Seabury reported to the SPG that there was a substantial number of people in the county desiring a church, and that they had promised to erect a church building and buy a glebe if they could have the Society's aid in obtaining a clergyman and paying him. (A glebe is a farm, the income of which is for the support of a minister.) In 1756 the SPG instructed Seabury that, while his primary responsibility lay in Hempstead, he should do what he could to help the Dutchess County people to establish a church. If they fulfilled their promises, the Society would see that they got a clergyman. It was planned that churches would be attempted in the Rombout (Fishkill), Poughkeepsie and Crum Elbow Precincts. Subsequently a fourth location was chosen in Beekman Precinct. The Crum Elbow location was centered in the area of the present Troop K headquarters of the New York State Police at the intersection of NY Route 82 and US Route 44, the Beekman location, sometimes referred to as Pouquaig, lying east of Sylvan Lake.

In the same year, Fishkill began getting pledges for erecting a church building. They soon had over 100, and believed they could get fifty more. Seabury made five more visits to Dutchess, the last in 1762, sometimes visiting all four locations. In both Poughkeepsie and Fishkill he was allowed to use the Dutch churches. The relationships between religious denominations tended to be hostile, and the Dutch were unusual in their tolerance. One must remember that the Mayflower Pilgrims first settled in Holland and came to America, not because they were driven out, but because they did not like to see their children turning Dutch.



In his last letter to the SPG shortly before his death in 1764, Seabury wrote that although there was a substantial number of prospective church members, it was very difficult to choose a location for a church building, as the population was very scattered.

Starting in 1762 the Rev. John Beardsley made half a dozen visits to Dutchess. (He had a mission in Groton and Norwalk, but the congregation was failing in its pledged support). With Beardsley's vigorous assistance funds were raised to buy a glebe. In July 1766 the SPG officially approved Dutchess County as one of its missions, and that Beardsley should leave his previous place to serve there. Christ Church, Poughkeepsie, consequently marks 1766 as the date of its foundation. Trinity Church Fishkill, viewing the matter from a practical rather than a legal standpoint, feels that since members were formally raising money to erect a church building in 1756, that date can be claimed. The agreement establishing the mission required the people to provide a glebe and 60 pounds yearly for the minister's salary, while the SPG would provide a library and 35 pounds annually.

The purchase of a glebe was the first matter of importance, and the Fishkill and Poughkeepsie congregations disagreed as to the proper location. The former recommended a farm lying about halfway between the two, and the latter one just outside Poughkeepsie. Fishkill said their choice was bigger and cheaper, and that they did not have enough money to buy the other. Poughkeepsie felt that in case the two congregations ever separated, the glebe should be convenient for one of them, which would then buy the other's share. Since the two could not agree, the decision was left to Beardsley, who chose the Poughkeepsie site. To make up for the shortage of money he agreed to pay one third of the purchase price of 600 pounds. The Glebe House in Poughkeepsie, now open as a museum, was the original house built on this land for him.

Beardsley was active and vigorous in his work, traveling between the four locations in his care, baptizing and preaching. Gradually it became apparent that there was not enough support or population to establish congregations in Crum Elbow and Beekman, and they dropped from sight.

After the death of his first wife, Beardsley married a daughter of Bartholemew Crannell of Poughkeepsie. Crannell was a prosperous landholder and shrewd attorney, an active and generous churchman and a Tory. The financial and legal affairs of the mission were left mostly in the hands of Beardsley and Crannell, and inadequate records led to legal problems and bitterness twenty years later when Trinity and Christ Church tried to separate their affairs.



*The Glebe House*  
*Poughkeepsie, New York*

### 3. THE BUILDING OF TRINITY CHURCH

No written records of the construction of Trinity exist - the building must speak for itself. There have been plenty of stories ranging from the demonstrably false to the probable. The Reformed Church bell was not bought from Trinity when its steeple was removed. The timbers are probably chestnut and may have been cut in the Adirondacks and floated down the Hudson. It has been reported that the builder was a master carpenter named Barnes from New York City. But were the original carpenters fired for drunkenness and a second crew hired? Were the trusses built in New York by ship's carpenters and shipped to Fishkill? Was there glass in the windows, and were there shutters?

The building was a simple rectangle about forty-two by sixty feet with a three foot extension that was part of the base of the tower. Ten smoothed tree trunks were mounted vertically on masonry foundations, and joined at the top by timbers. On these were mounted a series of trusses that support the ceiling and the roof. This assemblage is the heart of the building, as the walls, also on stone foundations, are only strong enough to support themselves. The principles of construction owed much to the techniques of building the Dutch barns of the period. The four columns at the road end of the building supported a four stage steeple that was reputed to exceed one hundred feet in height. The main entrance was in the base of the tower, and there was a "grave yard door" halfway down one side. There was a Palladian window at the altar end, four large windows in each side wall, and another pair either side of the tower at the entrance end. Lacking engineering training and lacking knowledge of the structural strength of their building materials and with a ready supply of good wood, early builders tended to overbuild. Since iron nails were hand made one at a time, they were costly, and wooden pegs were used as joiners whenever possible.

The timbers of the trusses were fastened together by mortise and tenon joints, that is, a hole was gouged in one timber, and the end of the adjoining piece was trimmed to fit in the hole tightly. When the two pieces were joined a hole was drilled through both and a tapered peg driven in hard. If necessary the ends of the peg could be sawed off afterwards. The virtues of this method are proved by the existence and solidity of the building 225 years later. At

Trinity both members of a given joint are marked by an incised Roman numeral, and each joint by a different number. A completed truss was horribly heavy, and the builders lacked powered cranes for lifting. A single timber eight inches square



and twenty feet long would weigh at least 250 pounds. It seems obvious that the trusses were built on the ground, taken apart, hoisted one timber at a time, and reassembled in place. Since hand-made joints were never exactly identical, it was necessary that the right pieces be in the right places. The numbering system guaranteed that.

Floor joists were logs flattened only on top, and two-inch-thick flooring planks were nailed in place. The original hand-made nails are still visible. Since the floor joists were about three feet apart, the floor was disconcertingly springy until additional bracing was installed around 1960. There would have been shutters to protect the windows whether glazed or not, but the existence of glass has been questioned. When the Provincial Congress met at Trinity it found extensive evidence of the intrusion of pigeons, but whether this was because there was no glass or whether the windows of an unpopular church had been stolen or broken by vandals is unknown. Window glass was laboriously hand made and expensive, and there was not enough money to finish the interior or to paint the exterior. Many homes made do with oiled paper, but it hardly seems practical for the church's large windows. Obtaining window glass would have been a high priority. The present louvered shutters date from about 1820, and once had fixed louvered half circles at the top.

The exterior of the church must have presented an appearance similar to that of many Colonial frame churches. The flared roof line is not so common, but can be seen in a number of early Dutch houses. There were several features that show that the builders wanted a handsome building as well as a practical one. The four stage steeple, the carved details of the trim, the beaded siding boards, and the elegant coved cornice display an eye for beauty and a willingness to pay for it.

#### 4. THE MISSION YEARS

Trinity possesses almost no written records of the time before and during the Revolution, but Christ Church has published a book on its extensive collection of early documents, and a number of them relate to the financial and legal affairs of both parishes. Beardsley also sent reports of his progress to the SPG, and a half a dozen of these letters still exist. In fact, there has been considerable argument about the actual date of the construction of Trinity, and one of these settles the matter - 1768. In the same letter, Beardsley requests the SPG to reward Trinity's efforts by giving them a Bible and a Prayer Book. That Bible is one of our great treasures. Christ Church erected a brick and stone church in 1772, and acquired some furnishings but no pews. They requested a Bible and Prayer Book also, but were refused, the SPG pointing out that Trinity and Christ Church were part of the same mission, and the rule was one set of books to a mission. The colonial government granted to the mission 200 acres of vacant land to enlarge the glebe, and Trinity was unhappy about the lack of documentation to prove its claim to a half share. They were reassured, but their misgivings turned out to be justified twenty-five years later.

Tension between the Colonies and England had been increasing for years, and Lexington and Concord in April 1775 triggered a great increase in rioting, petitions to the crown, drilling of militia, and an increase in self-governing activities. Dutchess County even had its own "Tea Party." Local feelings ran high as there were large numbers of Tories, and, with a large Quaker population, substantial pacifism. In this atmosphere the Church of England, which was regarded as almost a branch of the government, and whose local branch had a Tory priest and several prominent Tories in its congregations, was an object of hostility and suspicion. The local churches probably experienced a loss of both membership and support.

During these years the Dutch Church was torn by a controversy partly about ordination of clergy. Could they be ordained in this country or must it be done in Holland? At one point Fishkill's minister belonged to one side and Poughkeepsie's to the other. They were preaching alternately in the two churches with one half or the other of the congregation staying home.

This and their insistence on the use of the Dutch language had driven some people to join the Church of England. Sometimes one of the local churches lacked a clergyman and some of its members supported the Anglicans with the clear understanding that the support was temporary.

## 5. THE WAR YEARS

The fighting in the Revolution had actually begun in 1775, but July 4, 1776 marked the great divide. Americans were no longer rebellious subjects but an independent nation, in their own eyes. They could not afford to lose the coming struggle, and many Tories were sure that England would win and feared the consequences if they supported the rebellion. When a Commission to Detect Conspiracies was set up in New York, it was not just a witch hunt but a defense against a certain danger. The British navy had been chased out of Boston, but that summer it was in New York harbor poised for invasion.

The Church of England required that its religious services be conducted according to the Book of Common Prayer, which included prayers for the king in every service. Its priests had to choose whether to keep their oaths of allegiance and suspend public worship or to maintain that the prayers could be dropped. People could swear allegiance to the new government or risk imprisonment or exile. The Hudson Valley was so important strategically that some Tories were sent to New Hampshire to await trial, as their presence in Dutchess was regarded as dangerous. Some were placed under house arrest, and others were imprisoned in various places including ships anchored in Esopus Creek, near Kingston.

Beardsley refused to take the oath, and the two churches were closed. He even made a trip to New York City without permission, and was arrested on his return, along with a number of Quakers. The Quakers protested that they were only attending the Annual Meeting of their sect and had no interest in politics. They were released, but Beardsley was sent briefly to the "Fleet" prison. He was then placed under house arrest, but that was not too onerous. He was allowed to leave at least once for a Vestry Meeting and could leave to visit the sick and to baptize. It surely didn't hurt that one of the commissioners was his brother-in-law, Peter Tappen. In late 1777 a group of people intent on vigilante justice was troubling the peace. Beardsley was a target, and the commissioners feared that he might be injured. He agreed that he had better leave, and in December he and all his household, excluding male servants and slaves, were sent by ship to New York City. They were allowed to take only their clothing and

food and bedding for the trip. Beardsley became chaplain for a Loyalist regiment. As time passed many Tories changed their allegiance, and others who did not were allowed to stay at home if they lived quietly and obeyed the laws.

A letter to the SPG from New York reported that the Christ Church people were meeting and holding services omitting such collects (prayers) as were offensive to those in authority. That church was the owner of record of the glebe, and the vestry, renting the house and the farm land, had continuing business all through the war. Apparently there were occasional religious services when a Patriot priest happened along. Trinity shortly lost the use of its building, and we have only one piece of evidence of its religious activity. Someone kept the Bible safely and probably other items, perhaps including the present altar table.

Both sides of the conflict regarded control of the Hudson as vital to success in the war. If the British should gain it, they could bring their fleet up river, prevent appreciable communication between New England and the south, and seize supplies. New York State was one of the granaries of the country, and with the British navy controlling the coastline, the river traffic both along it and across it was essential. The navy landed troops on Long Island, defeated the outnumbered and ill-trained Patriots and drove them to Manhattan. The Continental Army was defeated there, driven to White Plains and defeated again. Washington took his battered army partly into New Jersey and partly into the Highlands of the Hudson. With the British controlling the river north to almost West Point, Fishkill and Newburgh became very important to the American cause. Since they were protected by the river forts and the chain across the Hudson, the ferry crossing was safe communication bypassing New York City. There was land suitable for troop concentrations, and the villages provided housing and useful artisans and tradesmen. They must have been terribly overcrowded.

In these early days the army was learning its job by doing and by making mistakes. Care of the wounded and ill went the same way. Some of the wounded from these early battles were moved to a hospital set up in Newark, and then inland out of harm's way. Others were to go to Peekskill, but it was found that there was no suitable building there, and they were carried to Fishkill.



The state government had fled New York ahead of the armies and came to Fishkill. Isaac Ter Boss, who is buried in Trinity churchyard, helped carry the state papers, medicines and money to Fishkill. The Provincial Congress met first at Trinity, but they found that it lacked seating and was dirtied by pigeons. Their removal to the Dutch Church left Trinity available.

To twentieth century eyes the medical care available at this time seems hardly worthy of the name. They had no notion of the actions of bacteria, few medicines and anesthetics, and a profound belief in the virtues of bleeding, purges, blisters, and clysters as treatments for almost anything. Surgeons were experienced in amputations and trephining (opening the skull to relieve pressure), but amputation at the thigh or shoulder was usually fatal because of the difficulty of controlling blood loss. Disease killed many times the number of people who died from wounds, and a number of the wound deaths were caused by infection. Army doctors learned by experience that small hospitals had a lower death rate than large ones, and officers kept their ill and injured in the barracks if at all possible. Hospitals expected to put two men in a bed, more if necessary, and the result was cross infection. A man enfeebled by one disease lacked the strength to fight off another. The commonest killers were dysentery and putrid fevers (a general term including among other things, typhoid and typhus). Pneumonia, venereal disease, mumps and measles, the latter contracted by young men from country areas who had never been exposed, increased the total. Smallpox was a scourge, and inoculation was still controversial. Many states forbade it, and George Washington disapproved at first. The inoculation used matter from a sick man's scabs, and the treated man could die or give the disease to someone else unless quarantined. When the death rate from inoculation was reduced from about eight per thousand to one per thousand, and an epidemic killed one hundred per thousand, the answer was clear. Washington persuaded the Continental Congress to require that all army recruits be inoculated.

There was a smallpox epidemic at Fishkill, and a local inhabitant years later related seeing bodies stacked like cord wood between Trinity and the Dutch Church. Inadequate food, clothing and shelter, especially in winter, contributed to more deaths. After one especially severe winter, Maj. Gen. William Heath commented that in the New Windsor hospital, the

number of patients who froze to death was comparable to the number who recovered. Trinity could have been no better. Moses Wing who had his leg amputated at the thigh after the battle of "Flatbush" was transferred to Fishkill to the care of Dr. Chauncey Graham. The Rev. Dr. Graham was actually the pastor of the Fishkill Presbyterian Church. He is also mentioned as certifying the state of health of certain prisoners in the 1775-76 period. Whether he was a physician, in addition to being a clergyman and operating a boarding school, or whether he was temporarily the administrative head of the Fishkill hospitals is not known. Minimum medical training was quite simple. Wing was discharged from the army in December 1776, returned to his home in Sandwich, Massachusetts, studied medicine under a local doctor, and returned to military service as a medical officer on shipboard in 1778.

Dr. James Tilton designed a hospital hut that was built near Morristown, New Jersey. It consisted of three wards, each containing a fireplace. It allowed about 28 square feet for each patient, and using that figure, Trinity could have housed about 90 people. Several sites in the county had hospitals, an unspecified location at New Hackensack, the Quaker Meeting House near Pawling, and the Fishkill Presbyterian Church and adjoining academy near the junction of New York State Routes 52 and 82. The Beverly Robinson house in Garrison, like Trinity, seems to have been used throughout most of the war, even though the demand was reduced as fighting moved to the south. Col. Robinson commanded a Loyalist regiment - the one in which Beardsley served as chaplain.

The army encampment south of the village had its own cemetery, which has never been discovered. Some burials occurred in the local churchyards, but the monuments, if any, have disappeared. David Godwin many years later wrote a memoir outlining the military service of himself, his father, and his brothers. They all served in the Hudson Valley, and his father died in Fishkill during the war: "He was buried in the church yard at Fishkill with all the honors of war." One brother, who was a prisoner of the British for more than three years, died shortly after his release and was buried beside his father. Which of the three church yards was their burying place is never mentioned. There is a story that nineteenth century gravediggers at Trinity found bones and fragments of wool blankets.

## 6. THE NEW AMERICAN CHURCH

When the war was over and the independence of the United States was firmly established, the condition of what had been the Church of England was precarious. Many of the priests, including John Beardsley, had emigrated to Canada, and many of the church members had gone as well. There was no more financial support from either the SPG or from any branch of American government, leaving all support of local churches to the remaining members already impoverished by war. A fundamental deficiency was the lack of an American bishop, as no priest could be ordained without one. Many prominent men of the day were members, including fifty-five signers of the Declaration of Independence and two-thirds of the framers of the Constitution. This helped to counterbalance the hostility toward a Church that was associated in people's minds with the British government. The needs of the Church were an organization, bishops, and a new Prayer Book that combined ancient tradition with the American situation. The English bishops had considerable power, both secular and religious, and the Americans had to find a formula combining the need for administrative authority, with lay restraints on such authority.

Connecticut elected Samuel Seabury as their bishop and he journeyed to England to be consecrated by the required three bishops. He was coldly received and proceeded to Scotland. As a result of political problems, including two rebellions in the 18th century in favor of the Stuarts, there was a group of bishops there who had never sworn allegiance to the Hanover king. The non-juring bishops as they were called were outlawed but still bishops. They probably enjoyed the opportunity to consecrate Seabury, and he returned to America in the summer of 1785 as the first American bishop. Subsequently the English Church modified its stand and consecrated three more American bishops.

Christ Church had at least three visits by Episcopal clergy during the war and moved aggressively to get a priest as soon as it was over. Henry Van Dyck, who had been acting as a Lay Reader in Connecticut, desired to become a priest, and visited Poughkeepsie in June 1784. He made an excellent impression, and a subscription to hire him was begun.

Contributions came from Presbyterians and Dutch Reformed people, as both groups lacked ministers at the time. Trinity was contacted, and by August the two churches agreed to hire him as soon as he should be ordained. He would give one third of his time to Fishkill which would contribute one third of his 120 pounds salary. The exact terms of Van Dyck's employment were settled and he was to come to Dutchess County as soon as he was ordained. The ordination occurred in due course, but Van Dyck had an excuse for not coming just yet. Then came an assortment of excuses and attempts to alter the terms of the contract. By 1786 he had made several brief visits to both churches, but never stayed, and was still living in Connecticut. The Vestries had become very irritated and were about ready to give up, and Van Dyck finally admitted the real problem. He owed a debt to a creditor in New York which he could not pay, and by State law, could be imprisoned if he came to live in New York. With assistance from Egbert Benson of Christ Church, he was able to get easier terms for the repayment of the debt, and New York changed its laws. He finally came to Poughkeepsie in May of 1787.

In 1788 Trinity took the trouble of having three independent well-regarded citizens appraise the damages the building had sustained by its government occupation, and establish suitable rent for seven years use of the building and grounds. The vestry voted to try to be reimbursed for the sum of almost 350 pounds, and to use any money received for completing the church. The National Archives have no record of such a claim, but as the Articles of Confederation were still in effect, the claim might have been made against New York State. Unfortunately a fire destroyed any possible record, so we do not know if the claim was ever pressed or if it was decided that the possibility of winning was too small to justify the cost of the action.

During this same period a dispute over glebe lands was seriously distressing the two congregations. Reynolds in "The Records of Christ Church" covered the problem in detail. It is to Mr. Van Dyck's credit that he insisted as a condition of his coming as rector, that the dispute be submitted to arbitration. As a result Fishkill was awarded rights to half the glebe, both the original purchase and the later grant, but must pay one half of certain costs incurred in obtaining and holding the glebe. The source of the argument dated from 1773. Some things

were never written down, and many of those involved in the beginning had died or emigrated to Canada. Both churches were in serious financial condition. Christ Church had erected a substantial building before the war and was still in debt, and Trinity's building had never been finished. Each had appealed to Trinity Church, New York for help, at first without success. The glebe was sold for one thousand pounds under mortgage. The purchaser defaulted and the churches finally got their money in 1795. It must have been a relief to be rid of the glebe. There had been continual trouble with tenants to some of the land not paying their rent and with squatters and trespassers. In every case the courts upheld the churches, but the lawsuits were a continuing financial drain.

During this time, John Beardsley was pressing for the reimbursement of money he claimed he had spent on the churches' behalf prior to his departure. The claims were finally compromised in 1805. The details of these negotiations are recorded in Reynolds' book as if they were entirely a problem of Christ Church, and it is not known if Trinity had any part in them.

After the departure of Van Dyck in 1792, George Spierin was hired with the same provision of service to Trinity and Christ Church and at the same salary. However there was no longer a house for him to live in. There survives a rather plaintive letter from him begging for a house or for payment of his rent. He left in 1795, and was followed by John Sayrs. Sayrs was to serve three out of four Sundays at Christ Church at a salary of 120 pounds with Trinity receiving the fourth Sunday at a salary of 40 pounds. A year later his salary was increased by one sixth, but there was still no rectory, and he declined appointment for a third year. The poverty of the two churches was a continuing problem. Funds were raised for church operations by soliciting donations and by renting pews. Some people who belonged to other denominations rented pews in the Episcopal Churches, but dropped out as their own sect acquired ministers.

After leaving Poughkeepsie, Sayrs went to Maryland, and he eventually founded St. George's Church in Georgetown, D.C., and was one of the first chaplains of the United States Senate. He was buried under the chancel of St. George's and the tombstone inscription was composed by Francis Scott Key.

In 1798 each church received a gift of 500 pounds from Trinity Church, New York, Poughkeepsie for the purchase of a glebe or a parsonage, and Fishkill for completion of the church building. Trinity was very generous to the small and struggling churches of the state.

Toward the end of 1799 Philander Chase came to serve the two congregations, and his formidable energy left its mark. He was only 24 years old, and had already spent the year of his diaconate as a missionary in upstate New York founding several congregations that still survive. He had achieved an outstanding reputation, and since he had promised to come to a parish in Delaware County before he received the offer from Dutchess, the local churches paid \$100 to the other parish to get him released from his contract. He had only been in Poughkeepsie a year when he asked permission of his parishes to give four Sundays a year to the parish he founded, St. Peter's, Lithgow and for time to minister to a congregation in present day Patterson, Putnam County. He strongly criticized the lack of good parochial records, and set to work to document and record past baptisms of his congregations. The Vestry of Trinity voted to reimburse Mr. Chase for 6 pounds for the purchase of a record book. The Diocesan Convention had been omitted in 1798, 1799 and 1800 because of raging yellow fever in New York City. In 1805 there was another epidemic, and Chase persuaded Bishop Benjamin Moore to hold the Convention in Poughkeepsie. The Journal of the Convention records Chase's report of 48 baptisms at Christ Church and 27 at Trinity. In his autobiography he wrote that as his salary was inadequate he took up teaching, becoming head of the Dutchess County Academy in Poughkeepsie, the school that had been established in Fishkill by Chauncey Graham.

Chase's enthusiasm and energy put him at odds with some of the congregation. For a newcomer under 30 to impose his ideas on older men who had run the churches' affairs for 25 years infuriated some, one to the point that he refused to attend. Chase's method of departure left a bad taste with the local congregations. Protestants in New Orleans had requested an Episcopal missionary, and the health of Chase's wife made it seem like a good move to him. (A 1956 letter from Henry Noble McCracken, a former president of Vassar College, states that Chase had married McCracken's great aunt, Mary Fay.) After conferring with Bishop Benjamin Moore, but with no notice to the vestries, he left, leaving his family behind. After his

departure he wrote a letter explaining that he would be gone for two or three months or even longer. He did not resign nor did he make any provision for a supply priest. Finding that he could establish a congregation and support his family in New Orleans, he wrote two months later to resign.

Chase's career is impressive. After six years in New Orleans he returned north to Hartford for another six years. In 1817 he journeyed to Ohio, a frontier with no Episcopal churches. He established a diocese, becoming the first bishop, and founded Kenyon College and Gambier Seminary. After fourteen years he moved on to Illinois, founding another diocese and establishing Jubilee College. He became Presiding Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in 1843 and held that post until his death in 1852. He had tremendous ability, energy and missionary zeal, but was restless in settled conditions and impatient with those who disagreed with him. He had devoted adherents and a number of equally devoted opponents.

In 1806 Warden Daniel Verplanck was instructed to negotiate with the Newburgh church and others about uniting to call a rector. Settlement was reached with Christ Church to call Barzillai Bulkley who came in August. The arrangement was that Bulkley should serve two out of three Sundays at Christ Church and the third at Trinity. Little is known of Bulkley's work in Dutchess or of his life before or after his stint in the county. His departure in August 1809 marks the end of the sharing of ministers between the two churches; the reason for this is unknown.

After the overcrowding and bustle of the war years, Fishkill had reverted to its earlier life with not much increase in population. The Episcopal community was too small for it to support a rector on its own, and it was hard put to finish the church building and keep it in repair. In 1803, the vestry voted to repair the steeple, but must have found that impossible as it was removed instead at a cost of over 88 pounds. An anecdote exists that a carpenter engaged for that removal climbed up the steeple soon after dawn to work. He could see the early morning shadow extending far to the west, and could also see it move from side to side as the tower swayed. In the same year the vestry paid for installing pews in the church and repairing the fence. The pews were the so-called box pews, enclosures with partitions extending from the

floor upward about four feet and functioning doors. There might have been built-in benches. With this arrangement some warmth could be obtained in the unheated building by the use of charcoal burning foot warmers or hot bricks. At some time a wine glass pulpit was installed, so named because the cylindrical or octagonal pulpit was mounted on a central post like the stem of a wine glass. The pulpit was reached by a small, steep winding staircase, and the height enabled the priest to see his congregation in spite of the pew walls. Above the pulpit was suspended a decorative cap that served as a sounding board. The pews were arranged to provide a center aisle and narrow aisles along the outside walls.

A vestry meeting in 1805 recorded almost the only treasurer's report from the early days that exists.

<i>Due from pew rents and subscriptions</i>	£. 80	s. 5	d. 2
<i>Glebe rent</i>	16	0	0
<i>Bond interest</i>	10	10	0
<i>Total</i>	<u>106</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>2</u>
<i>Due to Philander Chase</i>	-80	0	0
<i>Remaining</i>	<u>26</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>2</u>
<i>In the treasurer's hands</i>	12	16	0
<i>Available</i>	<u>39</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>2</u>

These are figures for one year, so it is easy to see that there was not much money available for building maintenance or anything else. The 80 pounds for Chase was only one third of his total salary. Trinity could not afford a full time rector.



## 7. TRINITY STANDS ALONE

After Bulkley's departure in 1809 the vestry met with the churches of Peekskill and the Highlands (Garrison) about sharing a rector, and in 1810 with Newburgh. In 1812 John Brown, who was studying for ordination came to Trinity, and may have served St. George's Newburgh as well. In Trinity's baptismal records he signed himself that first year as "Lay Reader", subsequently as "Deacon", and finally as "Rector". Immediately after his ordination as priest he left to accept a call from St. George's, and had a long and illustrious career there. He served as rector until 1878 and as rector emeritus until his death in 1884 at the age of 93. During that time he organized four parishes and was instrumental in reviving half a dozen more. He established St. George's cemetery, served as trustee and president of the Academy, president of the horticultural society, trustee of General Theological Seminary, member of various diocesan committees, was offered the position of first president of Hobart College and preached at the centennial celebration of Trinity.

During his service at Trinity the vestry re-shingled the church roof, and carried out a plan for "sealing the church overhead." This leads one to think that the interior of the church had been until then open to the trusses and roof.

In 1815 Trinity appealed to Trinity, New York for financial help. Whatever they may have done, the Rev. Petrus Ten Broech came in 1816, and during at least part of his tenure, served Peekskill and Garrison as well.

The Fishkill congregation remained too small to support a priest by itself. So Trinity saw a succession of part-time rectors, sometimes shared with another parish with a sharing of salary, and sometimes serving missions in return for a payment from the Diocese. These arrangements were made with the churches already mentioned or with St. Ann's of Matteawan, St. Mark's of Chelsea, St. John's of Glenham, Zion of Wappingers Falls and Resurrection of Hopewell Junction. The priests' tenures often lasted just two or three years, and sometimes there were lengthy gaps. These men tended to be young, and they left as soon as they could find a position that paid better, and did not require the difficulties of travel between churches. As a result, the

churches in their care had only limited growth.

Dutchess County saw the rapid growth characteristic of the time. Agriculture was a profitable enterprise, as the area was a major provider of food for New York City. The wheat production gradually disappeared as the western lands were developed, but meat, dairy products, and vegetables were in demand. Wood cutting, to provide fuel for the iron foundries in the area and eventually for the steamboats and railroads, was a profitable sideline for land owners. In time the county was practically deforested. The river was the main transportation pathway, especially after the development of the steamboat. The first railroads followed the river, so the development of the towns along its banks continued. The inland towns tended to exist only to serve the neighboring farmers, unless there were mill sites along the streams. The Fishkill Creek provided such sites, but not near the Village of Fishkill.

The village was a bit of a transportation hub for land travel. New England emigrants on their way to the West, sometimes passed through Fishkill, heading for the ferry to cross the Hudson. Herds of cattle and flocks of sheep were driven to the river for transport to the slaughterhouses in New York. Remember that before the development of refrigeration, it was necessary to slaughter for meat as near the consumer as possible. The Albany Post Road passed through the village, and before railroads, was the best north and south land route available. At least twice the bridge across the Fishkill Creek just south of the church was washed out by floods. When that happened travelers had to rely on the "Battery Ford". That name presumably dates from the Revolutionary War, when the crossing was important enough to need defense.

An 1866 census of the Town of Fishkill shows that the neighborhood of the village had many farmers and the tradesmen who served them. There were blacksmiths, wagon makers, grocers, tailors, shoemakers, a doctor, teachers, among other trades, but no industrial occupations. Population growth was slow, while Matteawan and Wappingers Falls grew because of water power and Fishkill Landing because of its river side location. In 1910 Matteawan and Fishkill Landing were to merge to form the city of Beacon. Poughkeepsie surpassed them all. The churches in Fishkill all had to struggle for existence.

Information about Trinity Church is scanty. Often the Vestry Minutes record only the annual elections, and even the names of the rectors must be inferred from their signatures on the election reports. Samuel Verplanck in 1785 had given the church a glebe farm in Stormville. Somehow the deed had been lost, and a new deed was signed by his heirs in 1836, confirming the church ownership and the validity of the lease it had granted. The farm was a source of income until its sale in 1953, but it's hard to tell how much profit there was. There were unreliable tenants and expenses such as fencing and other maintenance costs.

Property ownership has always entailed maintenance problems. There are repeated references to painting the church, repairing or replacing the roof, replacing window glass and fences. Eventually the church acquired two wood stoves and then coal stoves. There is an old bill for increasing the amount of zinc sheeting around the stoves to reduce the risk of fire. The furnaces and electricity did not come till 1921. When the church finally built a rectory, problems of cess pools and contaminated wells were added to existing concerns. When painting of the rectory was approved in 1900 the choice of color was left to the rector's wife.

The church itself after several early years when it was unpainted, has worn several colors at different times. It has been white, mustard yellow at one time, and medium brown with white trim and green shutters in a color post card dated 1931. Mrs. Louis Fitzgerald of Garrison on more than one occasion gave money for painting, specifying that it be a "Colonial color".

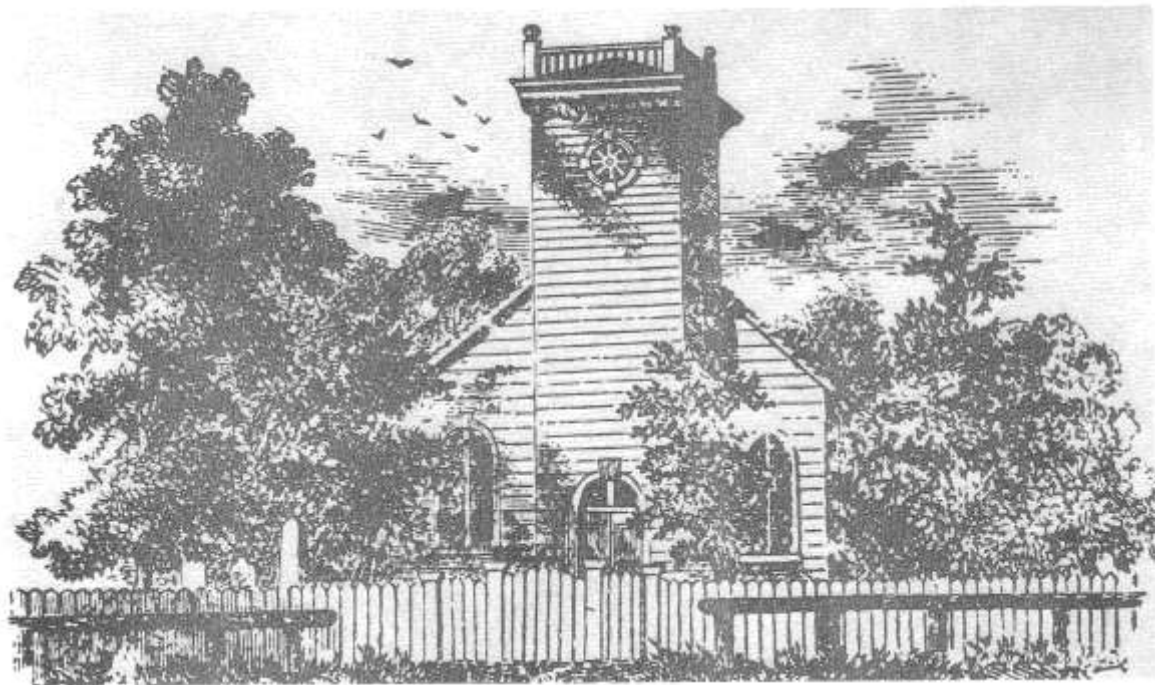
We have some knowledge about the lives of a few of the rectors. Petrus Ten Broech (1816-1818) was the son of Abraham Ten Broech, a general in the Revolutionary War and the first mayor of Albany. Petrus was responsible for churches in Garrison and Peekskill as well as Fishkill. He had to cross the Fishkill and Annsville Creeks and the mountains of Putnam County, undoubtedly by horseback. He went on to serve a congregation in New Hampshire, and one son ended up as an army doctor in California.

Christian Cruse (1846-1851) was a considerable classical scholar. While an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania, he was one of the founders of the Philomathean Society, a literary and scholarly society that still exists at the university. One of the co-founders and a life-long friend was the Rev. William Augustus Muhlenberg, a

prominent New York City priest responsible for many innovative ideas about the proper function of churches. Cruse's wife and only son, who died at the age of 21, are buried in the church yard.

Frederick W. Shelton (1852-1854) was also a considerable literary figure. He was a published author while still an undergraduate at Princeton, continued contributing to the "Knickerbocker Magazine" and other periodicals, and wrote several books, both fiction and non-fiction. One of his novels and his "Upriver Letters" were published while he was at Trinity. He moved to Montpelier, VT and then to Boston, MA, but returned to Dutchess County to become the first rector of St. Mark's Church in Chelsea (formerly known as Low Point and later as Carthage Landing). He presided over the dedication of the new church building, and served about fifteen years, until ill health forced his retirement. He continued to live in his cottage by the river until his death two years later in 1881. He had been working for some time at translating some of the "Dialogues of Plato".

The centennial was duly celebrated in 1856 with The Rev. John Brown preaching the sermon.



*Church Exterior c. 1860*

## 8. THE SECOND HUNDRED YEARS

We know more about the tenure of the Rev. J. R. Livingston (1855-1878) partly because of important things that happened during his long service to Trinity and partly because of the Cotheal Papers. Isaac Cotheal was a considerable landowner in and around Fishkill and a very active churchman. Among his papers in the Blodgett Library is a journal with daily entries from 1867 to 1885. Occasionally the only entry is the weather, but generally he recorded the activities of the family, from pleasure jaunts and house guests to the purchase of an ox and the affairs of Trinity. He was very active in the church and at his death was clerk of the vestry, treasurer and warden. He also attended services at the Dutch Church and Wednesday prayer meetings at the Methodist Church. Trinity Church would have held services with a priest presiding perhaps two or three times a month.

A dam and a woolen mill had been built in Glenham (about two miles downstream from Fishkill Village) in 1823. This led to the settlement of a number of experienced English weavers. The factory grew and grew until it was the largest employer in the Town during the Civil War with employee housing extending into Grovesville. Livingston built St. John the Baptist Church for them and in the parish hall, conducted the first school. The school continued until the public school was built in 1873. The mill failed in the same year, and the catastrophe for the employees must have been even greater than more recent economic upsets. The church was closed in about 1954 and the land was purchased by Texaco Inc. for the expansion of its research laboratories which had taken over the old mill site.

In 1870 Trinity carried out an extensive scheme to modernize the building. The low bid of \$825 for the work was accepted, provided that the contractor subscribe \$25 to the project. The stub of the tower was removed, leaving the present silhouette. Inside the changes were drastic. The pews and pulpit were completely removed. It had been hoped to remove the columns, but as they were essential to the support of the structure, they had to remain. A narthex (vestibule) was partitioned off, reducing the chill when the outside door was opened in cold weather. At

the opposite end of the building, a chancel was formed by building a platform and erecting a partition across the church in the line of the front pair of columns. The partition was pierced by a large pointed arch in the middle and a smaller one on the left (organ and choir area). The right hand corner was walled off to form a robing room. At some time an addition including some primitive plumbing was made to the robing room. Using lumber salvaged from the old pews, ordinary pews were constructed. They were rearranged, abolishing the former center aisle, and substituting a central seating block with two aisles and two side seating areas. A section on each side was left clear allowing the installation of two wood stoves. A new altar, pulpit, lectern, and communion rail, all the latest style of Victorian Gothic walnut were installed. The trim was stained to imitate walnut, the pews either stained or painted dark brown, and the columns were painted to imitate marble.

At the reopening of the church in October, a former pastor, the Rev. Robert Van Kleeck, preached the sermon entitled "The Old Is Better". Fishkill had acquired a gas plant, so the church installed gas lighting. This only lasted three years, as a fire that destroyed much of Main Street, also destroyed so much of the gas system that the plant was abandoned. The village had to turn to kerosene, which was an improvement on the whale oil previously used. In the pew divider in the center of the church are some holes in which iron standards were placed to support lamps. The church had to wait for furnaces and electric light until 1921.

Livingston had independent means, and it is hard to see how the building in Glenham and the work at Trinity could have been accomplished without substantial contributions from him. He was unmarried, and his sister kept house for him. She efficiently arranged for substitute priests when he was ill, and even provided for one for six weeks after he died. Both were buried in the grounds of St. John's, and the bodies were removed to St. Luke's, Beacon when the property was sold.

In 1857 Trinity Church, New York gave to the Fishkill church two Waterford crystal chandeliers removed from St. Paul's Chapel when it was converted to oil lamps from candles. In 1926, apparently endeavoring to return to earlier styles, it asked for their return! Glorvina Bartow reported to the vestry in 1881 that she had raised the money for a stained glass window, something Livingston had wanted, but had not lived to see. A newspaper clipping, inserted in one of the Cotheal journals, reported that the window was the work of Messrs. Morgan of 53 Bleeker St. New York, the firm that had supplied much of the stained glass for "the new Roman Cathedral on 5th Ave." Miss Bartow carefully noted that she had raised \$219, and the window, including a protective wire screen had cost \$203.38. Of the balance, \$5.18 was being spent on altar linens and \$10.44 on material for kneeling cushions.

J. H. Hobart (1879-1889) was a descendant of the famous bishop of New York of the same name, and was a former minister of Trinity, New York City. He was living near Fishkill Landing when Livingston died, and agreed to succeed him.

A rectory was finally achieved in 1892 on a plot of land across Main Street from the church. The land was a gift from Miss Catherine Cotheal. The Rev. Horatio Ladd was its first occupant. In 1894 Ladd delivered an address to the Clericus of the Highlands entitled "The Founding of the Episcopal Church in Dutchess County, New York". They were so impressed by it that they paid for its publishing in pamphlet form at the expense of the Clericus, Bishop Henry C. Potter writing an introduction.

## **9. TRINITY ATTAINS ITS 150TH BIRTHDAY**

Ladd left in 1896 and was followed by the Rev. Joseph H. Ivie. He was to be paid \$600 a year and have the use of the rectory. For services to the missionary parish of Glenham he would receive \$400. He was priest when the 150th anniversary of the founding of the church was celebrated in 1906 with much pomp and circumstance. Bishop Potter administered confirmation and celebrated Holy Communion, and Ladd gave the address. There was a considerable procession to the church with visiting choirs and clergy, and after the services a reception and a luncheon. After Ivie's introductory speech, seven post prandial addresses were made, all dealing with some aspect of Trinity's history. Bishop Seymour of Springfield, Illinois spoke of Trinity's Centennial Service. Ladd's speeches, some information about the celebration, and a list of all Trinity's priests, trustees, wardens and vestry are all bound in one book. It is a treasure house of information.

Ivie was followed as pastor by the Rev. Clinton D. Drumm. He eventually submitted his resignation to the Vestry, in order to enlist in the army. Ironically this occurred on September 30, 1918.

The next pastor was the Rev. Harold L. Thomas (1920-1936), and there are still a few parishioners who remember him. He was a bachelor and led a Scout Troop. His housekeeper arrived one morning to find the parlor floor covered by blankets and sleeping bags occupied by small boys and the priest. He had planned an overnight camp-out, but a downpour of rain had caused a change of plan. It was his misfortune to serve through the worst of the Great Depression. Warden Bayard Verplanck wrote to the bishop stating that Thomas's salary was below the prescribed minimum, and was badly in arrears besides. Thomas had refused to complain, and some help did come from the diocese. When he retired because of ill health, the church owed him almost a year's salary, and sold a bond from its modest endowment to pay him. He had some independent means and used it during the Great Depression to help people in danger of losing their homes. He is remembered by Laurence Hancock as the most saintly man he ever knew.



As early as 1928, the Vestry approved the removal of the Victorian embellishments from the church, if it could be funded without cost to the church. The parish was in serious financial trouble from 1932 on. There was increasing help from the diocese, and bank loans secured by church owned bonds were taken out almost annually. There was a windfall of \$1,000 when Dutchess County bought a strip of land in the glebe for highway right-of-way. After his retirement, Thomas lived in Poughkeepsie until his death in the 1950's, and occasionally attended church functions.

During Thomas's tenure began the changes that were to revolutionize Fishkill and consequently Trinity. The ever widening spread of automobile use had led to extensive highway construction, and Fishkill was now the intersection of two well paved highways. The route of the Albany Post Road, which had entered the village from the north by way of Osborne Hill Road and Jackson Street and followed Main Street past Trinity before dropping down hill to the creek, now crossed the east-west highway at right angles and ran behind the church. It had become practical to live several miles from one's work, shopping, or church even when there were no trains or trolleys. The author's grandfather, Michael Baumbusch (1864-1952) recalled that when he was a young deputy sheriff and had to serve papers in Fishkill, he took the train from Poughkeepsie to Fishkill Landing and hired a rig (horse and buggy) to reach his destination.

In the 1930's housing began to encroach on farmland as the presence of Texaco in Glenham began to increase the population. This process accelerated after World War II with the huge growth of IBM. The farms near Fishkill have all been replaced by housing, shopping centers, and motels. The existing local churches all grew, and several new denominations were established nearby. The lack of a Parish House at Trinity was a serious handicap to its activities. At one point Edith Uhl, living next door to the church, had the Sunday School in her home. She also stoked the church furnaces!

The Rev. Benjamin Myers (1936-1952) had been urging the construction of a Parish House for some time, but retired before it could be accomplished.



*Church Interior c. 1930*

## 10. THE LAST FIFTY YEARS

The Rev. R. DeWitt Mallary came in 1953, and the parish house was erected the following year. To finance it the glebe farm was sold, there was intensive fund raising, and money was borrowed from the Diocese. Land behind the church abutting on the Post Road was purchased and a two story frame building was erected. It provided a large meeting room with a kitchen on the ground floor and on the second floor classrooms, lavatories, and a small office for the rector. Mallary was succeeded in 1957 by the Rev. Edmund Mathews (1957-1979), and it was under his leadership that the parish at last became independent. The church still owed money for the Parish House, but the church's resources had grown so that the congregation felt that if the Diocese would forgive the debt, Trinity could do without the subsidy it had been receiving and could support a full time rector.

In 1962 came major alterations to the church interior, to remove as much as possible the changes of 1870. The pews and the chancel platform were left, but the partition with its pointed arches was removed, opening up the whole of the building. It was necessary to restore the decorative covering of the pillars revealed, and to restore some decorative plaster work on the ceiling. The chancel furnishings and lighting fixtures were completely replaced with things that harmonized with the Colonial architecture. The only item salvaged was the carved wooden eagle on the lectern. All woodwork was painted white. At the same time a wing was built to provide storage, working space for the Altar Guild and sexton, and robing area for priest and acolytes. The appearance of the inside of the church is basically the same today.

The population growth of the area, which benefited Trinity in many ways, has come at a price. The church building is hemmed in by major highways, and is at the mercy of commercial development. Pedestrian access is almost non-existent and parking is a problem. The widening and realignment of Route 9 in front of the parish house made matters worse. The rectory had become a very undesirable place to live with traffic noise and air pollution almost at the doorstep. Changing lifestyles had led to clergy preferring to have a housing allowance, permitting them to own homes of their own choice and of suitable size.

Owing to lack of funds the parish had never maintained the rectory adequately. The Rev. Edmund Mathews and his family eventually were living in a family owned house in the Town of Wappingers, and the rectory was sold, the proceeds being invested to help provide a housing allowance.

After Mathews' retirement in 1979, The Rev. Dr. James Heron came. The parish continued to grow, and more projects were undertaken. The parish house had become inadequate and did not comply with fire, sanitation, or handicapped access regulations. In 1985, using bequests, major fund-raising, and both Diocesan and bank loans, the problems were addressed. There was an addition providing storage space on the lower level and a comfortable office for the rector and a combination chapel, library, and meeting room on the upper level. There were enlarged lavatories, and a new one on the ground floor, fire retardant partitions throughout, a new fire escape, and air conditioning for the office section. In the angle formed by the addition, there is now a Columbarium garden. In marble fronted niches, one can store cremation remains.

The physical needs of parish life were now in good shape, and attention turned to the church building, long in need of basic repairs. Bats had invaded the attic through gaps in the coving, the windows were painted shut, the roof over the narthex leaked, and there was rot in doors, window frames, shutters, and siding. Following advice from experts on historic preservation that repair is always better than replacement, the work began and extended over two or three years. The louvered shutters that date from about 1820 were taken apart, repaired and replaced. All the windows were removed, and the fragile old glass was carefully taken out. Stripping the paint revealed the walnut stain of 1870. After repairs, repainting, and resetting the old glass, they were re-hung and can now be opened. Lacking sash weights, they must be held up on attached props. The two doors, one of them with its original hardware, had new wood set in to replace rotted sections and were re-hung. On the outside walls, the existing layer upon layer of paint, cracked, chipped and peeling had to be removed, but a section of wood was saved for historical analysis of the paint.

New siding, milled to match the original, was installed where necessary, and the whole building painted in its present color scheme of pale gray with white trim, dark gray shutters, and red doors. The parish had been advised that there is no "correct" color for old buildings. Our ancestors used whatever they liked or whatever was available.

As this is being written, the church is in the process of acquiring some land to alleviate the disastrous shortage of parking space.



*Trinity Church 1994*



*Interior 1994*

## 11. THE GRAVEYARD

The graveyard contains over 160 stones, several broken, damaged or illegible. The vital statistics of those readable in 1913 are recorded in Poucher et al., and in 1987, Philip Giamatteo mapped the graveyard, numbering each stone, and recording all the legible inscriptions. It was an Eagle Scout project, and he was assisted by his parents and several members of his troop. There are only half a dozen stones where it was found possible to make rubbings, a way to preserve a record of the actual appearance of the stones before weather completes the destruction. Even before the increased pollution of the atmosphere, rain and natural carbon dioxide combined to corrode the surface of marble stones. The reddish sandstone memorials resist this corrosion, but split easily. Water seeps into the smallest crack, and then freezing makes whole layers of stone split off. Preservation of these old stones is difficult and prohibitively expensive.

The oldest stone and the only one dated before the Revolution records the death of Elizabeth Duncan on July 4, 1770 aged 63. One of the original Trustees of the church was James Duncan, and she may have been his wife. There are graves of eight veterans of the Revolutionary War, Richard Southard, Isaac Ter Boss, Sylvanus Pine and his three sons Robert, Thomas and John, Ezekiel Green and William Alger. These surnames occur repeatedly in lists of early vestrymen and wardens. The Alger stone, of which there is a rubbing, reads

DEATH IS ALL  
Erected in memory of  
William B. Alger  
Esquire  
who died the 3d. of April 1792  
Aged 44 Y'rs 6 M. 19 D.  
Here, call'd from Labor to Repose,  
A weary Mason resting lies,  
Till the last awful Trumpet blows,  
And bids each human Atom rise.  
Then shall the Sons of Truth and Light,  
Whose Sign is Faith, Whose Token Love,  
Receive the Word then Wing their Flight,  
To join the Lodge of Saints above.

This stone has a Masonic emblem at the top, and a few other early stones have winged faces and stylized roses, but most stones are quite plain. Sometimes there is a Bible verse and sometimes there are lengthy inscriptions, often in verse. Certain verses were very popular and appear in many old graveyards, but others were obviously composed for a particular person, often by an exceedingly amateurish poet.

In Memory of Sarah McKeeby  
Daughter of William McKeeby  
Wife to Birdsey Watkins  
who departed this  
Life, Oct. the 1st 1800  
Aged 31 years 9 months 6 days  
Weep not for me my dear Birdseye  
My Soul is risen to Christ on high,  
Rejoice believe thy Soul and Save  
My Body rests now in the grave  
My Body is moldering in the dust  
My Souls rejoicing with the just  
Angels and Saints all join the throng  
The Song of Moses and the Lamb

The plight of Ezekiel Green who died in 1817 arouses our pity.

Affliction sore long time I bore  
Physician's art was vain:  
Till God did please to give me ease  
And freed me from my pain

For a long time the Gould stone provoked many questions, as nothing else was known about the family.

In memory of  
William Gould  
Who died October 2d, 1838  
aged 31 years 3 months 29 days  
also Sarah his wife who died  
Oct. 2d, 1838  
aged 35 years 2 months 2 days  
also Charles their son who died  
October 3d, 1838  
aged 4 years 4 days

Natives of the town of North Wooton, England  
poisoned by eating fungi (toadstools)  
Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord

The word "(toadstools)" including the parentheses is actually carved in the stone. By chance Douglas Buys discovered that a Gould family member had been searching for this grave, but on the west side of the Hudson. She had in her possession a letter written by William Gould's father in England not long after the deaths, to another son, in Newburgh. From internal evidence it is clear that the surviving son had written to his father to give him the news, and to ask for help and advice. Five children of William and Sarah, ranging in age from infancy to about thirteen had survived, and the brother had a large family of his own to support. The father told his son to settle his brother's debts and to take any stone he could use in his own business from his brother's stone yard. He should send the orphans back to England, where the grandfather would care for them. If possible, the children should be accompanied on the voyage by a relative. If not possible, the son was to take the children to New York and put them in the personal care of the ship's captain. He was to try for the Great Western, as it made the fastest trip, and docked at Bristol, the nearest port to Gould's home. The Great Western was the first steamship built for the trans-Atlantic crossing, and had made its maiden voyage in April 1838. A few years ago an author researching for a book on mushrooms and toadstools visited Trinity to see the stone, as it was the first recorded death from toadstool poisoning. Unfortunately, when the book was published, the graveyard was listed as being in Peekskill.

At present there are nine small stones lined up against the foundation of the sacristy, moved there when the sacristy was built. Only one gives a name and age, the others only initials and nothing else. The graves are adjacent to the Verplanck plot, and may represent Verplanck servants. Slaves had no surnames, so they could hardly have had two or three initials.



The Verplanck family seems to have favored memorials shaped like a Doric column without the capital. There is a tradition that when some graves were dug in the nineteenth century, bones and fragments of blankets were discovered. This would indicate that there were some burials from the war period that were either unmarked or had markers that did not survive.



*The "toadstool" stone, photographed c. 1955*

## 12. TREASURES

Our most precious memento is the Bible given to the church by the SPG in 1769. That edition had the Church of England Prayer Book bound with it, and includes such things as a service of thanksgiving for deliverance from the Gunpowder Plot. (Conspirators in 1605 had hidden 30 barrels of gunpowder in the cellar of Parliament, hoping to destroy Parliament and King James I). There is also a service in remembrance of the "martyred King Charles I". The Bible was rebound after the Revolution with the Prayer Book removed. It is covered in gold-tooled red Morocco to match the first American Prayer Book, which we also possess. Mrs. Barbara Smith Buys gave the church an unaltered copy of the same Bible.

The book of Vestry Minutes dating from 1785 and the records of baptisms, marriages, and deaths (even though incomplete) from 1800 on have been valuable references in compiling this history. Many records were lost in a fire in the rectory.

Of great interest is the covered silver flagon that is still used on festal occasions. It is about 13 inches tall over all and is inscribed as follows:

Presented  
by  
Samuel Verplanck Esqr  
To the first Episcopal Church  
In the Town of  
FISHKILL

To Commemorate Mr. Eglebert (sic) Huff by birth a Norwegian, in his life time  
attached to the Life Guards of the  
Prince of Orange (afterwards King William III  
of England), he resided for a number  
of years in this County, and  
Died with unblemished reputation,  
at Fishkill, 21 March 1765  
Aged 128 Years

Fishkill  
January  
1820

The Reformed Church of Fishkill has a duplicate. Several descendants of Englebert Huff have researched their genealogy and have provided considerable information. There is a family tradition that Huff deserted from a Dutch warship in New York Harbor, and Dutch records show that there was a warship there at the right time, shortly before the British took over. He settled first in Westchester County, but moved to the Verplanck lands in Dutchess. He was buried in the graveyard of the Hopewell Reformed Church, but the grave site has been covered by later building. Samuel Verplanck would have been a small child during Huffs last years.

Huffs descendants were Tories and emigrated to Canada after the Revolution, and from there some one emigrated to Australia. One Sunday three descendants, from Long Island, Michigan and Australia visited Trinity. The Australian, the Rev. Ronald Palmer was an Anglican priest and preached the sermon.

We also have the silver private communion set (used when taking communion to the sick) of the Rev. Mr. Hobart.

There are two Hitchcock type chairs that unfortunately were stained, varnished and stenciled in gilt with the words "Trinity Church." The present altar is a table of light colored wood (maple?) of unknown origin. It and most of the items described above are shown in a 1906 or earlier photograph of church antiquities. The top of the table, 30 by 60 inches, is one piece of wood, and the table is probably the work of a local carpenter. It is very solid, but of rather clumsy design. The same photograph also shows the elegant finial, since lost, from the original pulpit sounding board.

We also possess a random assortment of records of such things as Sunday School attendance in the thirties, and the minutes of the Women's Auxiliary in the twenties. We also have some rotting silk vestments. Will future generations value those or not?



*Original Bible, given in 1769*

*Huff memorial flagon*

*First American Prayer Book*

### 13. THE VERPLANCK FAMILY

It is impossible to describe the contributions to Trinity Church by its members over its 238 year history, but one family stands out, both for its contributions and for longevity. Other names show up for one, two or three generations, but the Verplanck name first appears with the gift of a glebe farm by Samuel Verplanck in 1785, and ends with the death of Bayard Verplanck in 1955. Over the years there was at least one Verplanck and sometimes three or four on the vestry more than half the time. Undoubtedly this was sometimes a matter of compliment to a wealthy and powerful family, especially as some of these people spent a good deal of each year in New York City. However the vestry minutes show faithful attendance at meetings and service on committees by many. The records of St. Mark's, Chelsea show that from its organization in 1867 until shortly after the death of the Rev. F. W. Shelton, when the church was forced to become a mission, one of the Wardens and two of the six Vestrymen were Verplancks. William S. Verplanck is recorded as having been a life-long friend of Shelton's.

The farm given by Samuel lays along New York Route 52 in the Stormville area. It was leased to various farmers and provided some income and many headaches for many years. The farmhouse burned down in 1906, and a new one was not built until 1917. Around 1931, some land was sold to Dutchess County for highway improvements, and in 1939 the church young people proposed turning it into a recreation area, requesting \$50 from the vestry to help dam a stream. Nothing came of this and the whole property was sold in 1954 to help finance the building of a Parish House. It eventually became the Mt. Storm ski area. The original deed of gift was lost, and in 1836, his son and heir having also died, his seven grandchildren executed a quit claim deed confirming Trinity's ownership of the farm and the validity of the lease to William Vermilyea in 1810 for "a term of two lives." Samuel was also the donor of the silver pitcher described along with other church treasures.

In the church records, baptisms and burials of Verplancks appear repeatedly. In 1805 a Mrs. Verplanck is listed as the baptismal sponsor of a woman with no surname given. She was presumably a slave. The graveyard contains a number of memorials, some quite elaborate. The marble column erected for Gulian Crommelin Verplanck in 1886 has a lengthy Latin

inscription beginning with his birth in Novum Eboracum (New York). John Bayard Rodgers Verplanck lies under a flat marble slab (1955) and his wife Susan Van Wyck (1960) lies beside him under a similar slab. During her lifetime Mrs. Verplanck converted to Roman Catholicism, and was faced with a problem. She wished to be buried in ground consecrated to her faith, but also to be buried beside her husband. With the permission of Trinity's vestry her plot was blessed by a Roman priest as properly consecrated ground. These are the most recent full burials in the churchyard.

When the Parish House enlargement and the construction of a Columbarium were planned in 1985, it was apparent that digging might encroach on Verplanck graves. The rector informed a Verplanck descendant of the situation, promising that if any remains were encountered, they would be reverently reburied as close as possible to their original location. Permission was given. One spring Saturday with the building contractor scheduled to start excavation the following Monday, a back hoe, operated by a man experienced in handling gravestones, was hired to move nearby stones away from possible damage during construction. The marble column described above rested on a mound and was fronted by a flat slab marking a vault containing the remains of a dozen family members, the most recent death being in 1888. The backhoe lifted away the column, and the operator began pounding with his bucket on what he thought was the masonry foundation of the stone. Suddenly a hole appeared. Investigation showed that he had pierced the vaulted ceiling of a masonry vault some eight feet wide and perhaps eighteen feet long. On slate shelves rested the remains of a number of skeletons, and in one set lay a Civil War army uniform belt buckle. At the end of the vault nearest the church was a slate door. Apparently there had once been steps excavated to lead to that door. Memory of the existence of the vault had been lost, but it was close to discovery in 1962 when footings were dug for the sacristy addition to the church.

If its existence had been known, it could have been left, protruding from the ground but intact. As it was, the repair costs would have been prohibitive, and work on the Parish House would have been delayed at least a year. A ladder was inserted in the hole in the roof, and pictures were taken. The backhoe then smashed in the entire structure and the hole was filled. After construction was completed, the memorials were replaced at or near their original locations, and the area landscaped.

## 14. CONCLUSION

After the 1962 renovations, the congregation was feeling quite proud of its accomplishments. Bishop Stuart Wetmore preached the sermon at the reopening of the building and, after complimenting the parish on its accomplishment, gently but firmly reminded the congregation that the Church is "the Body of Christ, which is the blessed company of all faithful people." The building, no matter what it is like, is just the place where the Church meets. This brief history has dealt mostly with the building and its history. There has been little mention of the laymen who have given of their time and treasure to support the church and the Church. In the author's 38 years in the parish there have been too many to mention, and in the earlier years, they are mainly unknown.

The congregation will continue to face sometimes conflicting responsibilities. The first obligation is to worship God, and try to do His work on earth. It must maintain the loving community that is a group of people highly varied in age, race and background, but sharing a common faith. It is also the custodian of a building that is part of our nation's heritage and an object of beauty. It tries to share its knowledge of the past with visitors, researchers, and school children, and the writing of this brief history is part of that effort.

## **APPENDIX: PRIESTS OF TRINITY CHURCH**

Samuel Seabury, Missionary, 1755-1761

John Beardsley, 1766-1776

Henry Van Dyck, 1787-1791

George Spierin, 1791-1795

John Sayrs, 1795-1798

Philander Chase, 1799-1805

Barzillai Bulkley, 1806-1809

John Brown, 1812-1815

Petrus Ten Broech 1816-1818

William Thomas, 1821-1827

Robert B. Van Kleeck, 1833-1835

J.L.Watson, 1835-1836

C. A. Foster, 1837-1838

Robert Shaw, 1841-1842

William Hart, 1843-1845

Christian F. Cruse, 1846-1851

F. W. Shelton, 1852-1854

John R. Livingston, 1855-1878

John H. Hobart, 1879-1889

John M. Chew, 1889-1891

Horatio O. Ladd, 1891-1896

Joseph Ivie, 1896-1908

Clinton Drumm, 1908-1918

Harold L. Thomas, 1920-1936

Benjamin Myers, 1936-1952

R. DeWitt Mallery, 1953-1957

Edmund Mathews, 1957-1979

James Heron, 1980-2003

Jean Campbell, 2005-present



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