

KING'S CHURCH

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

1722-1929

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BY

FRANKLIN RICHMOND CUSHMAN

PROVIDENCE, R. I.

KING'S CHURCH - ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

1722- 1929

Because King's Church - St. John's Church continued for more than two centuries to minister to its people with steadfast faith it is dear to the congregation of the Cathedral parish.

Because it was the mother church in Providence and Kent counties, one of the four colonial churches, giving freely of its strength and substance, because its Rector was the first President of the Rhode Island Episcopal Convention and because it now serves the whole Diocese it deserves the loyalty and devotion of all the churches.

To the Church School of the Cathedral of St. John this brief story is dedicated.

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1722- 1929

Once upon a time, which in fact was 1721, Gabriel Bernon purchased land on Towne Street near Roger Williams' spring on which to build his house. Thereupon he was a freeman of the Providence Plantations. It may be that the view across the wide waters of the Cove to the hills on the west bank of the Woonasquatucket River reminding him of his boyhood home in La Rochelle led him to make a new home here.

He had already lived several years in Newport helping to found Trinity Church. Then he had gone to Kingstown where the Rev. Dr. MacSparren was the missionary. Now his new home would be thirty miles from that mission on Tower Hill, St. Paul's. To be sure he might attend worship in the meetinghouse of the Baptist Society a few hundred feet farther north but his love for the service of the Church of England forbade.

Across the way the hillside lay, bare of habitation since the Indian raids of King Philip's War. It had been the home lot of Richard Scott, the Quaker, and his charming wife, Catherine Marbury, the sister of Mrs.

Ann Hutchinson, but it was, in 1722, owned by Nathaniel Brown of Kettle Point, Rehoboth, whose son Nathaniel had married Mrs. Gabriel Bernon's sister. Perhaps Gabriel Bernon had a vision of a church with a steeple on the hillside.

At any rate Nathaniel Brown in 1722 did give a little parcel of land "forty feet by seaunty one" to "Joseph Whipple, Gabriel Bernon, John Whipple, Daniel Abbott and Robert Currie and to such other chief and principle men as may succeed them . . . to erect and build a church for the public worship of God after the rites and manner of the Church of England."

In response to the earnest pleas of the founders, friends far and near contributed more than seven hundred pounds. Gabriel Bernon even appealed to Sir Francis Nicholson, the Governor of South Carolina, who had been the Governor of New England and a friend of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, the S. P. G., to which he finally gave his American lands. Col. Joseph Whipple not only gave a generous subscription of one hundred pounds but also boarded the workmen who built the church.

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The "chief and principle" men, having found the lot too small, bought another half lot, an L-shaped piece along the east and south lines of the original gift. On the lot thus enlarged, now sixty feet by ninety, King's Church was built. It was a plain wooden building with a peaked roof and a little belfry at the western end ready for use in 1723. The cornerstone had been laid at the northeast corner with appropriate ceremonies on St. Barnabas' Day, June 11, the year before 1722.

Tall, wide Roman-arched windows flanked the doorway in the middle of the south side, admitting sunlight on the great square pews in the central blocks and lighting the smaller square pews along walls and the L-shaped ones at the corners. All these pews were built painted and perhaps carpeted by the owners. All were boxed-in to save the heat from the tiny foot stoves that the sexton filled coals in wintry weather.

At the head of the broad aisle stood the high pulpit with the reading desk and the clerk's desk below. Back of the pulpit was the altar standing away from the wall. Narrow side aisles from west to east were connected by short aisles across the church at the east and west ends.

An appeal to the S. P. G. occasioned the appointment of the Rev. George Pigot, who was living in Connecticut, as the first missionary. Rev. Mr. Pigot's wife was a granddaughter of Caleb Carr, the Quaker Governor. Upon her land in Phenix a house was built, really the first manse which was still standing in 1949; a substantial homestead. In 1728 the Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Pigot gave the S. P. G. a tract of land in Coweset on which the people of Warwick built a church using the timbers from old Trinity Church

which the Newport parish had given them in 1726. Here the clergy of King's Church ministered till 1764 when it was taken down and the timbers piled on the shore for transportation to Warwick Neck. A violent storm scattered them and what might have been the fifth colonial church came to an end.

Infrequent letters to the S. P. G. contain the only records of the Rev. Mr. Pigot's labors. In 1724 he wrote that the congregation numbered a hundred "the greater part not of Providence" and that the communicants numbered seventeen. The S. P. G. kept the Rev. Mr. Pigot at King's Church but a few years and then sent him to St. Michael's Church, Marblehead. Misfortune seemed to follow him. The S. P. G. would not grant his request to be sent to Cowesett and on returning from a missionary visit in Providence he learned of the death of three of his children in an epidemic and of the fatal illness of the fourth. Eventually he returned to England for a quiet parish life.

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The Rev. Joseph O'Hara proved to be a most unsatisfactory person, having deceived the S. P. G. and misrepresented himself to his parishioners. Having discovered this, the vestry locked the church door.

King's Church was more fortunate in the next clergyman commissioned by the S. P. G., the Rev. Arthur Browne, a notable churchman. Through co-operation with men connected with the founding of the church he was settled in a house on the glebe in Providence Neck, just north of Cat Swamp. Here he lived six years, much of the time dissatisfied because the people were slow in paying their share of his stipend though they sent men to work on the glebe. With a happy heart he went to Portsmouth, N. H., where as the missionary at Queen's Chapel he enjoyed the society of the colonial magistrates. In the *Tales of a Wayside Inn* the poet Longfellow told how he solemnized the marriage of Governor Wentworth and humble Martha Hilton. The Rev. Mr. Browne did not remain without Rhode Island connection for his son, the Rev. Marmaduke Browne, was one of the rectors of Trinity Church, Newport.

The Rev. Mr. Browne reported twenty-seven communicants when he came to King's Church and forty-six in 1733. The beautiful flagon and beaker, known as "Queen Anne silver" and marked "An oblation of Nathaniel Kay the Publican," were used for the first time while the Rev. Mr. Browne was the missionary in charge.

The Rev. John Checkley, a devout scholar and bookseller, having been fined by the magistrates of Boston for his defense of Apostolic Succession, was consequently denied admission to Holy Orders until he was nearly sixty years of age. Having been ordained at that ripe age, he was sent by the S. P. G. to King's Church to be its first and only American born pastor of colonial days.

For fourteen years the Rev. Mr. Checkley ministered faithfully in Providence, Warwick and Taunton, assisted by George Taylor, the school master commissioned by the S. P. G., teaching in the Colony House as well as catechizing the children twice a week. For two years the Rev. Mr. Checkley was confined to

the Manse which the Rev. Mr. Browne had resold to the church fathers. Then he died and was buried in front of the church in an unmarked grave. The S. P. G. had given him a folio copy of the Book of Common Prayer and had sent two dozen copies for the use of the poor of the parish. In his lifetime he accumulated a large library that included many books in Hebrew, Greek, Latin and French.

Six years before Mr. Checkley's death in 1754, John Merritt, Esq., a Boston merchant, bought many acres on Providence Neck which after

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his death became the Moses Brown farm. In the course of time he was chosen Senior Warden of King's Church and was an important person in its history. On Sundays he was driven in his coach and four-said to have been the first such equipage in the town-to King's Church by way of Olney's Lane. So narrow were the roads and so unwieldy the vehicle that the coachman drove it down to Weybosset Ford to turn.

By 1754 the neighborhood had changed considerably. Soon after the church was built, Gabriel Bernon bought a section of the Dexter land north of the church for his daughter Susannah, the wife of Joseph Crawford. The next two lots were sold to Nathaniel Wheaton and William Smith respectively, lots of little depth. Back of these three house lots was an oblong piece of land one hundred seventy feet by one hundred sixty, which Mr. John Whipple deeded to King's Church in 1767 for a burying place. Back of the church and along the south side the Messrs. Wheaton and Smith bought more of the Browne land. The corner lot between the church and the gangway was also owned by Mr. Wheaton.

In 1762 Mr. Merritt advanced money to purchase this corner lot for the church and the gangway became Church Lane. By his will this property was given to the church fully-together with a legacy in cash. Mr. Merritt's grave and that of his wife, inscribed with their armorial bearings, may be seen near the corner of the north transept.

Meanwhile the settlement was moving southward. Near the foot of Gaol Lane the Goddards had set up a print shop. Half way up the hill Mr. John Carter would soon have his printing business at the Sign of Shakespeare's Head, opposite the Friends' Meetinghouse, which gave a new name to Gaol Lane. From his printing press Mr. Carter issued each Saturday the Gazette which publicized King's Church as a landmark by its advertisements. Goods were sold at "the Sign of the Greyhound two doors above the Church" and at "the Sign of the Negro Boy" a few rods northward." Across the street was "the Sign of the Buck" and the "Sign of the Stocking" was not far away. In Church Lane was a boarding school for young ladies.

Sometime a tower was built at the west end of the church. The church records, which were begun in 1754, state that the south door was shut up in 1762 and a long pew built in the vacant space. Probably the tower went up at the same time. Not long after a gallery was erected above the entrance door in the west. In this gallery the pipe organ, one of the earliest in Providence, was installed in 1771, putting the

church deeply in debt to Mr. Lewis Deblois who advanced money to pay for it. And in 1771 the General Assembly granted a lottery to

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enable King's Church to build a steeple and install a town clock. To attract subscribers the steeple was advocated as an aid to mariners setting their course up the Bay. In 1775 King's Church lost its neighbor for the Charitable Baptist Society moved to its new church, the First Baptist Meetinghouse.

In 1776 the northwestern corner of the churchyard was exchanged for the two lots at the back of the church belonging to Messrs. Wheaton and Smith, previously mentioned, bringing the church lot out to Church Lane all the way up the hill to a piece owned by the Benevolent Congregational Society. These several additions to the real estate were made during the incumbency of the fifth missionary of the S. P. G., the Rev. John Graves.

The Rev. John Graves came from England in 1755, a man of determination and energy, stubborn but of great goodness. Of this the script of his sermon, owned by the Cathedral, is evidence and the story of his long quarrel with Mr. Merritt proves his friendly but independent disposition. He believed that his English ordination vows required him to read the prayers for the King and the royal family as decreed by law. His parishioners in a colony which had declared its independence in 1776 differed and he ceased to officiate in King's Church. However, he lived on in the old Manse, reporting to the S. P. G. that he continued to go about among his people ministering to them in their homes, baptizing the children, marrying the young folks and burying their dead. He declared that he met with even greater kindness and consideration than in the earlier times.

The Holy Bible which the Rev. Mr. Graves used in the church is now treasured by the Cathedral, having been given to it by the Rt. Rev. Mr. Starkey, the Bishop of North New Jersey, whose wife was a granddaughter of the Rev. Mr. Graves. It is kept in a Bible-box, once owned by Miss Eve Bernon, the youngest daughter of Gabriel Bernon, a gift of Miss Margerethe L. Dwight.

During the War of the Revolution the church was served by men of various persuasions, priests of the Church of England, lay readers and other ministers "in their way" as the record reads. The Rev. Mr. Graves wished to return as Rector but the vestry had already entered into an agreement with Rev. Thomas Fitch Oliver, a Harvard graduate, who after some years as a Congregationalist minister had come to King's Church as a lay reader in Deacon's Orders. The Rev. Mr. Graves remained in close fellowship all the rest of his life and was buried with his wife and several members of his family in the northwest corner of the churchyard.

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Rev. Mr. Oliver's stay in Providence as Rector ended a year after his ordination in 1785. He accepted a call to the rectorship of St. Michael's Church, Marblehead, where the Rev. Mr. Pigot had served. Five years later he took charge of a mission in Johnstown, N. Y., the birthplace of the Rev. Duncan Fraser, sometime Dean of the Cathedral of St. John.

The Rev. Mr. Oliver was a Fellow of Rhode Island College, now Brown University. On St. John's Day, Dec. 27, 1785, he preached the sermon to St. John's Lodge in King's Church. The next April King's Church was visited twice by the Rt. Rev. Samuel Seabury, Bishop of Connecticut, recently returned from his ordination in Aberdeen. The Reverend Bishop preached on both occasions and confirmed about seventy persons.

While the Rev. Mr. Oliver was Rector a chancel was built and plans to move the pulpit were discussed but no action was taken.

The Rev. Mr. Oliver advised the vestry to invite the Rev. Moses Badger, who was visiting in Newport, to become Rector. This invitation the Rev. Mr. Badger gladly accepted. Like his predecessor, he was a Harvard graduate but he had been educated for the Church of England. As an itinerant missionary of the S. P. G. he served a long time in New Hampshire but was living in Boston during the siege of Boston by Washington's army. When the British troops evacuated Boston March 17, 1776, the Rev. Mr. Badger, a loyalist whose property had been sequestered, went with the flee. to Halifax. When peace had been restored he returned to America.

There were three important events during his short term in office; the payment of the long overdue debt to Mr. Gilbert Deblois, the son of Mr. Lewis Deblois, thereby rescuing the organ from threatened seizure and sale to satisfy the thirty-year-old debt; the signing by Governor Arthur Fenner of the proclamation by which Governor William Wanton had incorporated the King's Church in the "thirtieth year of the reign of His Most Sacred Majesty, George the Third," the charter of the church, and finally the first meeting of the Rhode Island Episcopal Convention in Newport, of which the Rev. Mr. Badger was elected president.

The death of the Rector and of the organist, Dr. John Chace, occurred within a single year. Dr. Chace had served gratuitously for more than ten years when death came in 1792. In appreciation of years of service in more than one capacity the vestry voted "to erect a pair of decent gravestones" to his memory. The fine slate head

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stone still stands among the Chace graves near the transept, perfectly legible. The Rev. Mr. Badger was the second clergyman to die in the Old Manse and be interred in the churchyard.

After two years' occupancy the Rev. Abraham L. Clarke moved from the glebe into a house near the church where he carried on a school. His interest in schools was recorded in a suggestion to the vestry that a singing school should be established to train the youth in the music of the church.

On Easter Monday 1794 Messrs. John Smith and Charles Lippitt were appointed to petition the legislature for a change of name. In granting this request the General Assembly created two corporations—one, a property-holding body under the title, "The Minister, Church Wardens, Vestry and Congregation of St. John's Church in Providence," and the other, a fund-raising body to operate as "The United Society of St. John's Church." In 1812 the two corporations were legally merged as one with the word "Proprietors" in place of "Congregation" in the title.

After the death of our first President, George Washington, in December 1799, the Rev. Mr. Clarke preached a memorial sermon and on February 22, 1800 took part in the Masonic observance in which a symbolic urn was buried beneath the church. When the days of mourning had been fulfilled the broadcloth hangings with which the church had been draped were given to the Rev. Mr. Clarke for a suit of clothes.

Following the Rev. Mr. Clarke's establishment in St. Michael's Church, Bristol, came a ten months' Rector, the Rev. Nathaniel Bowen, who suggested that the altar should be placed against the chancel wall. At that time, 1802, Mrs. Ann Allen gave the font, "a fitting memorial for the chancel." In due course of time the Rev. Mr. Bowen was consecrated Bishop of South Carolina, his native state, where he holds high rank among her bishops.

For the next five years conditions were rather uncertain. The Rev. Mr. Bowen had introduced to the vestry a young medical student, a native son of Cape Cod. His fine reading of the service so pleased the vestry and the congregation that they asked him to remain as lay reader hoping to induce him to read for Holy Orders. Unfortunately the weakened state of his eyes required periods of rest that interfered. For twenty of the months in 1805-6 the Rev. John Blackburne, awaiting ordination as Priest, took his place. Being refused ordination, the Rev. Mr. Blackburne sailed for England and the Rev. Mr. Crocker resumed work at St. John's in 1807, almost ready to be advanced to the priesthood. In May 1808 he was ordained by the Rt. Rev. Benjamin Moore D. D., Bishop of New York.

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King's Church was eighty-five years old Battered by storms that tore out its windows, defying great gales like the 1938 hurricane, it could look for but few more years' use and so St. John's was built on the same spot.

John Holden Green drew the plans and, working with Mr. George Olney, business agent of the corporations, superintended its erection. The church was eighty-two feet long by sixty-seven wide and thirty feet high below the eaves with a basement partly excavated. The fieldstone walls were laid by Messrs. Asa and Smith Bosworth. At the east a shallow chancel joined an ample low-roofed vestry room.

At the west the tower, thirty-four feet by fourteen, rose fifty-nine and a half feet above the basement story.

A copper plate engraved by Nehemiah Dodge was set in the cornerstone remaining at the northeast corner till the transepts were built in 1868. Fortunately an exact copy of the inscription was entered in the church records of the current date, June 1810. From the foundation of King's Church a stone was taken to be marked with the date of the completion of King's Church, 1723, and embedded in the north wall. That stone is now in the south wall of the transept with the initials G B added.

The portico before the tower door on clustered stone columns suggested a king's crown. The vestibule was small with flights of narrow winding stairs. In the stair wells tall reeded clustered columns extended upward to the lovely vaulted ceiling of the upper vestibule. At the inner corners of this upper vestibule very narrow flights led to the galleries. From the organ loft a steep climb gave entrance to the clock chamber which stood empty till 1850, when the Allen family donated the church clock. Higher still was the bell deck adorned by four tall pinnacles pointing skyward and repeated by the four smaller pinnacles at the corners of the roof over the bell chamber.

Probably the windows were wide Gothic windows like the one in the front wall of the tower. The patterns for the glass and the number of each shape ordered by Mr. Olney seem to justify such a conclusion.

The dome, about sixty feet in diameter, formed the ceiling of the eastern part of the church. At the center the architect left an opening to suspend a chandelier from the middle of the medallion surrounding it. There the crystal chandelier was hung at Eastertide 1816, the gift of the ladies of the parish. At the back of the church an ingenious arrangement of planes-triangles and trapezoids-provided the space needed for the upward reach of the tall organ pipes. High in the west wall were two triangular windows now set with brilliant glass, most

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likely the windows given a century later by Mr. Daniel Berkeley Updike, the famous printer, owner of the Merrymount Press. The balustrade of the curved galleries and the entablature of the columns that carried the galleries were adorned with the Adam fan.

The long pews of the central blocks were raised above the floor level with straight backs and mahogany rails. Along the walls ranged square pews set an inch or two higher than the central pews. At each side of the chancel the pews "behind the pulpit" faced west. As late as 1904 there was a square pew at the head of the north aisle.

Each owner furnished his pew according to his fancy. In some there were shelves below the book rest. Some had hooks or spindles for hanging caps or parasols or handbags. In a few there were little cabinets where hymn and prayer books could be kept under lock and key. For many years even the painting was

by the owner's direction. The footstools now in use in the Cathedral reflected individual taste. After a time one owner had the back of his pew sloped for greater comfort although the change lessened the width of the seat. The vestry commended this work and suggested that all the pews be so altered and it was done. The slips that were built in the square pews may be recognized by the sloping backs.

The high pulpit like that of King's Church at the head of the broad aisle was painted stone color much to the displeasure of the warden, Mr. Jeremiah F. Jenkins, although the dull color was relieved by red cushions with fringe "tacked on with a needle" by the skillful hands of Miss Tower.

By special request of Mr. Jenkins another text of Scripture was added to the Commandments on the altar-piece before it was placed in the chancel.

"The Law was given by Moses  
But grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

Years later this altar-piece was lent to St. Gabriel's Mission on Smith Hill.

It was planned to heat the church with stoves connected with four chimneys which have since that time entirely disappeared.

A long search for tin due to the disruption of legitimate shipping trade by the Embargo and Non-intercourse Acts delayed the casting of the bell. At length the second attempt by Mr. George Holbrook was successful and the "noble sound of the bell" called the people to worship.

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In front of the church on St. Barnabas' Day, June 11, 1811, the Rt. Rev. Alexander Viets Griswold, the newly consecrated Bishop of the Eastern Diocese, met the men of St. John's with their Rector, Wardens and Vestry coming in procession from the Market House, their temporary house of worship. There he performed the ceremony of consecration after which he led the clergy and congregation into the church to listen to his sermon and join in the singing assisted by the Psallonian Society preceding the celebration of Holy Communion.

For the next four years the sermons of the Rev. Mr. Crocker were scholarly discourses in beautiful words upon some subject of ethics or morality. Then in 1815 he startled his congregation by his sermon, a straight forward presentation of the Gospel of Christ. Some days later he explained to members of the vestry that a chance reading of Edward's "History of Redemption" had given him a new interpretation of the Christian religion and of his duty as a Christian minister. He sometimes spoke of this as his "conversion." Thereafter he was wholeheartedly devoted to his ministry, a power for good in the community and a leader in the church.

On the Christmas Eve following he instituted a midnight service attended by a throng of worshippers,

the first Christmas Eve midnight service in Providence. Two years later two or three enthusiastic ladies of the parish collected a group of neighborhood children for religious teaching. From this humble beginning sprang the Sunday Schools of St. John's Church. The sessions of the first ten years were held in rented rooms. In 1827 a little wooden building with a columned porch was built on the southeast corner of the church lot to serve a double purpose-for meetings of the Sunday Schools and of the congregation for the monthly lecture.

The Sunday School met in three sections known as the Morning, the Noon and the Infant Schools. At one time there was a weekday school called the Ragged School to teach the very poor children practical arts as well as religion. Attendance at the Sunday Schools grew to such an extent that a dark room back of the vestibule was used for the Infant School.

A century ago the children of St. John's Sunday School made special offerings for missions which were divided equally between missions in foreign lands and in the United States. The Morning School for many years gave one-half to missions in the west, Iowa, and the other half to missions in China. The Noon School set apart its contribution for foreign missions for work in Africa.

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The Rev. Dr. Crocker's rendering of the service and his reputation as a thinker and preacher attracted students at the University to the regular services. In his eightieth year friends who had known him as Rector of St. John's Church and as a Fellow of Brown University subscribed for a portrait painted by Mr. Daniel Huntington of New York. His friends in the church ordered a similar portrait for St. John's which is now in the sacristy. It shows the venerable gentleman wearing clerical bands and the old-fashioned spectacles upon which he had long depended.

Rev. Dr. Crocker's interest in carrying on religious work in the neighborhood following the tradition of King's Church grew stronger as the years went by. The Rt. Rev. Thomas M. Clark, D. D., called him "the original Episcopal domestic missionary in this section of the country." The first fruit of his missionary zeal was the founding of St. Paul's parish in Pawtucket. He suggested to his brother clergymen giving one-tenth of their salaries to missions. He was a leader in the Church Missionary Society founded in 1818.

In 1829 the congregation divided with the communicants on the west side of the river forming the new parish of Grace Church.

Sixty years' use and careless repair work by unskilled craftsmen so damaged the organ that in 1834 plans were made to exchange it for an organ by an unknown builder. That organ lacked the fine qualities that had distinguished the first organ in its early days and in turn it was exchanged for the organ now in the organ loft. This organ was built in 1851 by E. & G. Hook of Boston and installed by them. The choir, of course, was stationed in the gallery. It was a quartette of paid singers not vested. During the singing of the hymns it was customary for the congregation to turn and face the choir loft.

In 1855 the little wooden chapel was torn down and the present chapel of field stone was built extending fifty feet into the hill on land that had once belonged to the Benevolent Congregational Society. The entrance was in the gable end on the level of the basement floor. Some ten years later twenty feet were added at the east. That part of the upper floor is below the street level.

One Sunday morning in 1859 teachers and Sunday School children were delighted to see a small one-manual pipe organ in the gallery ready for use. It had been put there by order of Mr. M. B. I. Goddard as a surprise gift. This organ remained in the gallery till 1872 when it was moved to its present location at the left of the chancel.

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The last ten years of the Rev. Dr. Crocker's long ministry of almost sixty years was lightened by the assistance of six younger men, one of whom, the Rev. Richard B. Duane, D. D., succeeded him in 1865.

The Rev. Dr. Duane is best known in connection with St. John's as a builder. The first project was the tall brick house on Benefit Street at the corner of North Court Street, opposite the old State House. This house really replaced the Old Manse which had been sold in 1794 to Mr. Dexter Brown. Although a glebe had been bought next to the schoolhouse on Meeting Street at the corner of Benefit, it had not been occupied by the young bachelor rector, Rev. Mr. Crocker. After his marriage he had preferred to live in a rented house. The new rectory became the home of the Rev. Dr. Duane and subsequently was used by the Rev. Dr. Richards and his family of daughters and then by the Rev. Dr. Bradner the home of the Bradner children. It was so large that the Rev. John F. Scott recommended its sale.

The second project was an enlargement of the church by adding transepts at the east changing the basic plan of the church from the colonial oblong to a cruciform. The extension of the north transept into the churchyard over the graves of John Mumford and his family is indicated on a slate stone in the north wall. The south transept has a little enclosed porch giving entrance to the church without climbing stairs. Opposite the doorway in the blank window space friends of the Rev. Dr. Mocker erected a tablet to his memory. The descendants of Gabriel Bernon gave a bronze tablet to commemorate his connection with the early religious life of the colony. This tablet was placed on the wall near the door.

Unstained oak in marked contrast to the mahogany of 1810 was used for all the woodwork including the pulpit and reading desk. The ornamental grill continuing the line of the nave walls across the transepts and the screen in the chancel arch terminated in carved cherub heads. The memorial tablet for Russell M. Larned has similar cherub heads. The altar of the oak with the top given by Mr. William Goddard was built against the wall with a canopy of the same wood above. The Holy Table was safely stored not to be used till the next change in 1904. A new altar-piece was painted inscribed with texts from the writings of St. John.

The pews in the transepts faced north and south. In 1904 they were given to St. George's Church, Central Falls. The slate stone engraved by Mr. Chauncey Cooley which had been above the vestry door

since 1810 was embedded in the east wall of the transept opposite the door of the chapel with a sentence added.

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"The first Episcopal Church in this town was built in the year 1722. It was demolished and this erected on the same spot in 1810. The present chancel and transepts were added in 1868."

Another sentence might be added to complete the story.

Before the improvements had been completed the Rev. Dr. Duane offered his resignation stating that he had been called to the rectorship of the Church of the Messiah in Brooklyn, New York. His resignation was accepted with regret. The Rev. Dr. Duane was so highly esteemed and greatly beloved that the members of the parish contributed more than five thousand dollars to Mrs. Duane at the time of Dr. Duane's death in 1875, a token of their affection.

The principal work left for the next administration was the decoration of walls and reglazing the windows. The walls, covered with canvas, were painted in warm colors with stenciled borders. At the edge of the dome a text from the Revelation of St. John was engrossed in Gothic letters. Painted glass was used in the lancet windows and each of the kites bore a symbolic emblem. One such window is still in the north transept blocked in behind the organ.

The new Rector, the Rev. C. A. L. Richards, D. D., began a long pastorate in 1869 that continued till 1901 when he was elected Rector Emeritus. His was a fruitful pastorate both in material things and in expanded work. The Parish House was built and a new organ installed largely through the gifts of Mr. John Nicholas Brown, the north and south galleries removed and the vestibule enlarged with new and easy stairs.

In 1870 the vestry decided to close the churchyard for burials for two reasons. The entrance from Church Street was blocked by the vestry room and there was little unoccupied space. Since that time burials have been permitted only by consent of the City Council. Many of the inscriptions on the marble stones are illegible but there is a list of the graves compiled some years ago. It is of historic interest that Edgar Allan Poe and Mrs. Whitman met here for their farewell talk and that Poe immediately canceled his request that the Rev. Dr. Crocker read the banns of marriage in St. John's Church.

Not only was the Rev. Dr. Richards a scholarly preacher but he was also an able organizer carrying on extensive welfare work in the neighborhood with the help of a curate and a parish missionary. At

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first club meetings were held in the chapel, then in a hired house on Benefit Street near North Main and finally transferred to the Parish House built on the Crawford lot in 1893.

Among the ruins of the Crawford house which had been given to St. John's Church by Miss Candace Allen was found a small wood statue of Buddha which it is likely was brought from the East Indies by Captain Gideon Crawford on one of his early voyages. Little could he guess that it would be used to illustrate talks on idols in the summer school of St. John's.

The rooms on the street floor of the Parish House were used as an evening coffee and reading room for men. The next floor provided for the church offices and the Rector's study. For several years St. John's maintained a daily public kindergarten attended by children of varying faiths. Mothers' Meetings, a Sewing Club for Girls as well as a Kitchen Garden found a welcome. Even an Employment Bureau was operated. Nor were the boys neglected. They enjoyed all the pleasures of a flourishing Boys' Club under efficient leadership long before the days of Scouting. Thrift was encouraged through the Penny Provident Club. Much of this work was coordinated and reported by the St. John's Guild. The Parish House was proving to be a real community center.

Four of the parish societies have continued under different names, the St. John's Branch of the Woman's Auxiliary, the Girls' Friendly Society, the Chancel Committee and the Teachers' Club.

When the organ had been rebuilt and the new organ installed in the north transept in 1894, a chorus choir was engaged to take the place of the traditional quartette. This choir of trained voices including four soloists was stationed in choir stalls in front of the transept organ but was not vested till 1902 at the Easter service. This change to a larger choir was made to provide leadership for the congregation in the spoken and sung parts of the service.

In its second season the choir began a series of choir festivals using music prepared for the Choir Guild of Massachusetts. The custom of holding the festival annually at Evensong on Ascension Day prevailed for many years even through the difficult years of World War I. For more than a quarter century the choir sang a cantata or part of an oratorio each month except in the summer. Several times the church choir was assisted in the festival service by the choir of the church of the Messiah or the choir of the Church of the Transfiguration singing in the gallery. In Lent the organist, Mrs. George F. Wheelwright, gave an organ recital each Saturday assisted by trained singers or skilled musicians with harp, violin or cello.

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The Rev. Dr. Richards was very much interested in St. Gabriel's Mission on Smith Hill, a parish which

derived much of its financial support from parishioners of St. John's. After a long struggle for life as St. Gabriel's Church and then St. Paul's on Holden Street, it ceased to exist as a parish and in 1906 its members were united with St. John's congregation as an active part.

In preparation for the observance of the twenty-fifth anniversary of his pastorate the Rev. Dr. Richards requested that the total benevolences of the parish be collated beginning with 1862. In his anniversary sermon he said,

"You have contributed, since the statistics of my twenty-year sermon was published, \$97,184.73 for parish expenses and for outside missions and charities, \$130,308.79."

Shortly after the installation of the next rector, the Rev. Lester Bradner, Jr., in 1902, experiments were tried in the position of the choir. For the Festival the seats were arranged in tiers in front of the curved communion rail. This arrangement proved to be so much more satisfactory that it created a new problem-how to have the choir stalls in the front of the church without interfering with the use of the chancel. Various plans were suggested and drawings made but the architects agreed that the solution would be extension of the chancel eastward. An offer of Mrs. John Carter Brown to build a new chancel in memory of her sons John Nicholas Brown and Harold Brown made this possible.

To carry out the plan it was necessary to disturb the graves east of the chancel. The excavation and the reburial of the remains was performed under the watchful eyes of the Rev. Dr. Bradner and concluded with a brief memorial service. The gravestones were set in a line along the transept wall.

Beside the chancel the drawings made by Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson of Boston included the rood screen, panelling along the transept wall, an organ console and stalls for sixteen singers in the chancel, all of oak stained very dark. The architects superintended the construction with the advice and counsel of Mr. Updike representing Mrs. Brown. A carved panel from Christ's Hospital, the Bluecoat School, in London, was used as a pattern for the panels in the rood screen and over the credence table. Above the chancel entrance were placed two fragments from King's Church found in the church tower by Mr. Updike.

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"Beautify  
the place of  
My Sanctuary."  
"Isa.: 60:13"

The base of the altar was made into a chest for the storage of the altar vestments and the top built into the new altar. For the robing room Mrs. Brown gave a carved oaken chest and for the font an ancient brass ewer and a carved baptismal pew or rail.

The complete transformation of the transept was assured when Mrs. George H. Corliss and Miss Maria L. Corliss offered to refit the south transept as a Chantry with similar paneling and a reed organ in a case of the same dark wood. Before the altar could be erected it was necessary to remove the tablet in memory of the Rev. Dr. Crocker and also that in memory of Gabriel Bernon to their present places on the wall of the nave.

The three parts of the church-the nave, the transepts and the chancel-were brought into harmony by two tall Tuscan columns with plain entablature at the junction of the nave and transepts. Mrs. John Carter Brown gave the three windows in the chancel. The central one depicts Christ the King. The side windows are dedicated to the memory of the two sons. Through the generosity of Mrs. Harold Brown, all the other windows except the two memorial windows in the nave were reglazed with English cathedral glass. The two stained glass windows in the transept were added at later dates.

The final work was authorized by the vestry-a covered corridor to connect the church with the chapel and a working sacristy in the corner of the chapel.

The Rev. Dr. Bradner paid much attention to Christian education, adding to the long-established Sunday School another Sunday School not far from the present location of St. Paul's Church. The hour of meeting followed by compulsory attendance at Evening Prayer was changed to a morning hour. Under the Rev. Dr. Bradner's supervision a graded system of lessons, examinations and graduations was introduced and the chapel was rearranged so that it could be used as classrooms. A later change made a central aisle with two blocks of comfortable pews and Il Moretto's painting of the Annunciation as the altar-piece. The Rev. Dr. Bradner established a summer vacation school in 1915 with a large attendance of boys and girls of all sorts and conditions in life. The vacation school in August became one of the important parts of the work of Miss Frances Semle, who came to St. John's as an assistant to the Parish Missionary, Miss Sarah A. Potter, and having been consecrated Deaconess, spent her life in Christian work in the parish.

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Children's Day or Flower Sunday was for years a special day for the Sunday School. Flowers were brought to be placed upon the altar. In the afternoon Deaconess Semle, the teachers and a group of children distributed them among the patients in the wards of the Rhode Island Hospital while the church choir sang hymns accompanied on a portable organ by the organist.

On the sunny evenings of June and July, the Rev. Dr. Bradner conducted a service in the churchyard entering directly from the choir room and using the portable organ.

As time went by St. John's lost many of its wealthy families partly because of the new parishes in the city and partly because of changes in residence. Consequently the number of pew owners decreased and the taxes that could be levied were not sufficient to maintain the buildings in good condition and to support public worship. Election of non-pew holders to the Corporation did not remedy this condition. To meet

the deficiency in revenue a system of pledged offerings had been tried while the Rev. Dr. Richards was Rector. The success of that plan encouraged the vestry to amplify the plan into a regular system of weekly offerings. Thus after being in abeyance for nearly a century weekly offerings were resumed by vote of the Corporation.

The administration of the Rev. Dr. Bradner was brought to a sudden close by his continued ill health. In 1914 the new Rector, the Rev. John F. Scott faced problems due to World War I aggravated by a coal strike. Though the future success of the parish was seen to depend upon more Parish House work and a larger income, it was thought best to close the reading room, to conserve coal and light. In the most difficult days service was held in the chapel with the choir stationed in the gallery with the reed organ from the chantry. For greater financial support the Rev. Mr. Scott organized the first Every-Member Canvass, sending out many parishioners in pairs to visit church families and to report in the evening.

In 1918 Mrs. Charles C. Gardiner offered to have the second floor of the Parish House reconstructed to provide an assembly hall with a stage-to be called Gardiner Hall in memory of her husband, the Junior Warden at the time of his death, and of her father, the Rev. Dr. Richards. The reconstruction required rebuilding the chimneys, altering one flight of stairs and reducing the office space.

Both Dr. Richards and Dr. Bradner were gifted writers whose weekly sermons reflected their sincerity of purpose and literary skill. The sermons of the Rev. Mr. Scott were short and very definite. On Good Fridays he sometimes illustrated the Gospel of the day by colored slides vividly portraying the last days of the earthly life of the Saviour.

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Although the vestry had, in 1906, considered favorably the request of the Rt. Rev. William Nielson McVicar, Bishop of Rhode Island, to establish St. John's Church as a cathedral church, three years passed before real action took place. Then in 1909 the General Assembly created the Cathedral Corporation including in the list of charter members the Rector of St. John's Church.

In 1927 following the resignation of the Rev. John F. Scott to become Rector of St. Stephen's Church, Lynn, Massachusetts, the Rt. Rev. James DeWolf Perry, Bishop of Rhode Island, was chosen Rector of St. John's Church and the church became his Pro-Cathedral with the Rev. Francis J. M. Cotter as Vicar. The Corporation of the church agreed to convey all its real estate and its endowments valued at more than \$340,000 to the Cathedral Corporation and pledged the congregation to support the regular work unchanged for two years. In 1929 the transactions were completed and St. John's Church was created the Cathedral of St. John to carry on not only for two years but for full twenty years the pledge of financial support.

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