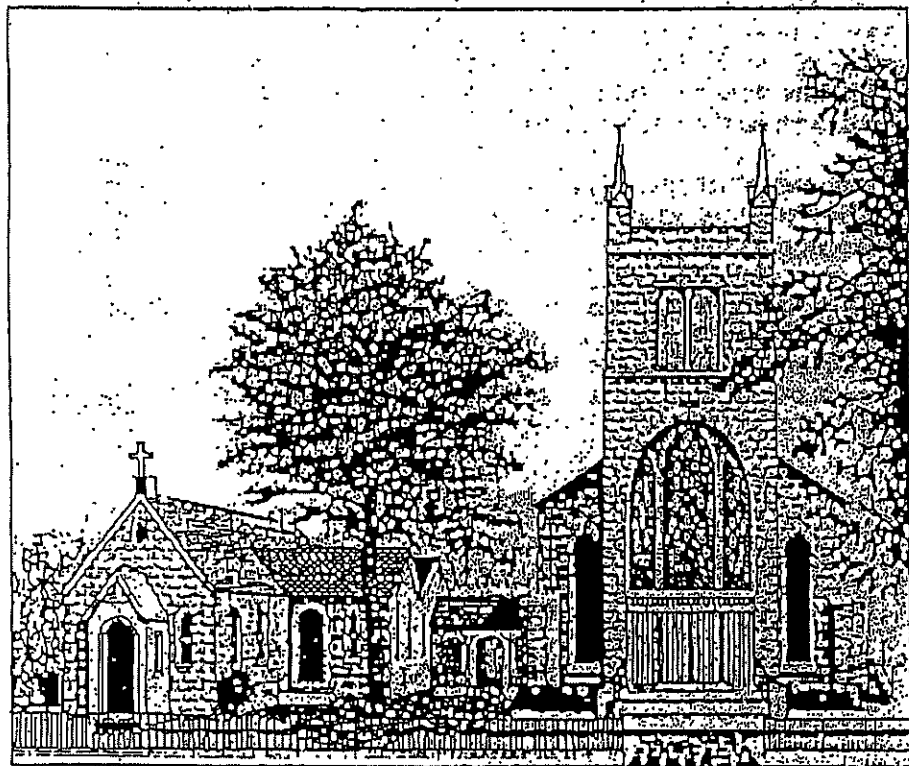


Below is a computer produced free-hand drawing of the church and chapel as they look today. Thanks to some large bequests and the generosity of members of the parish over the years it has been possible to keep this property in excellent condition and to reach out, year after year, to the needs of the community at large.



Sunday Services:

8:00 a.m. in the Chapel

9:15 a.m. in the Parish Hall

10:30 a.m. in the Church

Holy Eucharist Rite I

Christian Forum

Choral Holy Eucharist Rite II

Weekday Service:

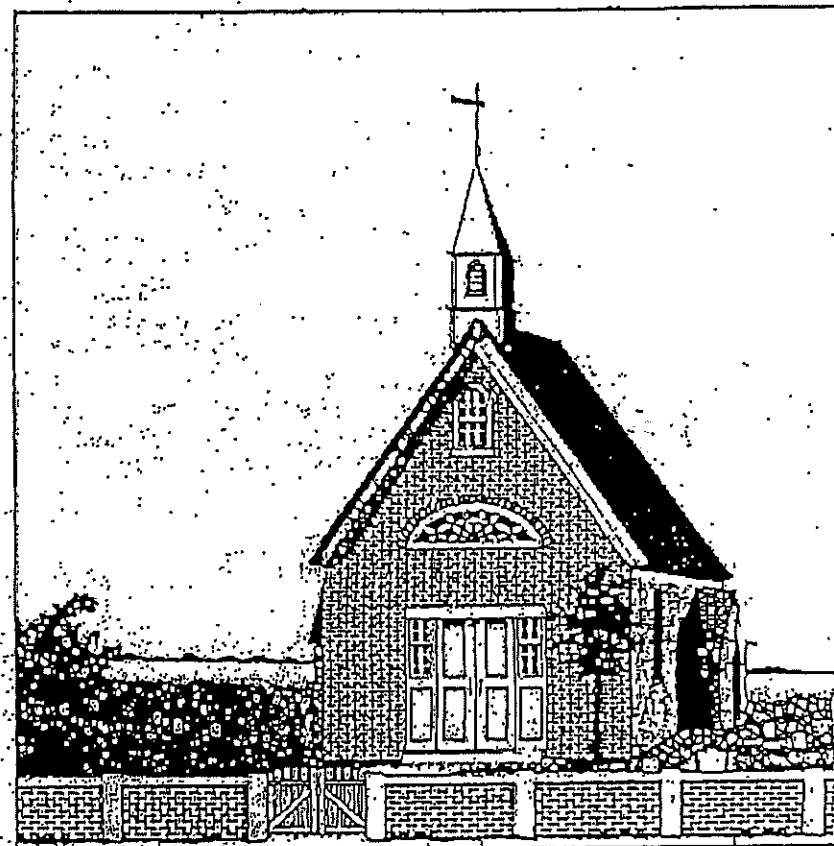
12 noon on Wednesdays

In the Chapel

Holy Eucharist and Healing

St. John's Episcopal Church

76 Market Street
Salem, New Jersey



A brief history

From 1691 to the present

by Robert F. Laird Jr.

Revised in 2002.

St. John's Episcopal Church.

There is a record of a Church of England marriage in Salem in 1691, just 16 years after John Fenwick with his colony of Friends established themselves here. A building of some sort was begun in 1708, but was discontinued for reasons that have not been recorded. Benjamin Vining, James Sherron, Joseph Coleman, George Trenchard, John Rolfe, Alexander Grant (whose dwelling now houses the Historical Society), and the Dunlap family were among the first Episcopalians in Salem.

In 1722 this tiny group wrote to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in London appealing for a minister. In 1724, the Reverend John Holbrooke arrived. However, before his arrival two Swedish Lutheran pastors, the Reverend Messrs. Hesselins and Lidenius, read prayers and preached in Salem and kept the movement alive. Under Reverend Holbrooke the congregation built its first church building on an acre of ground that had been donated by Samuel Fenwick Hedge, the grandson of Salem's founder. This property was deeded to Benjamin Vining and Joseph Coleman, Wardens, for "the sole use and behoof" of the members of the Church of England, of the Church of Salem. The deed is dated February 5, 1727, and the original document is a part of the church archives. It was here, on the site of the present church, that the first building, pictured on the cover of this brochure, was erected. The first service was held in it on June 24, 1728, St. John's Day.

The building was of brick and was 40 feet by 28 feet. It stood in the approximate middle of the present church yard.

From 1749 until 1792 no regular rector was assigned here, services being conducted by visiting clergy and the rector of St. George's, Churchtown. During the Revolution, British troops were quartered in the building. They completely wrecked the structure, probably because a number of members of the parish were active revolutionaries. The building remained in virtual ruins until about 1815 when it was repaired and enlarged to accommodate a regular congregation once again.

Erection of the present church building was begun in 1835 (bids for carpenter work dated February 8, 1835, are in the archives of the Salem County Historical Society.) It was designed by William Strickland, a well-known Philadelphia architect. This handsome stone Norman style structure was completed and dedicated February 8, 1838. Since 1807 the line of rectors has remained unbroken.

In about 1842, a new brick building was erected to house the Sunday school and a Vestry room. At that same time the chancel in the church was enlarged and beautified. In 1880, a recess chancel, organ chamber, robing room and a memorial chancel window were added to the church building. The architect for this work was George W. Hewitt of the Philadelphia architectural firm of Furness and Hewitt.

In 1883, the brick Sunday school building was removed, and present chapel was built. The design of the chapel is also attributed to George W. Hewitt. The covered cloister connecting the church and the chapel was added in 1903. At a later date the present tower on the main church building was erected in place of the original steeple.

Of special interest within the church are its lovely stained glass windows, most of which were donated in memory of members of prominent parish families.

In 1961 and 1962, a new parish house was erected on an adjacent piece of property where in previous years the Woodnutt Lumber Yard and a corner store had once stood. The parking lot behind the Parish House at one time accommodated a building that once housed Green's Carriage Factory.



To the left is a segment of an 1886 pictorial map of Salem showing the church and its adjoining property as it looked at that time. The old steeple and the buildings occupying the space now used for the Parish House are clearly visible.

For genealogists and students of local history the grave sites in the surrounding cemetery will be of interest. Buried here are many of the people who figured prominently in Salem's development as a town. One can find dates as far back as the early eighteenth century. Descendants of many of those buried here still reside in Salem County.