

**A History of Trinity Episcopal Church
Aurora, IL
(Written in 1949)**

Trinity Parish, Aurora, was organized on May 25, 1849, while the Rev. Henry Stafford was pastor to several villages in this vicinity. The Rev. T. N. Morrison succeeded Fr. Stafford after six months and was responsible both for the beginning of the church school and for the laying of the church foundation at Lake and Spruce Streets (on the West side) on a lot donated by Roswell Wilder. It was at the suggestion of Bishop Philander Chase that the church edifice was begun. As there was no minister in the parish from 1852 until 1854, the building was not completed until the spring of 1854, when the Rev. J. H. Waterbury, "having collected some funds among friends of the church in Brooklyn, N.Y.," made the church building an actuality. Many of the early Episcopalians in Aurora were of English extraction or came from England. Their pioneering venture of establishing the first Episcopal church in the vicinity brought them many hardships and disappointments.

However, the brick structure of the first Trinity Church was consecrated by Bishop Whitehouse on Sunday, July 18, 1854. The vestry minutes read as follows: "The Lord over all still watched over this feeble candlestick and has saved its final extinction." An entry for Christmas 1854 indicates the financial condition of the parish at this time. "\$2.30 was collected for the poor in the rector's hands."

The Rev. Mr. Waterbury resigned in April 1855 and was succeeded by the Rev. R. S. Nash, 1856-1857; the Rev. V. Spaulding 1858-1860; the Rev. Stephen T. Allen 1861-1865; the Rev. J. H. Knowles 1865-1866; the Rev. William Green, February-December 1867.

In 1867 the church building was abandoned in favor of a more central location, Arcadome Hall on Broadway. The Rev. Mr. Allen returned to Trinity in February 1868. During his ministry the current church building was erected at the corner of Lincoln Avenue and Benton Street at a cost of \$11,250.00.

On Easter Sunday, April 19, 1870, the cornerstone of the church was laid. Opening services were held Trinity Sunday, June 4, 1871, conducted by the rector, the Rev. Mr. Morrison of Bloomington and the Rev. W. C. Hopkins, Professor Wassemer was the organist. Over \$7,000.00 was received in subscriptions that day. The pews were rented the following evening in a "spirited contest for choice seats."

The earliest choir picture on record dates from this time and includes John Woods, Dr. Slater, Fred James, Choirmaster, Mrs. Athou, Thomas Bexton, Nellie Somarindyke (Stetler), Lily Mulford (Somarindyke), Amanda James (Simpson), Mrs. John Woods, Frank James, Hattie Mulford (James), Clara White (Pearce), and Mrs. Caldwell.

At the time of Mr. Allen's resignation, 1871, there were 56 communicants in the parish. During the next seven years, while the Rev. Mr. Hopkins was pastor, 252 communicants were added. Pastors succeeding him were the Rev. A. L. Sharpe, 1878, the Rev. Ed Benedict, 1879, the Rev. T. Tucker, 1880.

The most important pastorate of early Trinity was that of the Rev. Charles A. Holbrook of Portsmouth, N.H., who came in March 1883. On April 18, 1883, the first parish subscription was drawn up with Fr. Holbrook and Mr. Meeker appointed to write the by-laws of the vestry.

The first music committee, Messrs. Forsythe, Harmon, and Holbrook, was appointed May 11th. In November bills were sent to delinquents and an appeal for aid to each newcomer. Pledges were instigated by February of 1884.

At the annual Parish meeting on April 14, 1884, vestrymen elected were William Forsythe, D. M. Clapsaddle, John Pooley, C. R. Meeker, C. H. Fritz and W. Hord. The treasurer, Mr. Fred Hollis, reported 52 names on the subscription list and a total of \$1,031.00 in pledges. In April the church property was insured for \$8,000.00 and the organ for \$500.00. In June the rector was instructed to have notices placed on the pew backs to the effect that the pews were rent free but that contributions would be appreciated. In October the first sexton was hired for a salary of \$50.00 per annum. That summer Fr. Holbrook was given his first leave of absence with Dr. Clark conducting the service in the interim.

The years of 1885 and 1886 were concerned mainly with the budget, the assets and deficits averaging around \$1,100 - \$1,200 per year. Minor parish problems were such as heating, laying sidewalks, printing, hiring sexton and organ boy and petitioning the mayor to improve curbs and gutters on the church property. The vestrymen were now made responsible as collectors for certain portions of the subscription list and a set rule of proceedings for vestry meetings was drawn up August 29, 1885.

By December 1887 the Sunday School had an enrollment of 41 boys and 39 girls and met in two sessions until 1911. Trinity Boys' Choir, the only one in the city, was founded under the direction of Fr. Holbrook.

For the years 1883-1888 the rector reported 79 baptisms, 48 confirmations, 32 marriages and 46 burials.

In December 1887 two chandeliers for lighting the chancel by oil were bought at a cost of \$31.40 including express. They were sold in '89 as gas lighting took the place of oil.

By October 1888, the church, being fully paid for, was ready to be consecrated. Services began Monday evening, October 15th, with a sermon by the Rev. J. Stuart Smith of Elgin. Tuesday there were three services beginning at 8:00 a.m. with the benediction of memorial offerings, the brass altar cross, the recessional cross for the choir, the altar service, the Oxford Bible, the altar hangings and vestments.

At the 11:00 o'clock service, the Bishop William Edward McLaren of Chicago consecrated the church. At noon luncheon was served and in the evening, the Rev. T. Morrison, former pastor, spoke. Eighteen years had elapsed since the laying of the cornerstone.

Now that the church was out of debt, attention was focused on the purchasing of a new organ. Arrangements were made with Henry Pilcher's Sons, Louisville, Kentucky, and on May 1, 1893, three years after the initial steps were taken, the new organ was bought and installed at a cost of \$2,285.00 with a nominal allowance on the old organ.

In 1892 the roof was repaired. In '95 the vestry contracted for the curbstone in front of the church and the sidewalk on Lincoln Avenue. In May of '96 the first finance committee was appointed: Fr. Holbrook, Messrs. Kilbourne, Pooley and Fritz. In 1902 mite boxes were first distributed among the church school members "in order to encourage them in the habit of giving." An assistant treasurer was added in 1903, the year when a new double brick chimney was built at the cost of \$150.00.

Herman Bernard came to Trinity as organist in 1897 and served for one year. After playing in several other churches he returned to Trinity in 1905 and was organist for over 20 years.

On February 19, 1915, Fr. Holbrook tendered his resignation on account of ill health and upon advice of the Bishop. He had served Trinity Parish devotedly for twenty-two years.

The Rev. F. C. Sherman from St. Peter's Church, Chicago, accepted a call to Trinity in April 1905 and was instituted by Bishop Anderson. Under his pastorate the Parish House project was initiated, the problem having been discussed since the spring of 1895. Until the Parish House was constructed the only work room available was the space where All Souls' Chapel is now located.

Fr. Sherman appointed the committees in December 1905 to carry through the project.

Parish House Finance: Raftery, Adamson, Dr. Guild, President of the Ladies' Guild and President of the Parish Daughters.

Parish House Building: Raftery, Kilbourne, Adamson, Guild and Hutchinson.

The contract was let in July 1906 for \$8,000.00. Eugene Malmer was the architect and John McKimmey general contractor.

The land was bought with the money procured from the sale of lots donated by two parish members. Bishop Anderson came for the opening January 28, 1907. In April of the next year the first Parish supper was held. In April 1909 the sixtieth anniversary of Trinity Parish was celebrated with confirmation by Bishop Anderson and the second annual Parish banquet.

While the Parish House was under construction, ventilation had been installed in the church chancel, the church had been redecorated and crosses added to the building. In September the following year the Ladies' Guild financed the building of a cloister between the church and the Parish House at a cost of \$1,000.00. In April 1910 kneeling benches were added in the pews.

The first issue of the eight page pamphlet, the "Parish Visitor," appeared in February 1916 under the management of Mr. Fritz. It was issued monthly thereafter at a cost of twenty-five cents to subscribers.

In December 1907 the Parish unanimously decided to act on the advice of the Bishop and purchase the Copley property next door to the Parish House for a rectory. The "Parish Visitor" records that the proximity seemed "quite providential."

Fr. Sherman resigned in 1910. Under his leadership the parish increased in influence and numbers. He presented 137 for confirmation, making the total number of communicants 334.

The Rev. F. E. Brandt from Harvard, Illinois, accepted a call on January 17, 1911, and was instituted by the Ven. William W. Toll, Archdeacon, on February 12, 1911. During his pastorate considerable improvements were made to the church to accommodate the growing number of communicants. The church was redecorated, the cloister floor raised, a new furnace installed in the Parish House and the second story addition made to the Parish House with Eugene Malmer, who drew the plans for the Parish House in 1906, being the architect and Spring and Mowrey the contractors. Mr. John Sutcliffe was consultant on the changes made on the church interior: the new altar, and reredos, communion rail and choir stalls. Spurling and Linden of Chicago were the decorators of the chancel. The American Seating Company were builders of the altar and other articles of church furniture. The altar, including the reredos, was

donated by a parish family. The *Aurora Beacon News*, Friday, November 8th, reads as follows: "In all of these improvements the spiritual and social needs have been provided for and the result of them all will be to strengthen the church for an aggressive Christmas work in the community."

The January 1918 issue of the "Parish Visitor" announced that the rector's study in the Parish House was to be fitted as a chapel for weekday services.

Mr. Brandt resigned in November 1917. The Rev. Penwalter Reed was rector from August 1918 until April 1919. The Rev. Benjamin Chapman was called in May 1919.

In 1920, the rectory having been sold, the money from the sale was used to install the present system of steam heating, replacing the two old hot air furnaces in the Parish House and the church. The whole property was renovated that year according to the Parish Register, also a new lighting system was installed.

On December 14, 1924 the present organ was dedicated to the Rev. A. C. Holbrook. According to the *Aurora News* of December 15th more than 400 attended the morning dedication and vesper services. The organ was built especially for the requirements of the church by M. P. Moller of Hagerstown, Maryland, the largest pipe organ manufacturer in the world. Mr. Herman Bernard demonstrated the new instrument at the dedication service.

Also during Mr. Chapman's rectorship the present pulpit and prie dieu were installed. The figures and carvings on the pulpit were executed by Alois Lang.

The Rev. Benjamin Chapman resigned in 1930. The Rev. William Wallace Horstick accepted a call to Trinity in November 1931. During his ministry, the Men's and Boy's Club, the St. Mary's Guild and the Gamma Kappa Delta were organized, bringing the total number of church organizations to fifteen. Fr. Horstick also started the "Acolyte," our monthly church bulletin.

Improvements to the church property included having the church redecorated, new church lighting installed, carpeting laid, a new boiler added and a new roof, the latter addition being made during the depression years of 1933 and 1934.

The most important improvement, however was the completion of All Souls' Chapel in the apse of the church, begun in 1934 and consecrated on June 2, 1940 by the Rt. Rev. Paul Jones, acting for the Rt. Rev. E. J. Randall, Suffragan Bishop of Chicago. [Paul Jones is one of the named saints of the Episcopal Church for his advocacy for peace as Bishop of Utah in the years leading up to the First World War. His feast day is September 4.] This was the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of Trinity Parish House, with confirmation and a special edition of "The Acolyte."

The chapel had been financed by individual gifts and a special offering on All Souls' Day. The Tabernacle on the altar was made by Fr. Holbrook. The first service in the chapel was Holy Communion on Monday in Holy Week, April 3, 1939, at 8 a.m.

Fr. Horstick was elected second Bishop of the Diocese of Eau Claire on April 18, 1944, and was consecrated on June 29, 1944, although he took services at Trinity until the 13th of August. He had served the Parish for thirteen years with increasing energy and devotion and made friends for himself and the church throughout the city. During his pastorate Fr. Horstick was assisted at various times by the Rev. G. S. A. Moore, the Rev. Arthur McKay and the Rev. W. A. Wagner.

The Rev. J. W. Zulch was instituted as rector on September 3, 1944. He was assisted during the war years by the Rev. William Cope. Fr. Zulch emphasized the missionary work of the church and directed the overseas' work and activities of the guilds. He left the parish to pursue missionary activities in Nevada.

The Rev. Samuel W. Vose of Christ Church, River Forest, accepted a call to Trinity on December 16, 1947 and was instituted by Bishop Conkling on December 30, 1947. Fr. Vose was dean of the Chicago-West deanery for two years and was also president of the Oak Park-River Forest Ministerial Association.

Our church school has grown and now meets in two sections, one at 9:15, when the junior choir sings the Choral Eucharist, while the lower school meets at 11:00.

The Rectors Guild of young men has been recently organized. The present rectory at 728 S. Fourth Street was purchased in December 1947.

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Trinity Church, the church has been completely redecorated, including the Parish House. Remodeling plans for the Parish House are under way.

A Book of Remembrance will be placed in the Rector's study and will include a complete list of memorials which are too numerous to mention in this History.

The Choirs at Trinity are under the direction of Mr. Francis Aulbach, M. Mus., A.A.G.O., who came as organist in December 1942, Mr. Aulbach is a composer of children's and church music. His "Benedicte" is frequently used.

Sources for this History are as follows:

The Acolyte

Aurora Beacon News

Aurora City Directories, 1858, 1870, 1871

Aurora City Gazeteer, 1868

Aurora Daily Express

History of Kane County, 1888

Minutes of the Vestry and the Parish

The Parish Register

The Parish Visitor, 1905, 1917

Marion James Price, Parish Historian

Paul D. Reid, Chairman, Centennial Booklet

The Lectern

Trinity Episcopal Church

Centennial Anniversary

1849-1949

The Rectors of Trinity Parish

The Rev. Henry Safford	1849
The Rev. T. N. Morrison	1849 – 1852
The Rev. J. H. Waterbury	1854 – 1855
The Rev. R. S. Nash	1856 – 1857
The Rev. V. Spaulding	1858-1860
The Rev. Stephen T. Allen	1861 – 1865
The Rev. J. H. Knowles	1865 – 1866
The Rev. William Greene	1867
The Rev. Stephen T. Allen (2 nd Term)	1868 – 1871
The Rev. W. C. Hopkins	1871 – 1878
The Rev. A. L. Sharpe	1878
The Rev. Edward Benedict	1879
The Rev. T. Tucker	1880
The Rev. Charles A. Holbrook	1883 – 1905
The Rev. Franklin C. Sherman	1905 – 1910
The Rev. F. E. Brandt	1911 – 1917
The Rev. Penwalter Reed	1918 – 1919
The Rev. Benjamin Chapman	1919 – 1930
The Rev. William Wallace Horstick	1931 – 1944
The Rev. J. William Zulch	1944 -1947
The Rev. Samuel W. Vose	1947 - 1971
The Rev. Paul A. Camm	1972 – 1975
The Rev. William Burden	1972 – 2005
The Rev. Charles A. de Kay	2006 - - -