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ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, EDENTON, N.C.

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St. Paul's Church, Edenton, N. C.

REV. CHARLES AYLETT ASHBY, LL.B., RECTOR
PARISH ORGANIZED IN 1701. THE OLDEST CHURCH;
THE OLDEST PARISH; THE OLDEST CORPORATION IN
THE STATE. PRESENT COLONIAL BUILDING BEGUN
IN 1736. TWO WOODEN BUILDINGS PRECEDED IT.

St. Paul's Church

Edenton, North Carolina



This Church building is the third in order of those built in Edenton, or nearby, for the Mother Church of the Parish, in distinction from "Chapels of Ease," of which there were several within Chowan Precinct. That Precinct was far more extensive than the present County of Chowan.

The first Church, 1701 (same year the Parish was organized) was on land given by Edward Smithwick, located about a mile from Edenton. The spot where it stood is not known. It was somewhere on the Hayes lands. The second was in 1708. Possibly it was an enlargement of the first, on the same site.

In 1736 this present building was begun. Its dimensions are here given:

Length, 60 feet; width, 40 feet 3 inches; height, 18 feet 6 inches; thickness of walls, 2 feet 6 inches.

The bricks in St. Paul's walls are $2\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{3}{4} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Where they came from is not indicated.

The tower walls of St. Paul's are 3 feet thick.

The first Vestry of St. Paul's Parish, 1701, were "The Honorable Henderson Walker, Esqr., Coll. Thomas Pollock, William Duckenfield, Esqr., Mr. Nicholas Crisp, Mr. Edward Smithwick, Mr. John Blount, Mr. James Long, Mr. Nathanael Chevin, Mr. William Banbury, Coll. William Wilkinson, Capt. Thomas Leuten, Capt. Thomas Blount." They met and organized at the house of Mr. Thomas Gilliam.

Clergymen named as in charge or officiating: Rev. Messrs. Dr. John Blair 1703; Henry Gerrard 1705; William Cordon 1708; John Urmstone 1710;

———Newman 1723; Dr. John Blacknall 1725;
——— Fountain 1728; —— Marsden 1728; ——
Robinson 1730; —— Jones 1730; —— Granvill
1730; —— Boyd 1732; John Garzia 1736; Clem-
ent Hall 1745; Daniel Earl 1759; Charles Pettigrew
1775; Frederick W. Hatch 1811; John Avery 1828;
Wm. D. Cairns 1836; Samuel I. Johnston 1837; C.
M. Parkman, assistant, 1852; Francis W. Hilliard
1863; Angelo A. Benton 1870; Wm. W. Lord 1876;
Robert B. Drane 1876 to 1932; Charles Aylett
Ashby 1933 ——.

The Minutes of the Vestry begin in 1701. In 1713, in a letter to the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts," the Vestry declare that they have "no ornaments belonging to the Church." They refer to the Library of Books sent to Bath, which they claimed should have come to them. That was the first Public Library in this Province: one of the books is now held by the Diocese of East Carolina.

On the 19th of June, 1776 (fifteen days before the 4th of July National Declaration of Independence) this Vestry signed "The Test," a political declaration adopted by the North Carolina Provincial Congress, at Hillsborough, 23rd of August, 1775; it professes allegiance to the King, and goes on to declare that "the people of this Province, singly and collectively, are bound by the Acts and Resolutions of the Continental and Provincial Congresses, because in both they are freely represented by persons chosen by themselves," signed by Richard Hoskins, David Rice, Pelatiah Walton, Wm. Hinton, Thos. Bonner, Wm. Boyd, Thos. Benbury, Jacob Hunter, John Deasley, Willm. Bennet, William Roberts. Joseph Hewes, a Signer of the Declaration of Independence, was elected a Vestryman, and he qualified on 20th August, 1774. He died in 1779, in Philadelphia, and was buried in that city.

In 1837, the North Gallery of the Church was appropriated for the use of the Coloured People;

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and in 1841 there was a movement for a Chapel for them. The Parish Register shows much attention given to the spiritual welfare of the Slaves.

In 1852, provision was made for certain Pews to be free; most of them were rented. Since 1876 they have all been free.

During the War Between the States, St. Paul's Church Bell was given to the Southern Confederacy, and it was one of the bells cast into four cannon of the "Edenton Bell Battery." Earnest efforts to locate any one of those guns have failed to find one. Later Miss Anne Page gave the bell now in use.

In 1838—"The Committee exhibit a plan of altering the present Pews into Single Pews, and repairing the Church—" as we have it.

About 1850, the Chancel was re-arranged: the stained glass Window and the Altar, etc., put in as a Memorial to Josiah Collins. The oak was from England.

The Silver Chalice and Paten were gifts of Col. Edward Mosely in 1725. The Pewter Chalice and Paten, tradition says, were given by Queen Anne, or soon after her reign, by royalty. The old scones which carried tallow dips and are believed to be the first lighting of the Church building were found in the tower in recent years, and have been replaced as were originally with candles in them.

The graves of Colonial Governors, Henderson Walker; Thomas Pollock and Charles Eden, for whom the town is named, are in the Churchyard; together with many prominent in Colonial days and later, "The Westminster Abbey of North Carolina."

The Pews are put together with wooden pegs.

Many tourists and visitors come to St. Paul's. It is a treasure of Colonial days, with much of interest in its yard and building.

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