

# Branford Church Century and Quarter Old

Trinity church in Branford, is to celebrate the one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of its founding as a parish, Sunday and Monday, November 28th and 29th, and the event will be a notable one in the annals of the Episcopal church in Connecticut.

In 1748 Trinity church started as a mission, but it was not until 1784 that it was established as a church. The 28th and 29th of November this year fall on Sunday and Monday, the same as they did one hundred and twenty-five years ago, which makes the celebration come on the exact days of the week. A committee has been appointed to arrange for the celebration, consisting of the rector, Rev. George Weed Barhydt; Henry F. Jourdan, W. R. Smith, Frank G. Tester, Judge Harry W. Doolittle and W. Lay. During this celebration will occur the annual visitation of the Bishop.

Previous to 1748, the only services at Branford had been held when one of the traveling clergymen had visited the town. In that year Rev. Matthew Graves, missionary in New London of the venerable society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, received an urgent invitation to preach in Branford. It is supposed that he accepted the invitation some time in September. He reported on his visit there as follows: "I performed service at Branford to a most agreeable sight of auditors, who behaved very well, and some of the chief Presbyterians came to my lodgings and returned me thanks." These chief Presbyterians who behaved so well were without a doubt some of the petitioners. This was the first church service in the town of which there is a definite record. Steps were then taken to form a mission and it is probable that a definite organization flourished in Branford as early as 1751. It was in charge of Mr. Ebenezer Punderson.

The parish continued to increase until 1763-4, when it suffered somewhat from Mr. Punderson's inability to supply regular services. In 1766 there is plain evidence of prosperity. There were persons of wealth and the parish had so much increased that they hoped to build and have the Rev. Solomon Palmer as resident minister to themselves alone, and he was quite inclined

to listen. These plans, however, were not carried into effect.

From that time until 1776 there is no record whatever, nor after that until 1784. A document dated 1776, indicates that at the time of its date the parish was under the care of Rev. Bela Hubbard. In 1784 the parish emerges into light with fifty-four members.

Practically nothing is known of the parish during the Revolution and no steps could be taken during that time toward the permanent organization, as the feeling was bitter against the Church of England. As early as June 2, 1784, a meeting was held to consider plans for the establishment of a church. Another meeting was held July 5, when it was voted that the parishes of Branford and Guilford unite and secure a clergyman. Rev. Ashbel Baldwin of Litchfield, was decided upon as the clergymen they desired and on November 15, 1784, it was voted to "hire" him for twelve months at a salary of £80 L. M. (lawful money), one-half to be paid by the church in Branford and the other half by the societies in Guilford. The Branford church was unable to secure Mr. Baldwin and it was finally agreed to have Rev. James Sayre come and "open the church" on the last Sunday in November. This Mr. Sayre accordingly did, and this date, November 28th, is the most important yet noted, for it is the real religious birthday of the parish. The phrase to "open the church" without doubt refers to the initial service of the new parish, since even the site of the new church had not been decided upon. There is no means of knowing where this service was held. The parish organization was made the following day at the home of Captain Samuel Russell, so that November 29th may be called its ecclesiastical birthday.

The first officers of the parish were as follows: Church wardens—Ebenezer Linsley and Capt. Samuel Russell; vestrymen—Capt. John Russell, Obed Linsley, Thomas Frisbie, John Rogers, jr.; Papillian Barker, Capt. Ebenezer Barker and Edward Barker; clerk of the church, William Monro.

At the same meeting a vote was passed with the intention of procuring Mr. Sayre as their minister, and he probably was in charge while the church was building, for December 21, it was agreed to have him move to Branford

as soon as convenient, and to provide him a house to dwell in. March 25, 1785, Capt. John Russell was chosen treasurer to receive the subscriptions to his salary.

It was then determined to erect a church building. The selection of a site, like every other movement, was attended with difficulties. It was voted December 28, 1784, to build a church not to exceed fifty feet by thirty-eight, and John Russell, William Monro, Capt. Samuel Russell, Obed Linsley, Abraham Rogers, Papillian Barker and Ebenezer Barker were appointed a committee to receive subscriptions, transact all business of building, and to search the First Society's records to see whether liberty had formerly been granted to build a church, and in case it had not, to make application for it. William Monro and Capt. John Russell were also appointed to see an attorney about the rates, and to petition the

timber now lies, likewise the ground near the schoolhouse hollow." March 25th, it was voted to build on this hill, which was called Baldwin's Hill, if a title could be had. Where Baldwin's Hill was, cannot be decided. This did not prove satisfactory and the place selected was "the ground near the schoolhouse hollow."

Meanwhile the subscription paper had been started. The first copy was drawn up December 28, 1784, without doubt at the parish meeting. In this list several names appear which are not among the founders, one of them being Cambrig Primus, probably a slave or freedman, who subscribed six shillings. A second list, showing amounts subscribed, paid and due, gives the sum total as £300-10-0. The tax list of 43 members of the parish in 1786 aggregated £1533-10-3. A part of the subscriptions were paid in labor and goods.

The timber was drawn in February of 1785, the work on the frame was probably done in June and July. August 12, a contract was given to Jacob Tyler of Southington, to complete the church which was then raised. It was for £50, one-third to be paid in cattle and cash, and two-thirds in West India rum and dry goods, the rum being valued at three shillings or fifty cents per gallon. In December men were still working at the pillars. The first parish meeting in the church was warned for the first Monday in May, 1786.

The old church, which stood northwest of the present edifice, was unpretentious, being built somewhat after the schoolhouse model. There was no recessed chancel, but a semi-circular rail enclosed the altar and the chancel space. The whole Sunday School used to gather about the rail to be catechised at the visit of the bishop. The pulpit was very high and stood against the wall, having a small dark robing room under it. It was afterward moved forward and a convenient robing room placed behind it, the chancel was made square, reduced in size and pews were added. Over the entrance was a semi-circular gallery, the ends extending about half the length of the church. The pillars were a conspicuous feature of the interior.

For about forty years there was no way of heating the old church. A stove for burning wood was put in about

1825, the pipe being put through a window. Ten or fifteen years later another was added. The seats were free while expenses were paid by a direct tax. For many years the women and younger children sat on one side, the men and boys on the other. About 1820, families began to be seated by age, a custom which continued for a few years.

The name "Trinity Church" is first found in the parish records March 23, 1818. The church was consecrated under that name by Bishop Brownell, September 17, 1832.

Up to 1840, the church had had no rectory or parsonage. The clergymen lived in rented houses, wherever one could be found. At this time steps were taken to build a parsonage. The parish endeavored to raise \$1,200 for that purpose by subscription, but as this proved impossible, it was built by stockholders, the stock being divided into shares of \$25 each. The land for the parsonage was presented by Mr. John A. Wilford. The stock was transferred to the parish in 1844. That rectory was situated on Montowese street, but further south than the present rectory, which stands opposite the church.

Within the past two years the rectory has been rebuilt and enlarged at an outlay of about \$3,500. This was done under the direction of the present rector who has done a great deal toward the improvement of the church.

The corner-stone of the present church building was laid in April, 1851, with appropriate religious services conducted by the pastor, Rev. Henry Olmstead, jr. The frame was raised in August of that year, and the church completed in January, 1852. It was consecrated by Bishop Brownell, January 27, 1852.

In 1901 a celebration was held at the church, commemorating two events in the history of the organization. It was the fiftieth anniversary of the laying of the corner stone of the present church building and the one hundred and fiftieth of the beginning of the organization as a mission.

The clergymen who have served the parish since its organization are:—Samuel Johnson, D.D., 1748; Matthew Graves, 1748; Ebenezer Punderson, 1752-61; Solomon Palmer, 1763-66;

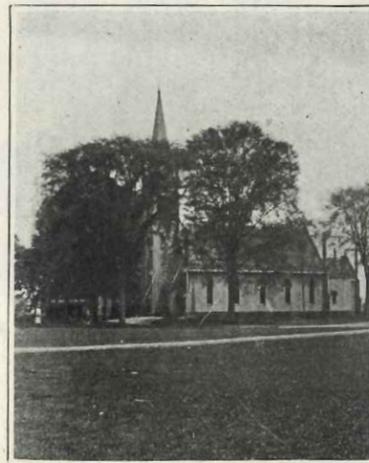
Bela Hubbard, D.D., 1767-83; John Sayre, 1784-86; John Bowden, D.D., 1785; Jeremiah Leaming, 1787; Edward Blakeslee, 1788-90; Tillotson Bronson, 1789; Ambrose Hull, 1790-91; Manoa Smith Miles, 1795-97; Ammi Rogers, 1801-04; Virgil H. Barber, 1806; Charles Seabury, 1808; Benjamin Benham, 1809; J. D. Jones, 1809-11; Elijah G. Plumb, 1811-18; Ashbel Baldwin, 1816; Origen P. Holcomb, 1820-23; Joseph Perry, 1821; John M. Garfield, 1823-28; James Keeler, 1828-29; William T. Potter, 1829-30; Edward J. Ives, 1830-32; David Baldwin, 1834-38; Levi H. Corson, 1838-40; Pascal P. Kidder, 1840-43; Frederick Miller, 1844-49; William H. Rees, 1850; Henry Olmstead, jr., 1851-62; Clayton Eddy, 1862-64; Frederick D. Lewin, 1864; David Bishop, 1866-69; Charles T. Coer, 1869; George C. Griswold, 1870-72; Henry Olmstead, D.D., 1872-82; C. H. Plummer, 1883; Melville K. Bailey, Easter 1885 to Easter 1891; Francis B. Whitcomb, May 1891 to February 1894; George I. Brown, March 1894 to June 1898; Henry W. Winkley, October 1898 to December 1906; George Weed Barhydt, February 1907 to the present time.

Several of these rectors were at the church but a short time, and in one or two cases there is a record of but one visit having been paid by them to the mission.

The present Rector, Rev. George Weed Barhydt, is a very active worker and has done a great deal toward improving the church and increasing its membership. Among the important changes which have taken place since he took charge might be mentioned the vested choir. This was due entirely to the efforts of Mr. Barhydt.

The present officers of the church are as follows: Wardens, Henry F. Jourdan and W. R. Smith; clerk and treasurer, Frank G. Tester; vestrymen, Richard Bradley, H. W. Averill, E. S. Bartholomew, W. R. Foote, W. E. Thompson, E. S. Wilford, W. Lay, R. H. Maddern, W. Palmer and H. W. Doolittle; auditors, W. E. Thompson and Walter Palmer; delegates to convention, Henry F. Jourdan and W. R. Smith; substitutes, W. E. Thompson and H. W. Doolittle.

The present membership is 520.



TRINITY CHURCH, BRANFORD.

County Court for liberty to build a church. Neither of these committees seem to have gotten much satisfaction, for March 7, 1785, Samuel Russell, John Russell, Ebenezer Barker, John Rogers, jr., Abraham Rogers, Obed Linsley and William Monro were appointed to determine where the church should be built. This committee examined two sites—"the hill where the

# Trunk Highways Being Improved First

Immediately upon the passage of the present law, the highway commissioner started a comprehensive and well defined plan of making a personal investigation of the roads throughout the State, with a view to carefully examining every condition to be found on the principal trunk lines of the State, the improvement of which is contemplated.

the many interests that now criticize the department will be removed and the work of the department will be allowed to go on in the improvement of the entire system, as originally planned, the improvement of our main highways has the demand been so urgent

secure as large an appropriation, either for construction or for administration, as the needs of the department and the interests of the people in this great question suggested or demanded. Hence, at no time since 1895—the commencement of the good roads movement in

pleted on the part of the State and those towns through which it runs is about eighty-six miles. The unfinished length is approximately thirty-four miles. The survey in the office on this trunk line covers about fifteen and one-half miles.

The next important trunk line is the continuation of Trunk Line No. 1 from New Haven, extending up through Hartford and Enfield, on the east side of the Connecticut river, into Massachusetts. The distance covered is about sixty-six miles. Of this only about seventeen miles remain unimproved. Of this unimproved portion, ten miles are now under contract and

tion of the first section of our trunk line system, as originally mapped out, will require about \$4,500,000. The entire appropriation under the bonding act available for this purpose after October 1, 1909, is practically \$1,000,000, which, under the present law, cannot be used in excess of \$250,000 a year. So the department is confronted with a very unpleasant situation to say the