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ST. PAUL'S CHURCH

VITAL LINK TO AMERICA'S PAST

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JANUARY 1977

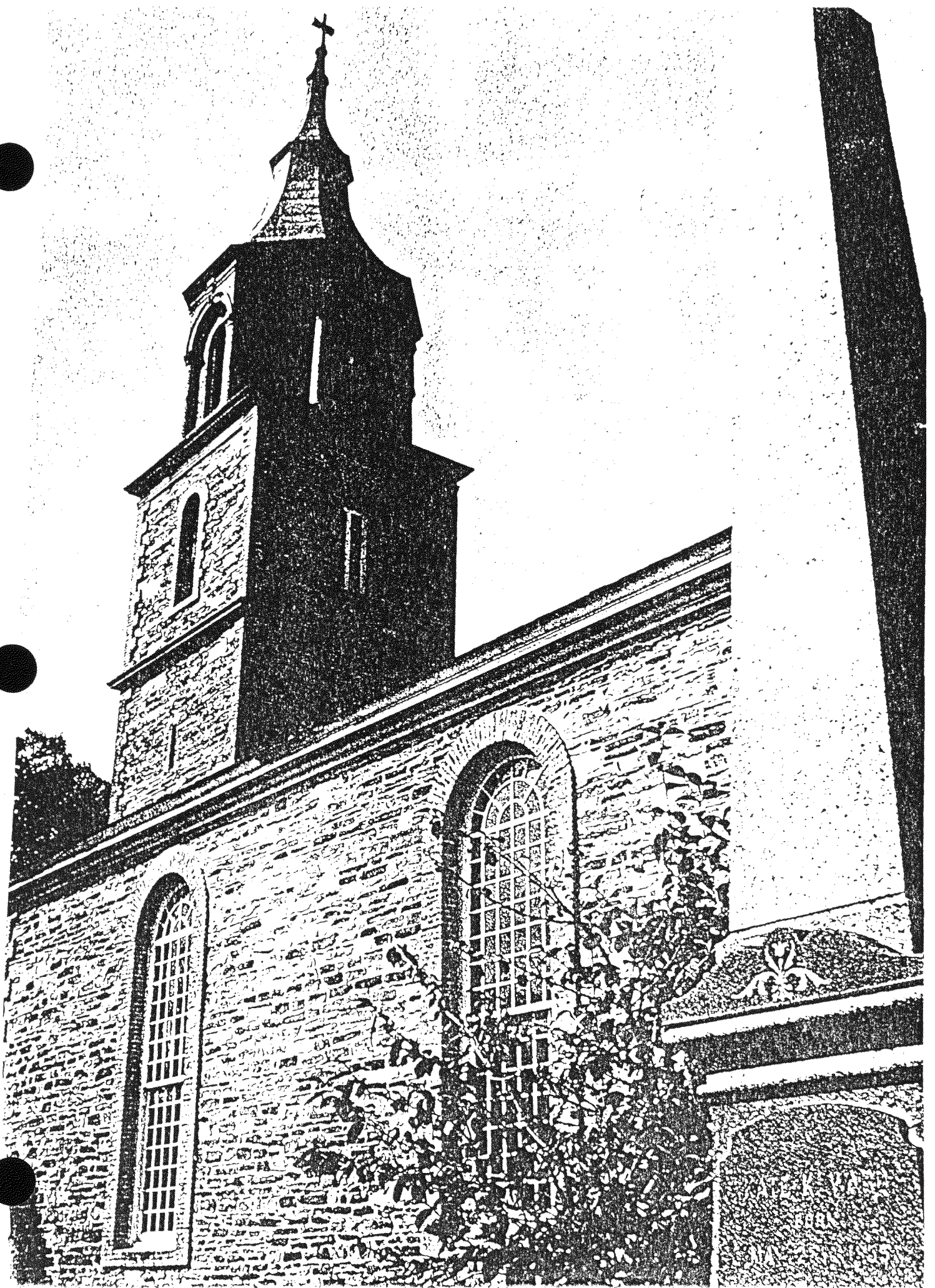


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ANCIENT BUILDINGS ARE AMONG THE MOST VALUABLE
RECORDS OF NATIONAL HISTORY AND PROGRESS. AND
AS SUCH ARE WORTHY OF THE UTMOST CARE, THEIR
LOSS BEING IRREPARABLE

WILLIAM MORRIS

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grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation
and the Town of Eastchester.

I. INTRODUCTION

When you drive south in Mount Vernon along South Columbus Avenue accosted on all sides by the familiar array of gas stations, fast food stands, and factories there is no hint that this was once the Old Boston Post Road, first opened in 1671. There is no hint until suddenly a stark octagonal steeple appears on the horizon. Nestled among oil tanks, next to a Salvation Army Center stands a striking stone church edged in red brick with colonial arched windows and a pepper-pot cupola.

Saint Paul's Church, one of the oldest churches in America, was once the hub of a small farming community, serving as a meeting house, court and town center as well as a house of worship. It remains a lone survivor of Pre-Revolutionary history in sharp contrast to the sprawling industrial non-community which surrounds it today. Saint Paul's Church stands on a site haunted by the drama of colonial America, of events which led to the crisis of revolt and to the creation of the Bill of Rights.

Within those stone walls; wounded Hessian soldiers lay in a makeshift hospital, Aaron Burr practiced law, President John Quincy Adams' son was laid to rest, and more recently here, President Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke to thousands honoring the nation's heritage.

It was during the early nineteen hundreds when Saint Paul's function as a center of worship began to decline, when population grew in other central areas and public transportation bypassed the church . In 1930 , the energetic Reverend Wiegler took over the parish which consisted of five women and a dilapidated building .

His leadership spurred a movement to restore Saint Paul's to its original eighteenth century appearance . Unfortunately , the popular interest at that time was in the colonial style . Victorian details seemed ugly and too recent to have value . The restoration effort concentrated on stripping the interior of the church back to its original state. In the process , much of architectural and historic value was lost that post-dated 1787 .

During the 1930's also, the public emphasis was on Saint Paul's as a memorial to the Freedom of Speech part of the Bill of Rights. This however concerned only one episode which occurred on the site. Saint Paul's story is far richer than merely a single episode or time period. Its value lies in its architectural, religious, as well as national historic significance.

Saint Paul's Church, a nationally recognized Historic Site since 1943, serves as a physical and irreplaceable

link spanning three centuries .

I AM SURE THAT THE AUTHOR OF THE LIGHT AND
MAINTENANCE THEREOF IS GOD AND HE FROM THIS
WILDERNESS AMONG SAVAGES SHALL (CAUSE) IT
TO BREAK FORTH MORE AND MORE UNTO THE PERFECT
DAY

ANNE HUTCHINSON 1643

II. THE FIRST SETTLERS SEEK RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

On one wall of Saint Paul's Church is a plaque honoring Anne Hutchinson and her bid for religious freedom which is where the story begins, In 1643, Anne Hutchinson led her small band of followers into exile from the Massachusetts Puritan Colony . They were among the first white settlers of Westchester, building their homes on the land near Eastchester Creek which later became the site of Saint Paul's.

Mrs. Hutchinson had challenged the Puritan ministers in their interpretation of the scriptures and their rules that denied Puritans the right of public assembly and free speech. Her " crime " was inviting women and a few men to her home for regular meetings to discuss the sermons they had heard in church, As she commanded as many as two hundred followers, the Puritan ministers felt threatened . In 1637, they had Anne Hutchinson tried for heresy and finally expelled from the church and Puritan society.

Her family and fifty-eight others fled first to Rhode Island and then to " Vredeland", the wilderness of Eastchester which the Dutch had purchased from the Indians.

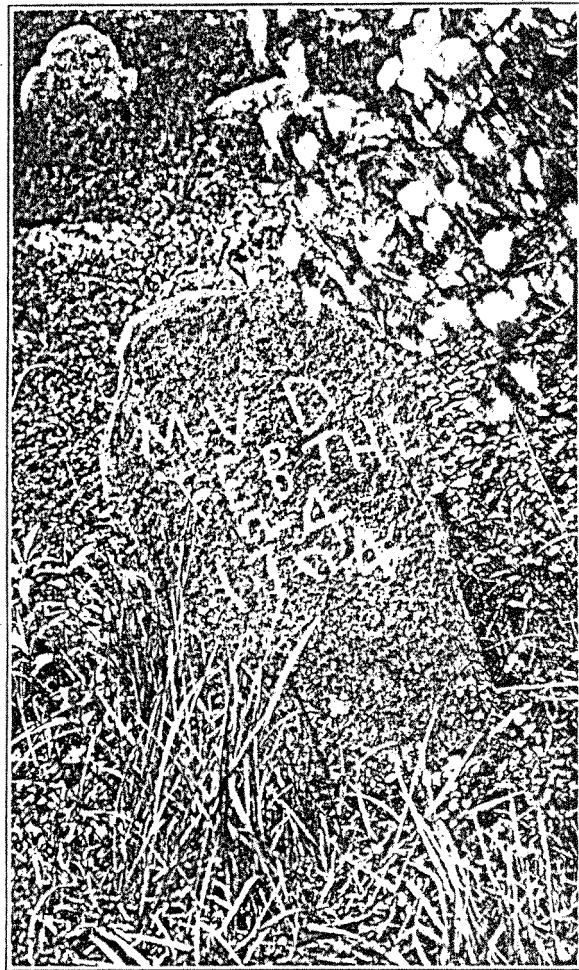
In 1643, as the Dutch had reniged on their promises, the Indians decided to repossess their lands. They came upon Anne Hutchinson's farm and massacred her entire family sparing only her eight year old daughter who was captured and lived with the Indians until she escaped years later.

News of Anne's martyred death in the Boston Bay Colony shocked those who remembered her cause and stimulated their demands for more religious and intellectual freedom.

One of her more ardent followers, Captain John Underhill, already a veteran of Indian Wars, marched a small army down to Eastchester for revenge. There he won a brutal battle, murdering scores of Indians and insuring peace for future white settlers.

After the Indian War, Underhill returned to Massachusetts but was forced to leave by the Puritan fathers due to his continued belief in Anne Hutchinson's cause. He then fought a series of wars with the Indians in Long Island. Eventually, his son, Nathaniel, made Eastchester his home and the Underhill family played an important part in the continuing history of Saint Paul's church.

In 1664, Thomas Pell met with Ann-Hooock, the Indian chief who had murdered Anne Hutchinson and had according to custom changed his name to hers. They signed papers which deeded the area bounded by the Hutchinson River and the



THE OLDEST GRAVESTONE

It was necessary to trace out the markings in chalk to photograph the stone

Bronx River to Pell's group of ten British families from Fairfield, Connecticut who settled where the Hutchinson's house stood.

These settlers were considered Independents (not of the Church of England') and immediately drew up an agreement which included the clause " that all & everyone of us or that shall be of us do paye unto the minister according to his meade & estat." ¹

A small wooden meeting house was built in 1665, at the expense of all freeholders and used for religious worship as well as public meetings. This structure was on the exact site of the present Saint Paul's Church and served the tiny community for twenty - two years. Then in 1692, the original church was replaced , across the road from the present building, by a larger one measuring " twenty-eight feet square and about eighteen feet to the eaves; the sides as well as roof being shingled , which later met together at an apex. " ²

An area north of the church was designated a "Commons" and all outdoor community affairs were held on this Village Green. Town records reveal that in 1711, the inhabitants " agreed by vote to meet at the meetinghouse on the 10th day of August ensuing, at sun half an hour high in the sky,

in order to the cutting brush about the Commons in Eastchester woods, and to appear at the beat of the drum " ³ . A sexton was chosen to "beat the drum" on the Lord's days and for public occasions and each family was taxed for this service " nine pence a piece, everyone."

On the Green were the stocks, pillory and flogging post for public offenders. There, too, elections for public officials took place with landholders lining up behind the candidates of their choice. In later years, the militia drilled on the green to prepare for the French and Indian War as well as the Revolutionary War.

It is interesting to imagine a tiny independent settlement in the midst of uncharted woods, struggling together to create a community. But during the ensuing fifty years, outside forces began to encroach on their insular existence. During those years, the freedoms we take for granted today were denied these hearty settlers .

POWER MAY JUSTLY BE COMPARED TO A GREAT RIVER,
WHICH, WHILE KEPT WITHIN ITS TRUE BOUNDS, IS
BOTH BEAUTIFUL AND USEFUL: BUT WHEN IT OVERFLOWS
ITS BANKS IT IS TOO IMPETUOUS TO BE STEMMED: IT
BEARS DOWN ON ALL BEFORE IT AND BRINGS DESTRUCTION
AND DESOLATION WHENEVER IT COMES. IF, THEN, THIS
IS THE NATURE OF POWER, LET US AT LEAST DO OUR
DUTY, AND LIKE WISE MEN, WHO VALUE FREEDOM USE
OUR UTMOST CARE TO SUPPORT LIBERTY, THE ONLY
BULWARK AGAINST LAWLESS POWER, WHICH IN ALL AGES
HAS SACRIFICED TO ITS WILD LUST AND BOUNDLESS
AMBITION, THE BLOOD OF THE BEST MEN THAT EVER
LIVED

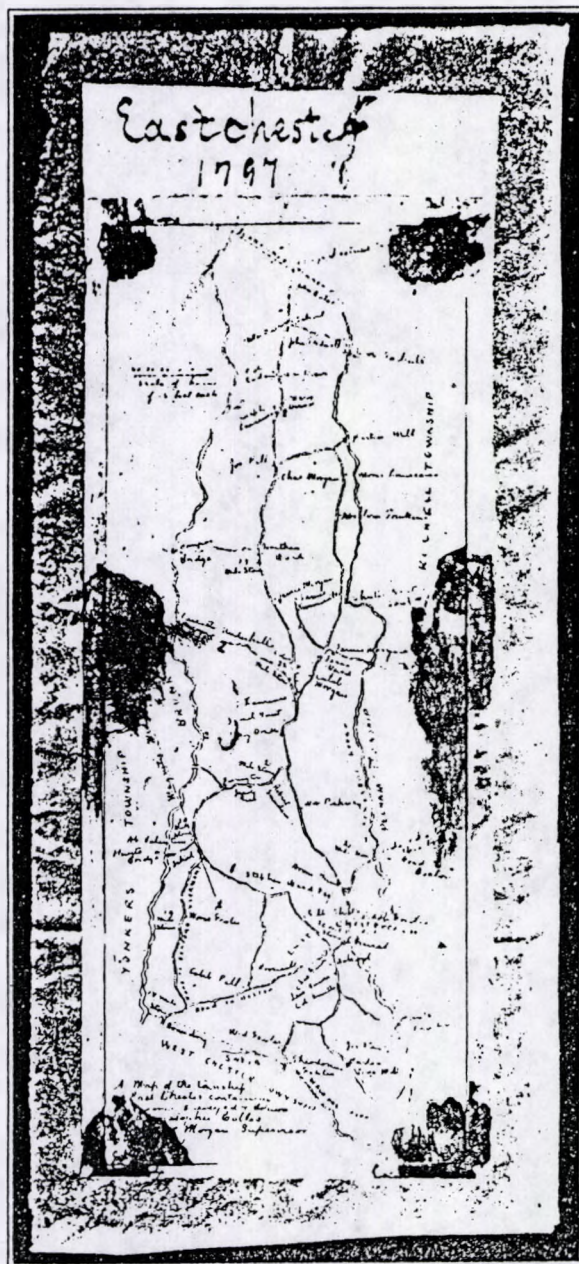
ANDREW HAMILTON
SUMMATION OF ZENGER'S CASE 1734

III. COLONISTS DEMAND FREEDOMS

In 1693, Governor Fletcher, who ruled the colony of New York by Royal decree, passed "An Act for Settling A Minister and Raising a Maintenance for Them In the City of New York, Counties of Richmond, Westchester, and Queens." This document began, " Where as Profaneness and Licentiousness hath of late over spread this Province for want of a settled ministry throughout the same: To the end that the same may be removed, and ordinances of God duly adminstered..."⁴ Fletcher ordered that Anglican ministers take over all religious services and that they be supported by each community.

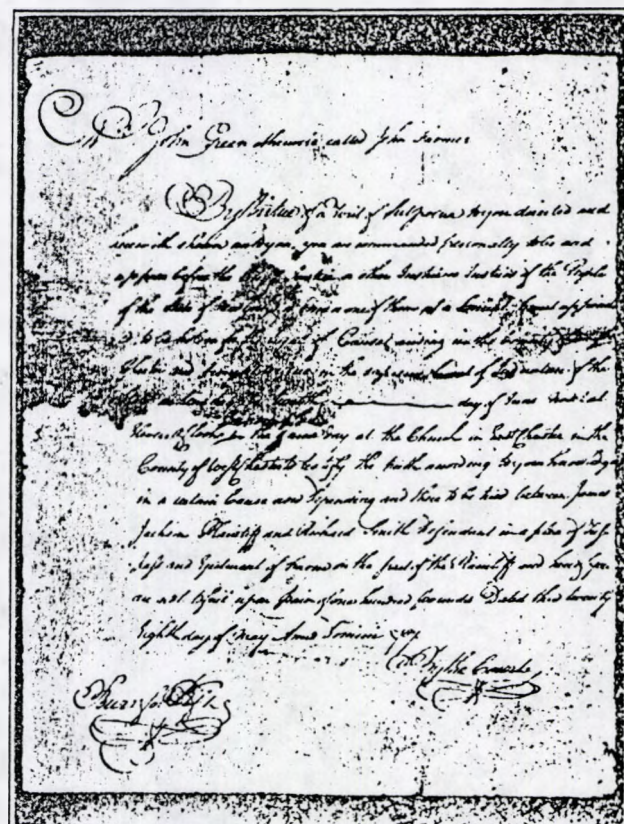
At that time, there was only one Anglican church in the whole province of New York and only one Anglican representative in the Assembly. Naturally the stubbornly independent colonists, many who fled religious persecution in Europe, were enraged by this invasion of freedom. In Long Island, there were riots and bloodshed.

The situation in Eastchester is best described by the Reverend Bartow, the Anglican minister appointed to preach at Saint Paul's.

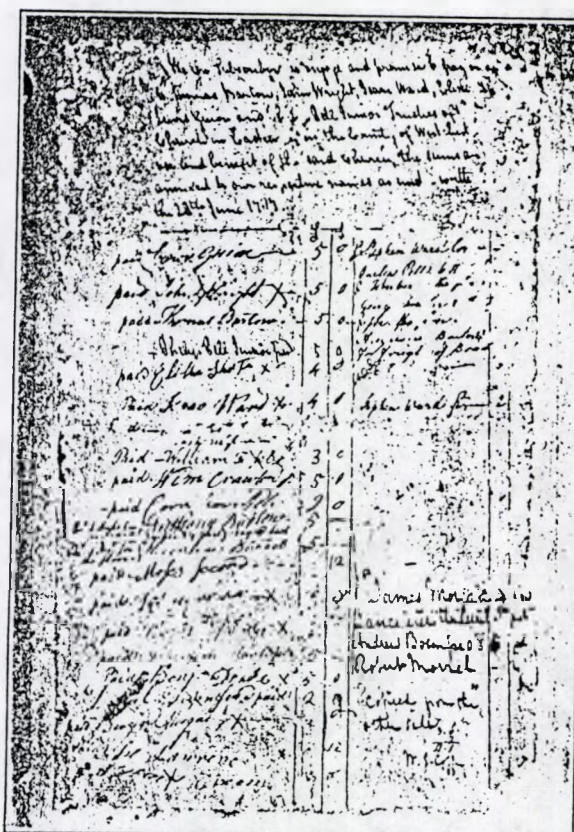


EASTCHESTER IN 1797

Photographic reproduction of original surveyor's map.
Black spots are discolorations caused by ageing of paper



COURT ORDER ISSUED BY AARON BURR
Note his signature in lower left-hand corner



PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRODUCTION OF FINANCIAL
SUBSCRIPTIONS TO CHURCH—JUNE, 1787

" My Lord Cornbury requested me to go and preach at Eastchester; accordingly I went, (though some there had give out threatening words, should I dare to come,) but tho I was there very early, and the people had notice of my coming , their Presbyterian minister, Mr. Morgan, had begun service in the meeting-house, to which I went straight way and continued the whole time of service without interruption, and in the afternoon I was permitted to perform the Church of England service; Mr, Morgan being present, and neither he nor the people seemed to be dissatisfied, and after some time of preaching there afterwards , they desired me to come oftener; and I concluded to minister there once a month, which now I have done for about three years." ⁵

Mr. Bartow, obviously a diplomatic and gentle persuader, wrote to his superiors in 1714, that his parish was now " so well satisfied with the liturgy and doctrines of the church that they forsook their minister and have ever since professed themselves members of the Church of England. " ⁶

The next Anglican minister sent to Eastchester was a Mr. Standard who wrote to his superiors that originally those families in Westchester County , "well-affected to the Church

of England" were not more than three or four, but that since Governor Fletcher's decree as many as one hundred attended the services on a summer afternoon in East and Westchester. He conceded however, that the population of the area was about 6,000 . Standard describes the people of Eastchester as, " New England Independents, who were in love with extemporary prayers and who remain so in some degree after they are reconciled to our church, so that the chief hope of making proselytes, lies amongst the younger sort..."

" Their employment is husbandry, even innkeepers, shopkeepers, smiths and shoemakers not excepted, so that we pray, pay and wait too, for everything done in this country," the British minister continues.

In the same letter, he explains that since there was no other building to meet in at Eastchester, the people demanded the right to use the church they themselves built and paid taxes to maintain. "But I being legally presented and inducted, as was likewise my predecessor, I laid claim to it as my own proper right, exclusive of them, and so kept them out of it for a time, but they but rarely meet in it , and threatening a lawsuit, I permitted them to do as they had done in my predecessor's time, being somewhat at a loss how to behave in that affair ... "

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The people of Eastchester were not only legally denied the right to practice their own religion but also the right to public assembly in the meeting house they had built.

Mr . Standard, inspite of his early somewhat derogatory remarks about the uncivilized lifestyle in Westchester county, stayed in the area for thirty-three years as rector of Saint Paul's. He was the donor, in 1758, of the bell, cast in the same foundry as the Liberty Bell and its "twin" , which still hangs in the belfry. This was his gift to the parish at the close of his service there.

The most famous episode concerning the violation of rights American's now hold as basic to our citizenship began with the "Great Election of 1733", which occurred on the Village Green in Eastchester.

In 1732, Governor William Cosby arrived in New York, a year after being appointed royal governor of the colony. He was widely known as a corrupt and greedy man and while he dallied in England, the acting Governor had been a colonist named Rip Van Dam . Cosby arrived and immediately claimed half the salary paid to Van Dam for his year of work. Van Dam took it to court and the claim was ruled unlawful by Lewis Morris, Chief Justice of the colony and a major landowner in Westchester and New Jersey.

Cosby retaliated by removing Morris from the bench and advancing instead James De Lancy, a rich leader of the Tory interest, without consent and approval of the council. This incident prompted the first two-party election in the colonies.

Morris, enraged by the injustice, organized an opposition party among the colonists and ran himself for Assemblyman of White Plains.

" This marks the first time in colonial history that a royal governor was openly opposed by an organized political group." ⁸ Morris and his "People's Party" contested Cosby's selection of Forster, a puppet known to be in the Governor's debt.

Ever corrupt, Governor Cosby did his best to rig the election. First he appointed, contrary to the law, a non-resident as High Sheriff who tacked a notice on the door of Eastchester Church (as Saint Paul's was known until 1795). The notice announced the election to take place on the Village Green in front of the church on October 29, 1733, but omitted the time of day.

Morris's backers were alert to the trick and kept watch in the green from midnight of the day before.

" At sunrise Morris himself arrived preceded by two trumpets and three violins and free holders bearing a

banner inscribed in letters of gold - on one side
KING GEORGE, and on the other, LIBERTY AND LAW. " ⁹

Three hundred horsemen gathered behind Morris that day, having made the difficult journey from all parts of the county. De Lancey arrived with Forster and one hundred and seventy followers and the election was presided over by Governor Cosby's High Sheriff.

Thirty-eight Quakers, backers of Morris, were denied the right to vote because they refused to swear on the bible that they were property-owners and thus eligible to vote. This was a breach of justice since according to English law Quakers were allowed to affirm in lieu of swearing on the bible. In spite of all the illegal attempts to throw the election, Morris and the people of Westchester won.

Morris and several other wealthy men set up a rival newspaper to the Province's only newspaper controlled by the Cosby faction. They hired John Peter Zenger as editor and a week after the election printed a daring report on the injustices which took place. The " People's Party " continued to air their grievances through Zenger's paper until Governor Cosby could no longer tolerate it.

Cosby first ordered copies of the paper burned by the

public hangman. Later Cosby had John Zenger arrested on a charge of seditious libel for his report of the "Great Election of 1733", contempt of his Majesty's appointed officials being a dangerous crime.

From Philadelphia, one of the colonies' most famous lawyers, Andrew Hamilton, agreed to plead Zenger's case. He tried to prove not whether Zenger had actually written the offending material, but whether he had the right to print what was "notoriously true."

The royal prosecutor retorted, "The greater appearance there is of truth in any malicious invective, so much the more provoking it is."¹⁰

The jury was quickly convinced that the freedom to print the truth should be theirs. As Hamilton pleaded, "It is not the cause of a poor printer, now of New York, alone, which you are trying. No! It is the best cause - it is the cause of liberty, Every man who prefers freedom to a life of slavery will bless and honor you as men who have baffled the attempt of tyranny."¹¹

The outcome of the trial was a stern warning to Cosby and his royal support men, De Lancey and Philpse. Cosby died in office in 1736 and J.P. Zenger was appointed Public Printer. Most important, a precedent was set in the

country's courts for freedom of press.

" No Taxation without Representation", was the next plea for freedom which resounded in the settlement of Eastchester as well as all the colonies after 1765, when the famous Stamp Act was passed. The settlement was in the process of building an ambitious new church .

The project was described by the Reverend Milner in a letter dated 1764. " The people of Eastchester have laid the foundation of a new church of stone, seventy-one feet by eighty-eight feet in the room of a small decayed wooden building erected in the infancy of the settlement . "

The people were farmers, often in debt, dependent on the weather. Reverend Standard had described the town as follows: " ... few here improve in their fortunes, the number of those that die in it exceeds not the number of those that run out of it . "

Gradually the parish giving what time and money it could spare , dug fieldstones from the ground, mixed sand and clamshell mortar from Eastchester Creek and cut the timber to build the floors. New taxes were a burden these people could not easily bear.

In 1767, the newly inducted Reverend Samuel Seabury assessed his parish and their efforts as follows : " At

Eastchester, ... the congregation is generally larger than at Westchester. The old Church in which they meet is as yet very cold. They have erected and just completed the roof of a large well-built stone church, on which they have expended they say, £700 currency; but their ability seems exhausted and I fear that I shall never see it finished."

Reverend Seabury quickly became a respected member of the community serving as a physician and starting a small school for boys as well as running his farm and ministering to the people. He felt strongly that the differences between the colonists and the British could be smoothed out peaceably and without threatening their allegiance to the King .

In 1770 he wrote, " The violent party heats which prevail in this colony ... engross at present the attention of the people. I am confident the behavior of the Church people ... has ... done her honor, and will be remembered many years in this country with approbation. "

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Seabury wrote a series of pamphlets in behalf of the Church in a dispute about a New York Anglican College to be supported by colonists. The dissenters demanded freedom of religion as part of the college charter . As he had taken the oath of a rector of the Church of England, he remained stoutly loyal to the King.

Seabury wrote a letter to the New York newspaper defending the King and country in its taxation of tea and other commodities, in which he tried to convince farmers that the English law was economically best for them. He argued that the acts passed by the Continental Congress were directed against the interests of the farmer to the gain of the merchants and said that, " War is sure destruction to the Farmer."

His letters, signed "A Westchester Farmer", became part of a war of pamphlets which preceded the actual battles of the Revolution. Seabury's letters provoked a brilliant rebuttal by Alexander Hamilton, still a schoolboy and the farmers of Westchester were swayed back and forth by the anonymous debates..

The congregation at Eastchester was violently divided on this issue with names such as Isaac Wilkins, Jonathon Fowler, Judge Philip Pell, Charles Vincent and Lancaster Underhill signed to the Protest of April 13th, 1775 which renounced the Congress and others such as Stephen Ward and Joseph Drake selected to represent the County at the New York Congress .

In 1775, Reverend Seabury was removed from his home by Continental Soldiers and held prisoner for five weeks when they unceremoniously released him without charges. Back in Eastchester, he was persecuted by the Patriots as



THE RIGHT REVEREND SAMUEL SEABURY, LITHOGRAPH

a Tory . He wrote to England in 1777, " With regard to my own mission, I can only say it is utterly ruined. " Shortly afterwards he was forced to flee with his wife and six children to New York City, a Loyalist stronghold.

The Eastchester Church had been closed since the parish split apart over their political disputes. Reverend Seabury had insisted on saying prayers for King George III as part of the traditional Church of England ceremony. Patriot feelings ran high against the Church as a symbol of British rule.

St. Paul's Church was situated on the Boston Post Road, the only throughfare between Boston and New York. As a result, the Church was the site of many skirmishes. The bell, donated by the Reverend Standard, and bible were providently hidden, probably not to protect it from the British but as Otto Hufeland postulates, to prevent it from being made into cannon by the Continental Army.

In 1776, it was resolved: " Fishkill October 5, 1776 Resolved unanimously That his Excellency General Washington be requested and authorized to cause all Bells in the different churches and public edifices in the City of New York to be taken down ... that the fortunes of war may throw the same out of the hands of the enemy ."

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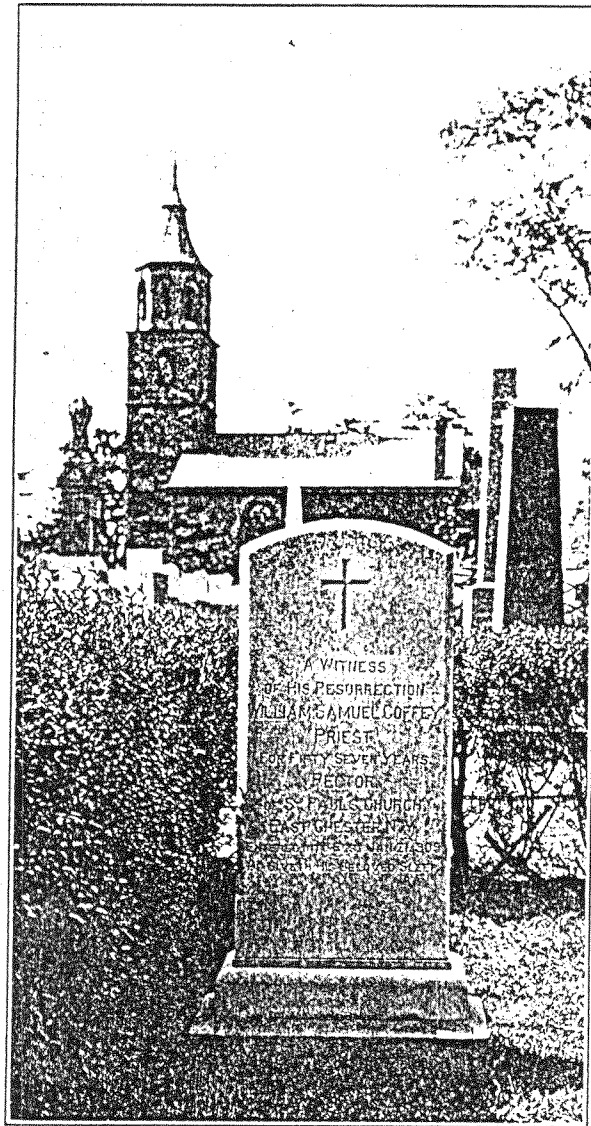
The bell, silver, prayerbook, and bible were buried in the Vincent place, the Vincent's being Tories.

In 1848, four tablets of Ten Commandments, Lord's Prayer, and the Apostle's Creed were presented by the family of St. Elizabeth Seton, the first American Saint. In 1852, the East wall of the church was removed and a Sacristy built on the rear of the church.

During the same year, the Reverend William Samuel Coffey took over as rector, a position he was to hold longer than any other rector of a single church in American history. Reverend Coffey was particularly interested in St. Paul's historical significance and did much important research on the subject.

The church was completely refurbished in 1853 with the box pews removed and replaced with benches, a cellar dug and a furnace installed. At some time around that period, the walls were frescoed and stenciled in Victorian style. Also an elaborate tin ceiling was placed over the barrel-vaulted plaster.

In Coffey's Commemorative Discourse of 1865, he tells of a painting executed and donated to the church by Francis William Edmonds in 1855. This "St. Paul's before Felix" was created to cover up the "ugly East window with its countless pines." This painting was rolled up during the restoration in the forties and left in the basement for thirty-five years until Mrs. Mann, a dealer from New York desired to buy it. It was sold for five hundred dollars in 1971.



THE GRAVE OF THE REV. MR. COFFEY

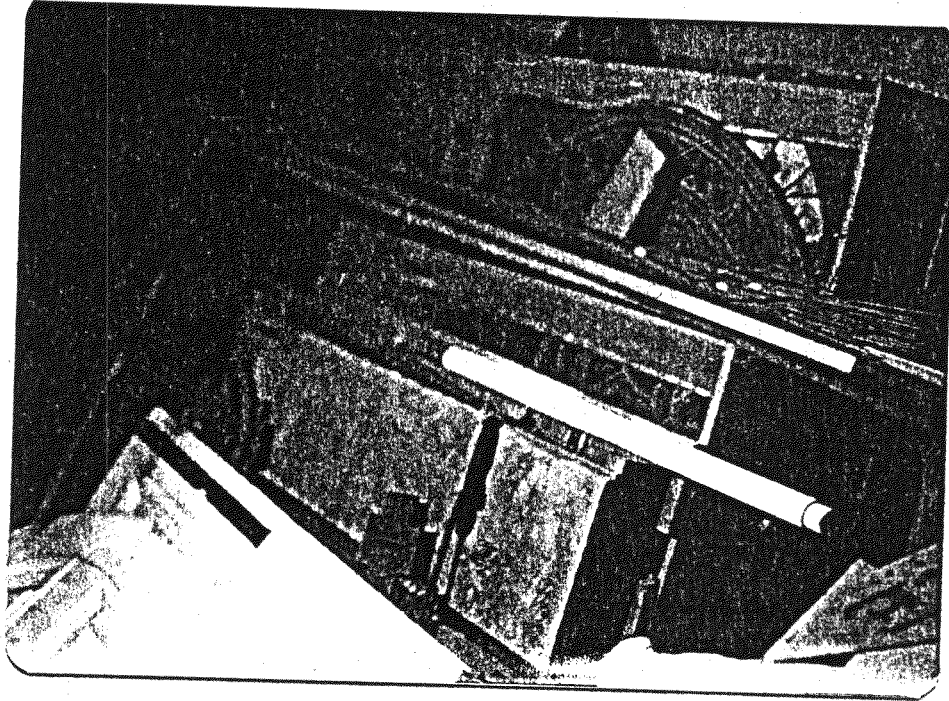
The neglected fate of the painting was shared by a series of stained glass windows put in about the turn of the century. In November, 1888, the Pinckney family commissioned some memorial windows to be made by Tiffany Glass Company. In the Church records exists a series of correspondence concerning the design of these windows between Reverend Coffey and the Tiffany artisans .

There was also a Drake family window made in 1887, by the G.&R. Lamb company and a Valentine family window from 1917. The most valuable window dated back to the early seventeenth century and a photo of that window is in the Church records.

A detailed description of these windows from a Church publication, The Pastoral of December 6, 1930, explains that the " fine specimens of glassmaker's art" must give place to authentic clear glass of the original church.

" Among these windows", it tells us, "on the north side of the nave, are representations of the Annunciation, the Visit of the Magi , the Boy Christ in the Temple, and Christ Rescuing St. Peter from the Waves. On the south side, is one depicting the Resurrection. In the vestibule beneath the tower is a remarkable specimen of early seventeenth century glass, from the tomb of John Pell at St. Nicholas Church, Bersingham, Norfolk, England presented by descendants of the Pell family."

These windows have been crated in the basement since the completion of restoration work in 1942. The descendants



PHOTOGRAPH OF CRATED WINDOWS PRESENTLY IN BASEMENT

of the Pell family and of the Drake family have repeatedly written to the church concerned about the windows for which a maintenance trust fund had been allotted . Cortland Pell Auser wrote in 1968, that he would like the windows replaced in the church, but the parish had no funds for the work at that time. These windows, like many other architectural details were removed from public view during the forties and have been virtually forgotten.

REVEREND W. HAROLD WEIGLE 1931

REVEREND W. HAROLD WEIGLE 1931

V. PROGRESS RESULTS IN THE DECLINE OF ST. PAUL'S

The story of the church from about 1900 on was one of almost continual decline with a few bursts of enthusiasm and renewed hope. The Boston Post Road had been from the outset one of the few major roads through the area and had carried a regular stagecoach as well as other travelers on route between New York and Boston. Years before Revolutionary times, there were several taverns surrounding the church. Guion's Tavern where Washington paid off his troops stood on the corner until the forties and Billy Crawford's Tavern, stood directly across the street from St. Paul's until razed in the 1960's. Eastchester was a good lodging place for weary travelers, a hearty days journey from Manhattan .

During the War of 1812, Commissary wagons were said to have cut across the Village Green, bisecting it and leaving the driveway beside the Church today. At that time with the harbors besieged by the British fleet, busy overland traffic made the Boston Post Road a major carriageway.

By the 1850's, an organization of New York City tradesmen called the Industrial Home Association #1 purchased a tract of land in Eastchester and developed it into a suburban town they named Mt. Vernon. This was their effort to break the bondage to Manhattan landlords, a way for blue collar workers to own their own homes by pooling their resources.

At that time, the Boston Post Road still rendered St. Paul's on the main route to town. " The road then went to the Eastchester Church and the Fay House, once Billy Crawford's Tavern on the Boston Post Road ... It was the main road from Yonkers and all the business from the western slope of Yonkers hill passed over it to the Village of Eastchester, at that time a rather important place with its two churches, schoolhouse, and all the country stores in between." ¹⁹

But by 1900, many other settlements had built up around the original Mt. Vernon and the modes of transportation had changed. Instead of owning horses and carriages, the middle classes in the crowded neighborhoods of Mt. Vernon depended on the public transportation. There was at the time an excellent series of trolleys and trains which crisscrossed the county. In an article found in the church records and dated 1899 (?) this process is described as follows:

" In the first half of the present century the church was comparatively prosperous, and was in fair condition when the present rector, the Reverend William S. Coffey took charge in February 1852. In the early years of his rectorate the church advanced rapidly, the building was enlarged and several endowments were secured. Unfortunately for the continued success of the parish, the town of Eastchester has been left behind in the march of temporal progress. The church was easily reached at a time when everybody in the neighborhood rode in carriages, but now that the steam

railroad and the trolley car have taken the place of private conveyances to a great extent, the church is accessible only to those who live in its immediate vicinity. There is no railroad to Eastchester and the nearest trolley line lands one but a full half-mile away from the church. Mt. Vernon, a short distance away, has grown to be a small city and has attracted by its conveniences some of the people who were formerly residents of Eastchester, so that Old St. Paul's has seen its parishioners going away from it and has not yet seen others come into take their places ... "

By the mid-nineteen twenties the automobile began to change the neighborhoods once more. A church pamphlet, The Story of a Living Shrine, circa 1927 reports:

" The area immediately around St. Paul's has only recently found itself convenient to transportation and consequent community growth... Serving many who find their livelihood in the nearby factories and industrial plants..."

At that time the old carriage shed was converted into a Parish Hall for Community meetings and youth clubs. But by 1929 when Reverend Wiegler took over, the parish had dwindled once more and he preached the first Sunday to five women.

" The Church was ill-kept, with cobwebs everywhere. Priceless prints and pictures hanging in the vesting room were dropping to the floor out of their frames. A large memorial tablet had fallen from the wall, badly damaging

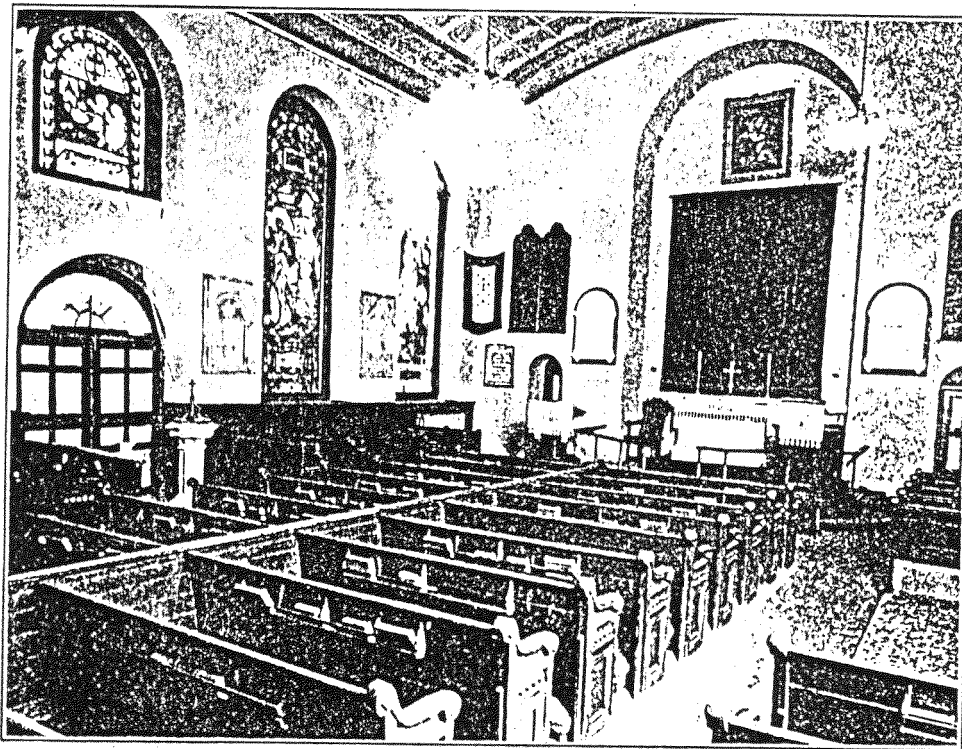
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two pews, and still lay where it had fallen"

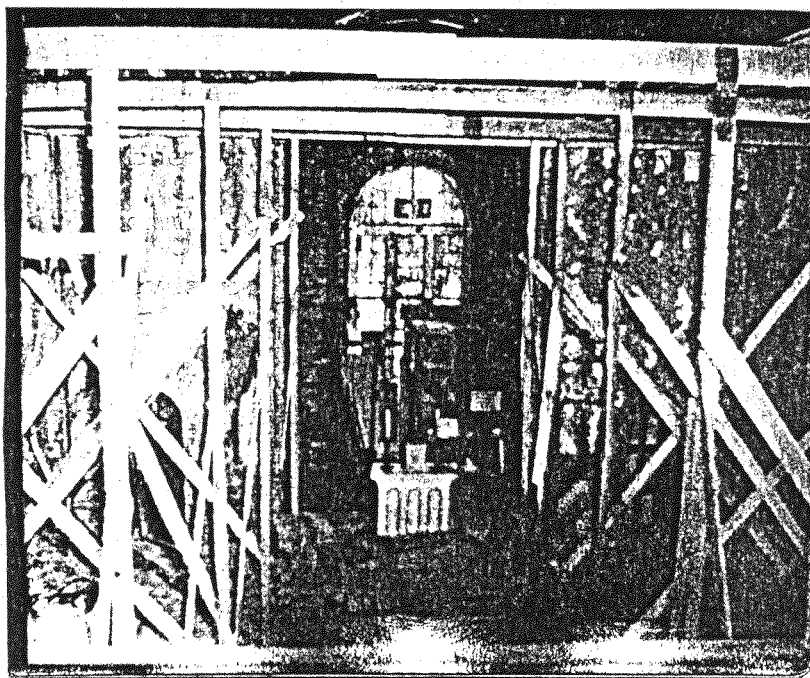
Not more than two years later on June 15, 1931, Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke to 7,500 at St. Paul's in the first Descendant's Day Celebration. Roosevelt, whose ancestor, Jacobus Roosevelt was a St. Paul's vestryman for four years, said on that occasion , " St. Paul's stands as an important symbol not alone for Eastchester but for the whole country. I hope to see it established as a national shrine."

Justice Samuel Seabury, great grandson of the Reverend Seabury also spoke that day. Evidently, Mr. Weigle accomplished an awesome task of contacting any descendents of original parishioners who might have been interested in aiding the church. He organized a committee of descendents to initiate restoration work including familar names such as Stephen Pell, Sylvester Ward, Hon. William S. Coffey(son of the late Rev.), William Bolton, a descendent of the Roosevelt family and one of the Underhill family. Many of the original families paid to restore their family box pews as they had been when first complete in 1788. \$ 42,000 was raised by popular subscription through a committee headed by Sara Delano Roosevelt, F.D.R.'s mother.

The firm of Perry, Shaw , and Hepburn, known for their restoration work at Williamsburg were retained to design the restoration process. From a paper in the Church records which delineated the changes proposed, the scope of work planned was revealed as follows:



INTERIOR OF THE CHURCH PRIOR TO RESTORATION



INTERIOR DURING RESTORATION INDICATING NATURE
OF RESTORATION

" Removal of Plaster Walls for waterproofing...
Removal of present hung tin ceiling which is a modern tin
contraption to be replaced with metal furring lath and plaster.
Install new plaster ceiling under balcony... Removal of
present pews ... Remove present floor to be replaced on under
flooring ... Twenty-six box pews constructed ..."

A new organ was listed to be " installed in old mahogany
case". The office was converted into a chancel. The
restoration committee under the direction of architect,
Thomas Mott Shaw, virtually destroyed all elements of the
church that did not conform to their image of the church as
completed in 1788.. Their decisions took arbitrary forms.

" Strangely, this restoration of scarcely thirty years
ago cut through the east wall to create a chancel, which
had not been in the original building. Fortunately the
" restoration" committee did not replace the organ as planned,
for this is believed to be the oldest working organ in the
N.Y. area."
22

The theory prevalent in restoration at that time was
to choose a time theme and to restore everything to match that
theme regardless of the valuable elements destroyed in the
process. Today the emphasis would be on preservation rather
than restoration, carefully preserving the evidence of all
the changing periods of history. It is dangerous to favor

one historic style and to destroy another which later may be equally valuable. The work done in efforts such as Williamsburg and St. Paul's of that period tended to create Disney sets that never could have been quite real, rather than to allow living history to tell its myriad tales.

In 1943, the Church received its status as a National Historic Site, but this designation did not include any kind of funding or aid from the government. Reverend Wiegles dreams far exceeded just the immediate restoration of the Church. He encouraged a prestigious group of newspaper editors and publishers including, Sulzberger of the N.Y. Times, Howard Davis of the Herald Tribune, Ed Friendly of the N.Y. Sun, Adolph Ochs, N.Y. Times and others less familiar, to start a society for the Bill of Rights and to adopt St. Paul's as the shrine to the freedom of the press. There was also a John Peter Zenger Memorial Committee determined to erect a memorial to Zenger. Their plan was to build a replica of the old wooden church on which was nailed the notices for the Election of 1733.

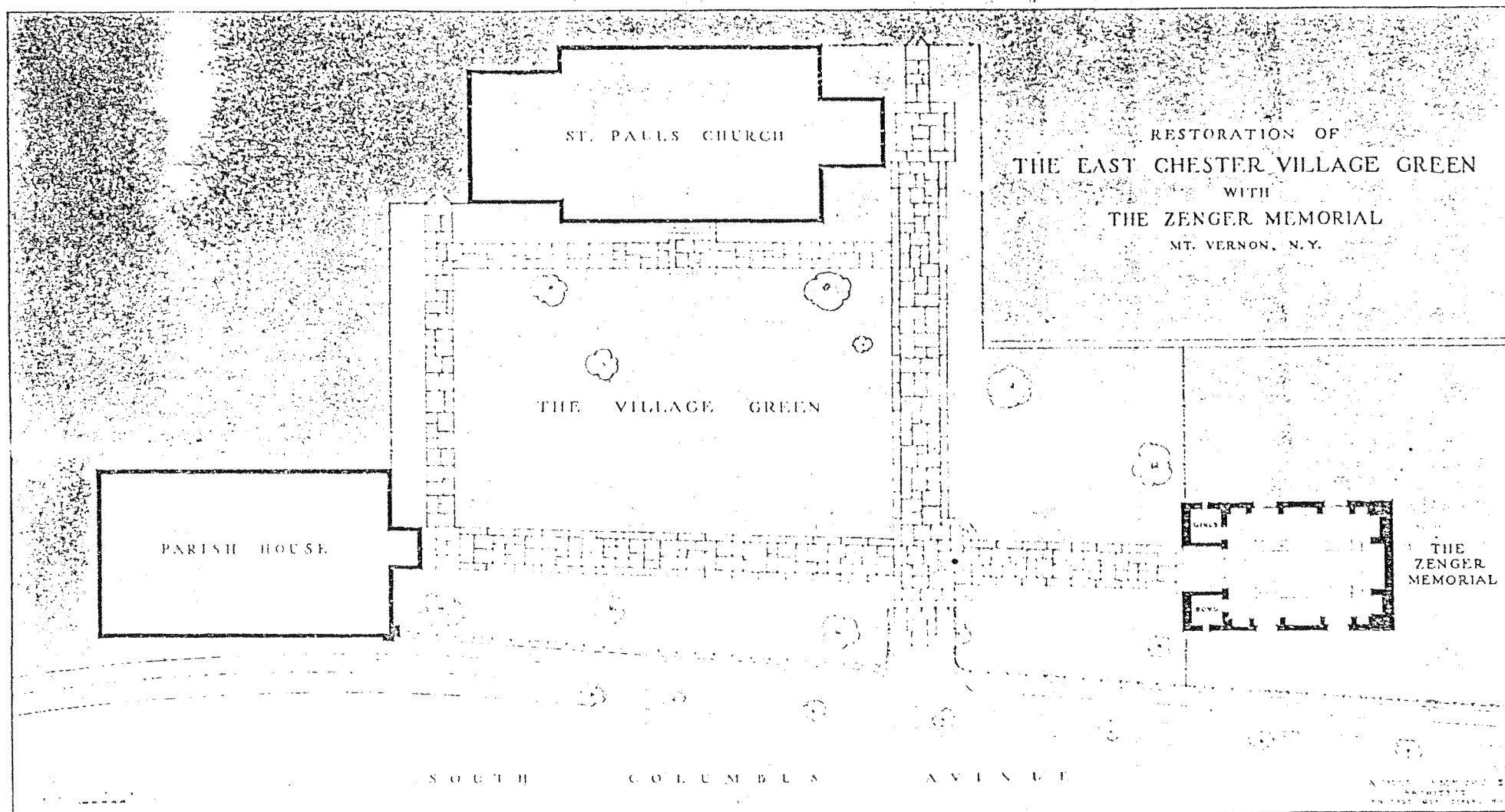
Money for this effort was collected from the press of the nation until complications arose with the Episcopal Diocese. A letter from Arthur Hays Sulzberger, publisher of the N.Y. Times, to Bishop Gilbert, representing the Diocese states as follows:

" As trustees, however, we have been concerned about the fact that the grounds at St. Paul's have been allowed to



SAINT PAUL'S CHURCH AND THE ZENGER MEMORIAL
THE EASTCHESTER VILLAGE GREEN

PERSPECTIVE RENDERING BY AYMAR EMBURY II, ARCHITECT FOR THE PETER ZENGER MEMORIAL



ORIGINAL PLAN BY AYMAR EMBURY II, ARCHITECT FOR THE PETER ZENGER MEMORIAL

fall into a state of bad repair and we are seeking some assurance that , should we build a memorial, the same would not happen to it. " ²³

The Zenger committee offered to repair the grounds, fence it and provide the memorial museum if the church would agree to spend an estimated \$ 5,000 per year for maintenance. The diocese refused to make such a promise and " the committee reluctantly established a Zenger Memorial in Federal Hall, at Wall and Nassau Streets, New York City." ²⁴

Finally in 1949 after twenty years of struggling to make St. Paul's a renown landmark, Reverend Wiegler retired and was succeeded by Reverend Gordon Graham. Graham's parish report in February 1950 describes the familiar story of a dwindling parish.

" The general trend in the members of the congregation in the last few years has been downward, due to the location of the Church in an industrial zone, poor transportation, people moving away. It does not look as if the future will bring any considerable increase. There is no new housing being built in the immediate area..... the people might be called middle class and work at white collar jobs. There are no rich among them.... "

1965 marked the Bi-Centennial of the original construction of St. Paul's. It was the scene of a volunteer clean-up by Scout

troops and other local youths of the dilapidated cemetery described in a local newspaper article:

" Once a Landmark in a rural community, St. Paul's now stands forlornly in the shadows of a heavily industrialized section. It's congregation has dwindled to a handful of parishioners and its status is that of a mission parish. The graveyard where early settlers are buried is often desecrated with beer cans and other debris left by the homeless men attracted to the area by Salvation Army headquarters nearby. "

25

Over the past twenty years many community members have adopted St. Paul's even though they were not members of the parish. The Society for the Preservation of the Bill of Rights was reincorporated to collect funds for Church maintenance and repair. It was through their efforts that the stairs to the Steeple were replaced and the Parish Hall refurbished. The Girl Scouts of America donated money to maintain the graveyard.

Unfortunately the various interested organizations are not united under any single leader, nor are they related to the actual parish itself. The Episcopal Diocese has indicated that it would favor turning the Church over to another organization which could maintain it. The small parish presently shares its Rector with several other churches. The people, who do not come from Mt. Vernon but rather from the Bronx travel by car so have

no real need to go to St. Paul's as opposed to other churches.

St. Paul's fortunes are ebbing and the church is endangered as an obsolete building in the wrong place and time.

THE BEST PROPHET OF THE FUTURE IS THE PAST

LORD BYRON

VI. PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

On September 24, 1975, Congressman Ottinger petitioned Congress for an act to include St. Paul's Church and the Village Green as property of the National Park Service. This proposal is now under Federal study.

Ideally the federal government could take possession of the property and perhaps carry out some of the dreams of the 1930's plan. Unfortunately many of the resources available to make St. Paul's a complex of historic interest such as the Billy Crawford's Tavern (originally planned as another restoration but demolished recently), are no longer in existence. However, the Church and the Village Green and the cemetery still do exist and will forever be of deep interest to the American people.

One possible idea for future tourists would be historic sermons on Sundays. A Rector dressed in the robes of the past could read the sermon, (currently in the Church's possession) that Revernd John Bartow spoke in 1722 when a rector of the parish, or some of Samuel Seabury's sermons. Reverend Coffey's Commemorative Speech of 1865 is rich with historic references and in an abbreviated form would be fascinating to citizens of all faiths.

If the Parish Hall were rendered a museum, the paintings removed during the restoration could be shown along with historic photographs and the stained glass windows. Most important a full time guide should be available to bring visitors through the museum, church and graveyard.

If the Federal Government rejects the bid to make St. Paul's a National Site, the hope for St. Paul's is dim. Perhaps a coalition of interest groups could again be formed as was done under Reverend Wiegler. These would then have to work under the leadership of a dedicated restoration professional. Funding would have to be actively sought from federal, state and local grants.

As Reverend Wiegler pleaded in his letter to the editor of the New York Times of 1965:

" If the British people could bequeath three acres of Runnymede to memorialize a martyred American President, does it not become the sacred duty of Americans to protect for all time a distinguished American Shrine - St. Paul's Church Eastchester? "

FOOTNOTES

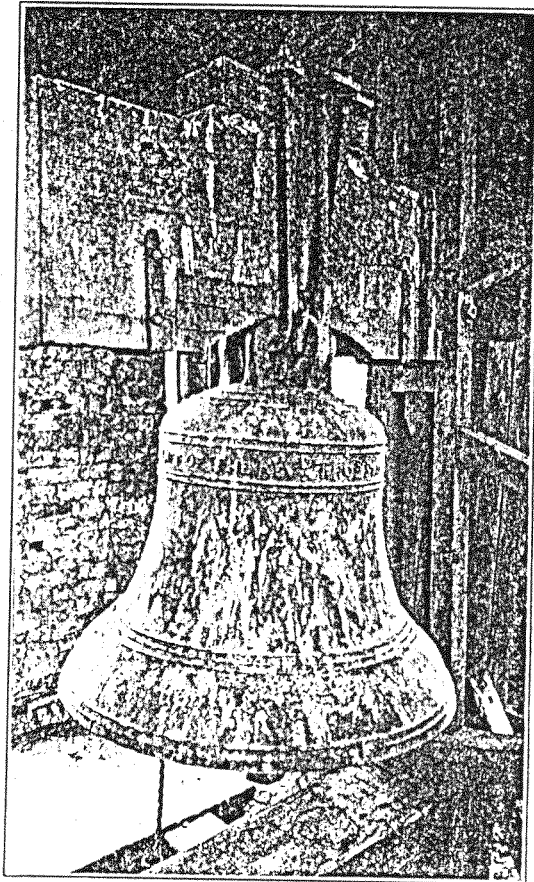
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THE BELL THAT CALLS THE PARISH TO
WORSHIP TO-DAY — PRESENTED IN 1758

Over the Boston Post road tramped troops from both sides of the conflict. All travelers were plagued by the lawless "cowboys" and "skinners" who prowled the area preying on Tory and Patriot alike.

On October 18, 1776, General Washington's troops retreated after a defeat on Long Island. General Kayphausen and his large force of Hessian mercenaries followed in hot pursuit. To save the Continental Army, Colonel Glover attempted to delay Kayphausen's troops. He marched his regiments across the Eastchester Village Green and into Pelham Manor where they practiced guerilla warfare, sniping at the marching Hessians while camouflaged among the woods. The Hessian troops continued to White Plains depositing their wounded and dying men at the unfinished Saint Paul's which became a makeshift hospital. The old wooden church still standing across from the new stone one was ripped apart and used for flooring and firewood.

Almost a year later, the Church, still used as a hospital was the site of a skirmish unfortunate for the Americans. General Putnam, learning that there were few left to guard the British hospital sent General Varnum to capture much coveted hospital supplies. The detachment successfully drove off the guard, but while some were gathering supplies, other soldiers were sent to investigate the area. In their absence, the British returned and drove off the invaders, killing several privates and a Captain.

The burial spot of the many Hessian mercenaries who died at the hospital was discovered in the early 1900's. They had apparently been buried in a sandpit left open from the construction of Saint Paul's to provide building sand. Brass buttons and buckles were revealed while digging a new grave in the 1900's and these were identified as belonging to these soldiers. Also to be seen at the Saint Paul's graveyard are numerous marked graves of American Revolutionary War soldiers.

After the fighting ceased and the Treaty of Peace, 1783, made the Union of colonies an independant nation at last, Eastchester was left to recover from the perils of war. Farms had been destroyed in battles and left untended by farmers called to fight . Their old church was totally torn apart and the new one battered by use as a hospital.

In 1784 the legislature passed a bill giving the American people the religious freedom they had long struggled for, by passing : " AN ACT TO ENABLE ALL RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS IN THE STATE TO APPOINT TRUSTEES WHICH SHALL BE A BODY CORPORATE FOR THE PURPOSE OF TAKING CARE OF THE TEMPORALITIES OF THEIR RESPECTIVE CONGREGATIONS ... "

17

Through this act the controlling cord to the Church of England was formally cut and the parish of Eastchester began the steps to becoming a recognized corporate entity.

The famous Samuel Seabury was at the same time being



THIS MARKS THE SITE
OF THE SAND PIT.
IN WHICH ARE BURIED
THOSE HESSIAN
SOLDIERS
WHO DIED IN THE
CHURCH
WHEN USED AS A
HOSPITAL 1776.
ERECTED BY BRONX
CHAPTER D.A.F.
1918

consecrated in Aberdeen, Scotland as the first Episcopal Bishop of the United States. He had been denied this appointment in England and forced to go to Scotland instead. The Prayer of Consecration in the American Book of Common Prayer was modeled after the Scottish rite as a concession to the Bishops who consecrated Seabury. Seabury took up his mission in New London, Connecticut.

St. Paul's Church was in 1787, being used during the week as an emergency Court House by the Supreme Court of the Judicature and other courts as it was the only public building available in the area. It was during this time that Aaron Burr practiced there and a summons signed by him is in the possession of the Church.

In December, 1787, the congregation of Saint Paul's made the following agreement: "To erect and build a pulpit, reading desk and clerk's seat in the said church, according to the dimensions in the plan ... and the form of a pulpit in the church at Yonkers ..."

Pew sites were sold with the stipulation that each family must build his own pew within six months. A clergyman was engaged and services were resumed. A full decade had passed without church services and it was one hundred and forty years since Anne Hutchinson and her settlement had sought a haven there for religious freedom. At last, the liberties fought and prayed for on that site were realized.

IN ALL THE IMPROVEMENTS, MAY THIS EXPOSTULATION
GO DOWN THROUGH THE AGES. ----- MAY NOT THE
ORIGINAL DESIGN IN THIS BUILDING, DESTROY NOT
ITS IDENTITY _____

COMMEMORATIVE DISCOURSE - WILLIAM SAMUEL COFFEY
1865

IV . THE ARCHITECTURAL ASSETS OF SAINT PAUL'S

For over two hundred years the graceful lines of Saint Paul's Church have pleased the eyes of travelers on the busy thoroughfare which runs past it. The building is basically of the "Christopher Wren - James Gibbs" style with Dutch influence shown by the use of fieldstone and brick for details. This combined with the changing cupola, rebuilt three times, provide an eclectic, distinctly American look.

" Approaching St. Paul's Eastchester, one is impressed with the massive earth-toned form of the stone structure. There is no lightness about it, and it seems almost a part of the churchyard. Within the church, the emotions are transformed by the spatial effect created by high walls and simple but graceful barrel-vaultshaped plastered ceiling. All pews face the high pulpit , located midway between two windows. Thus, sitting in the church one's attention is caught by these strongly upward looking windows directing the eye toward the round head and sky. The window spaces are so large that this stone church is filled with light, trees, sky, and air."¹⁸

It was not until 1804 that the gallery of St. Paul's was complete and the following year the walls and ceiling were plastered for the first time . Alterations occurred

frequently over the years, each change reflecting the styles of the period and fortunes of the parish, but these were primarily interior modifications.

By 1817, the original pews were rearranged, the pulpit lectern was moved to the east end and a new alter made. At the same time, a second wooden cupola was constructed by Abijah Morgan using St. James Church at Hamilton Square in New York as a model.

Meanwhile history continued to be made at St. Paul's. A yellow fever epidemic in 1797 swept Philadelphia, then the capital city, and forced President John Adams to flee to Eastchester. He stayed with his daughter and son-in-law, Colonel W. S. Smith in their home, the same Vincent-Halsey House where twenty years earlier the St. Paul's bell had been hidden. For three months he conducted Presidential business from Eastchester and on Sunday's worshiped at St. Paul's.

In 1829, when John Quincy Adams was President, his son, George Washington Adams took a steamboat from Boston to visit his parents in Washington. Being in extreme mental duress, it is believed he jumped off the boat into the Long Island Sound and drowned.

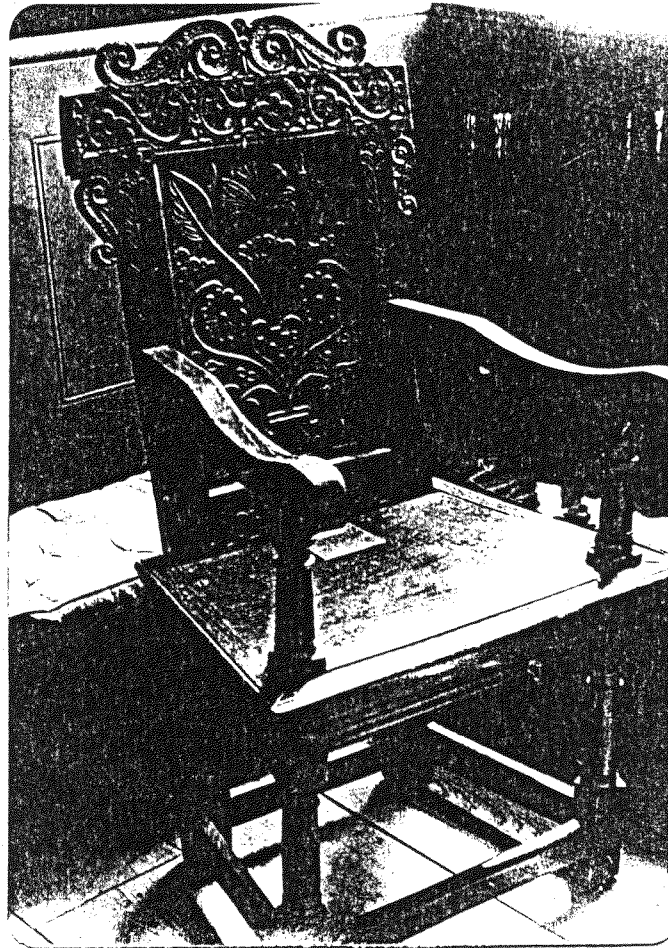
Six weeks later his body washed up in Eastchester Bay and was discovered by the Vicar of St. Paul's. He was interred at St. Paul's until retrieved by his family. As a gift of thanks for their aid, Mrs. J. Q. Adams donated a

silver chalice to the parish. This remains one of the Church's special possessions.

Other valuable donations make St. Paul's a rich repository of historic treasures. In 1833, George Rapelye , whose family had long been associated with the church donated a shed, chandelier and the Erben organ. The shed later became the Parish Hall and the chandelier was stolen during the Civil War, but the organ remains in use today as one of the nation's oldest. The organ was purchased from the celebrated New York City organ builder , Henry Erben, for eight hundred dollars. Very few of the beautifully hand-crafted Erben organs still exist today and St. Paul's organ has become a priceless and irreplaceable antique.

The Reverend Robert Bolton, another of St. Paul's memorable clergymen, took over the parish in 1837. He is remembered for his excellent History of Westchester County which has become the basis of most historical study of the county today.

His most visible contribution to the church was the old Bishop's chair, an antique "find" of his own day. While traveling in England, the story goes, Bolton discovered a woman scrubbing laundry with her tub on an intriguing old chair. Recognizing it as an antique, he bought it from her and had his sons fix and refinish it. This Bishop's chair with the date 1639 carved on the back was donated by the Bolton family to St. Paul's in 1910 and remains there for visitors to view today.



BISHOP'S CHAIR DATED 1679 ONE OF THE MANY
TREASURES OF THE CHURCH