

THE TALL PINES reaching into the bleak sky above the church sighed softly and creaked in the wind. Lost in thought and planning, the stalwart men in the churchyard paid little attention to the caprices of the weather.

It was late in 1929 and a trio from just down the road in Berlin seemed to be the only ones in Worcester Parish who would take the care to think about Old St Martin's and take any steps to see that this hallowed fane be preserved. One of the trio had called the attention of the others to the need for repairing the roof, and indeed since the stalwart brick walls were raised twenty years before the Revolution, to the bleak 1929 day, these three seem to be the only ones of the neighborhood's people who felt that this reverent work of historical and ecclesiastical sentiment be preserved.

This effort was the first by any other local people for the preservation of St. Martin's as far as is known. Two of the original trio are still active in Berlin church life.

Numerous articles in church periodicals, newspapers and state magazines have outlined the history of St. Martin's in recent years, but few of these have had access to some of the early records of the old church itself. This chronicle attempts to assimilate all the available information into one concise volume.

Earliest records kept of the evolution of Old St. Martin's from the Church of England as the Church was established in the colony indicate that it was 1692 when the Parish of Snow Hill—later to be known as All Hallows—was established. That parish came when the Church of England was established and sub-divided into thirteen Eastern Shore parishes, one of them lying between the Pocomoke River and the Atlantic Ocean.

All Hallows Parish, by which name it came to be

known by that time, had its first church built sometime between 1697 and 1700, as nearly as can be determined. Certainly a church or chapel had been created in the St. Martin's area by 1703, because the first reference we have in any chronicle is the will of one Roger Thomas, dated June 26 1703: "I desire that my body may be burried in the Church Yard at St. Martin's."

This one sentence, appearing in the Somerset County Registry of Wills and also in the Worcester County Registry of Wills, is concrete evidence on which is based the origin of the first St. Martin's, another structure entirely from the venerable colonial brick church of today.

Little is actually known of this first structure. It can only be presumed, from early Worcester Parish registers, that the building was built of wood, because it was sold at a public sale on July 19, 1762, to George Cochran and it is said that he intended to use it as a barn. Cochran gave fourteen pounds one shilling for the building. The private pews were excepted from the sale.

The "Seaside" portion of Somerset County—as the area of today's Worcester was known then—was growing in the middle eighteenth century and in 1742 Worcester was carved out of Somerset. It comprised the romantic-sounding Borgerternorton, Mattapony, and Buckingham Hundreds, from the Indian River on the north to the Virginia line on the south, between the Pocomoke River and the Atlantic Ocean. The entire half-century-old All Hallows Parish now fell into Worcester County.

Two years later, this "Chapel-of-Ease" at St. Martin's had grown. It lay midway between the Eastern

Shore of Virginia—whose lush lands attracted the Old World's planters and farmers and blacksmiths and tradesmen of all kinds—and the already heavily-populated north, around New Castle and Philadelphia. It was more than thirty miles from All Hallows Church in Snow Hill to the upper reaches of the parish in what is now Sussex County, Delaware.

The establishment of Worcester Parish in 1744 from All Hallows comprised the area on the southern boundary "beginning at the mouth of Newport Creek running out of the sea and with the said creek at a branch thereof to the main road at a place called Buckingham thence down the main road which leads to Snow Hill a quarter of a mile to a main road between Mrs. Mary Hampton and Brickus Townsend and thence with the Pocomoke River."

A strange stipulation lay incumbent on Worcester Parish then, because the division could not be made until after the death or removal of the Reverend Patrick Glasgow, rector of All Hallows Parish. Not until March, 1753—nine years later—did he die.

Meanwhile, the Assembly in the May-June session of 1748, had directed that upon the action of the division the new parish be "reimbursed in the matter of certain funds which . . . shall be applied . . . toward erecting and building a Parish Church, or church and chapel, in the new parish of Worcester in such place as . . . shall seem most proper and convenient."

Within a month after the Reverend Glasgow's death, Worcester Parish was created.

BUILDING OF THE CHURCH

Earliest vestrymen on record were: "John Purnal, Jos. Dereckson, Robt. Kirby, Danl. Tingle, Walter Purnal, and Amb. White." Their first official act of record—April 23, 1753—attested to their disbelief of transubstantiation.

.. From the first entry in the vestry book in April 1753, the May meeting is touched on briefly, then on September 4, 1753, "The Vestre maid choice of the place to Build the Church whare the Chapell now stands in Worcester Parish," the first mention of the planned construction of the present St. Martin's. The Chapell" of course is the wooden structure, the first St. Martin's, which was sold to George Cochran some years later.

Vestryman Robert Kirby apparently was the architect for the new St. Martin's, because the articles of agreement (mentioned further on herein) refer to "a plan that Mr. Robt.. Kirby drew."

A Chapel of Ease was apparently needed because of the long journeys by stage and horse in those days, for on June 9, 1755, the vestry met and agreed to build a Chapel at Black Foot Town—now Dagsboro, Delaware—on the south side of Pepper's Creek. Two acres of land were purchased in July and the work apparently proceeded.

The present St. Martin's Church got further consideration on July 6, 1756, when two acres of land were bought of James Mumford "for to build a new church on." Mumford was paid five pounds for the land. A few days later—July 10—the vestry agreed with James Johnson to build a church "forty foure foot square whare the old Chapel stands, for eighty five thousand three hundred pound Tob:c."

So that both parties would know what was expected of the other, Marmaduke Handfield was appointed to draw up the following Articles of Agreement, setting forth the manner in which the church was to be built and how the contractor was to go about it:

"ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE VESTRY OF WORCESTER PARISH AND JAMES JOHNSON"

Maryland Hall of Records — Provincial Court Judgements, Liber DD No. 2, Folio 111, 1761-1762

Articles of Agreement made indented and concluded on Between the Vestry of Worcester Parish in the County of Worcester and their succesors of the one part and James Johnson of the same County of the other part. Witnesseth that whereas the said James Johnson for the consideration hereafter mentioned have agreed and undertaken to and with the said Vestry and their Succesors to build a Church in the said Parish on a piece of ground bought of James Mumford known by the name of St. Martin's Chappel. the dimensions are as follows: the Body of the Church to be forty four feet square out to out, Brick wall twenty feet above the surface of the Earth, too feet below four Brick thick which from the foundation to the surface, three Brick thick from the surface to the Water Table, two and a half Brick thick afterwards to the top a Door in each side of the Church and one at the West end, seven windows to the Church, the said doors and windows to be made according to a Plan that Mr. Robert Kirby drew. the windows to be glassed in with Single Crown or good northward Glass - to be raised with leds and Pulleys, folding doors, the same sort of work as Major John's Evan's door, the

plank to be quarter thick, a good large Stock Lock to the Front Doors barrs and two staples to each of the other Doors. the said Doors and Windows to be primed with Linseed Oil and Red Oker and to be done over a second time with a led Colour . . the frame of the Doors and wihdows to be made of the Heart of old Yellow Pine the Door cases to be turned off with Mouldings in a neat manner, the frame of the floor to be done in a strong workman like manner with good white oak. the alleys to be laid with well burned Bricks the floor of the pews to be laid with good five quartered floor with steps, rale and Banister. Canepy, Reading Desk, Vestry Pews, to be completed in a neat workman like manner and to be painted as the doors and windows. to lay a lintle & Girder for the Gallery five pair principal rafters twentynine feet long 18 by 7 at foot and 6 by 7 at top - and the roof to be according to the dimensions of the above said Plan, the Sd Roof to be lathed and covered with 2 feet Cypress Shingles Inch thick Cove Cornish and Berge Boards to the Sd Church all twice painted over with Train Oil & Red oaker. the Body and Sealing to be plaistered & white washed, the Said Johnston doth agree that all the above Sd works to be done in a neat good strong workman like manner and to be finished on or before the 7th day of September 1759 - in consideration whereof the Said Vestry for themselves and their succesors agrees to and with the said Johnston to give hime Eighty five thousand three hundred pounds Tob:co to be paid in manner and form following (that's to say' one third down one third at raising the other third at the Expiration of three years In Witness whereof the Vestry of the Parish of Worcester afore-said for themselves and their succesors and the said

James Johnton have hereunto Interchangeably set their hand and Seals the Eighth day of September - one thousand seven hundred and Fifty six

Sealed and Delivered on Presence of

Mr. Stanfield
Robt. Kirby

Jos Dirickson
Wm.. Dirickson
Zadock Purnell
Samuel Powell
Powell Pattey
James Johnson

Which being read and heard the Said Joseph Derickson Powell Patty Daniel Tingle and John Hudson by Charles Goldsborough their attorney aforsd pray leaves to Imparle there unto until next Court, and they have the Same day is given to the plaintiff also.

Which said next court to wit the 9th day of September come again the said parties Plaintiff and Defendants by their attorneys aforesaid and the Said defendants by their attorney pray further leave to Imparle there unto until next Court, and they have it and the same day is given the plaintiff also -"

The above is set down exactly as it appears in the original record, as to wording and spelling. Of necessity, it has been punctuated to make reading easier. Clerks and record keepers in those days apparently liked little use of periods and commas, for seldom do they appear.

But nothing was done about the actual building of the church for two years. The old records, full of ambiguous detail, tell of the completion first of the Chapel at Blackfoot Town, when on April 14, 1757, the vestry met at the new Chapell and laid off the pews. Thirty-six persons drew lots for pew unmbers.

On June 20 the vestry met at the new Chapell to receive it but it was not finished according to bargain until June 30, when the vestry received it and gave it the name of Prince George's Chapel.

Assignment and filling of the pews at Prince George's occupies several pages of the old vestry book and almost two years, for it was not until June 5, 1758 that the vestry came back to the St. Martin's building problem. They added ten feet to the church, making it forty-four by fifty-four feet, to cost an additional 18,000 pounds of tobacco. This made the total cost 103,300 pounds of the leaf, and it is pure assumption that it was worth in those days about three cents a pound, to bring the cost of St. Martin's to about \$3,000.

In mid-1759 events moved back to the new church's construction. The provincial Court Judgements in the Maryland Hall of Records at Annapolis have a firm statement to the effect that "the same Joseph Dirickson, Powell Patty, Daniel Tingle, and Josiah Mitchell further say that the church afsd. in the articles of agreement mentioned was raised the 30th day of December in the year seventeen hundred and fifty-eight at the county afsd. and not before."

However that may be, Josiah Mitchell was appointed "to by planks for to build the pews in ye new church," indicating the exterior was near completion. Planks for the pews cost 100 pounds of tobacco for 350 feet of plank, to be delivered at the church by the last day of September, 1759. On the 25th of that month, the vestry met in order to receive the church, but (like its predecessor Prince George's) it was not done according to bargain. Contractor Johnson was

instructed to paint it all over in a neat workmanlike manner, make the top of the reading desk six inches longer, make a seat for the clerk, and put three staples and a bar on the front door.

The vestry was to meet Johnson at Snow Hill on November 19 to officially receive the church and make the final payment but for some reason Johnson did not appear. They went to his house the next day and completed the transaction.

But even later, on October 7, 1760, Johnson still had not finished his work and upon mending "ye windows with good putty and upon ye Mr Johnson doing of ye aforesaid work the church is to be Rectd."

In November 1760 the pews were not completed, but the vestry laid out the pews beginning at the northwest corner "and so round ye church beginning with ye number of the dubbell pews. "Plank, hinges and nails had to be found to finish the pews and the gallery.

New Year's Day 1761 dawned and the vestry met to take their first choice of the pews, the remainder of the parishioners to have pews according to their "taxables." Apparently the vestry again was the controlling force, for any person moving out of the parish had no right to sell his pew. The vestry appointed a new pew-holder, or left it vacant.

Contractor Johnson appeared again briefly. The vestry, to his notion, did not fulfill its part of the bargain so he carried the matter into the courts. An attorney from "Lewes Townd" Charles Goldsbury, was retained by the vestry and when the case reached the Provincial Court at Annapolis in 1762, the court ruled for the vestry. What Mr. Johnson's complaint exactly

was, we do not know.

The pews were chosen and assigned before they were even built. On March 23, 1761 the vestry let out 31 pews to be built by the lowest bidder and to have planks, nails and hinges found by the vestry and one William Tunol undertook the same at 19 shillings, sixpence per pew and was to complete the job in five months from the date mentioned: August 23, 1761.

In July, 1761 the same William Tunol was to finish the chancel and the end galleries in the church and to make two tables and seats about the church in the most convenient places. This was to have been completed by the end of October, that year.

The vestry had reserved for themselves a pew which they numbered No. 0, but apparently it was needed for other parishioners, so it was relinquished with the right of the vestry to meet in it when they chose. Vestry meetings were regularly held at St. Martin's, and in this particular pew.

III

Events moved slowly in the old days and in meeting after meeting of the vestry no mention is made of the new church. The entire neighborhood was engaged in a lively tobacco trade, which probably took most of their time. However otherwise the old records may be vague and replete with antique spelling, they are full of refrains over and over again telling of the solemn qualifying of numerous tobacco inspectors for the two warehouses. The leaf was in overproduction in those years and inspectors had to see to it that only the best grades were sent abroad, otherwise economic disaster threatened.

When not appointing tobacco inspectors, the

vestry was busy taxing the "Batchellors," who numbered 21 in 1756 for instance and were not eligible for tax if they were under 25 and had estates of less than 100 pounds. These tax lists appear nearly as often as the tobacco appointees and the tax was in accord with an Act of Assembly in which the funds were needed for His Majesty's service

An entry on August 5, 1759 the vestry met with John Postley, one of the bachelors who attempted to prove, and "by legal testimony did prove that he was not of the age of twenty five years and obtained a certificate to ye sheriff." Thus he was tax-exempt.

Down the echoes of the year we can almost hear the first St. Martin's vestries subscribing to the many oaths they were obliged to take. One of these was their disbelief of transubstantiation. Briefly, this tenet—which generally has seldom been heard of since those long-gone times—was the denial of a belief which is still a basic doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church today. It is described as the actual changing of the bread into the body of Christ and the wine into the blood.

Another was the oath of abjuration required of all vestrymen, the old members periodically and the newly elected members upon taking office. The oath acknowledged and testified the vestry's loyalty to King George and the House of Hanover and abjured any allegiance to "ye pretender James."

Early vestrymen had little time for frivolity. In addition to their church duties, they had numerous civic activities, among them the appointment of tobacco inspectors for two warehouses, one at Baltimore Hundred where Millsboro, Delaware now stands; the other was at New Port. These men were important fi-

gures of the communities, for they graded and fixed the value of all tobacco in the section. Tobacco was of course the medium of exchange and the handling of it in this manner required men of ability and honesty. The duties and powers of the vestry almost equalled those of our Circuit Court of today. The vestry also levied taxes and collected them.

IV

The calling and appointment of the first rector for St. Martin's either did not deserve special mention in a previous month's meeting or its place of mention in the December 11 meeting was an afterthought: it appears to have been in different handwriting than the entry for that date. "Reverend Mr. Dingle came to Worcester Parish the 11th of November 1753."

Mr Dingle was not formally "inducted" as rector until 1759, and he died in 1763.

One of the most thorough and far-reaching articles ever to appear about Old St. Martin's was published in the Eastern Shore Churchman for January, 1925, written by "R.R.G." An excerpt from this publication on "Clergy of the Olden Time" is reprinted herewith:

During these same years we read of ministrations by the Rev. Matthias Harris, a Rev. Mr. Ross, and the Rev. Thomas Thorrnton, and it seems probable that the latter was actually a rector of the parish, since in 1758 he is included with the vestry in the official act of taxing the bachelors.

A brief chronology of rectors gives us: The Rev William Macclenachan followed Mr. Dingle. The former died in 1766 and like Mr. Dingle is buried in the church. The Rev. Hambolton Ball is mentioned in 1766 and the Rev John Patterson in 1772. In 1886

Miss Aralanta Robins reported that her father said The Rev Samuel Sloan was in the parish for one or two years after the death of Mr. Macclenachan; Rev. John Montgomery 1769; Rev. Mr. Patterson 1772. The Rev. John Bowie until 1776, who was sent to prison as a Royalist by the Whigs.

The war interrupted no services at St. Martin's but there was no settled minister until after 1783; the Rev. William Shelley officiated in 1790-91; John White 1792-93; Samuel Tingely 1798-99, the third clergyman of the parish to be buried in the church.

First confirmation service was on July 6, 1795, when the first of our bishops to be confirmed on American soil, the Rt. Rev. Thomas John Claggett, the first Bishop of Maryland, visited the church and gave his apostolic benediction to two candidates, Hilliary and Catherine Pitts.

During the first quarter of the nineteenth century the vestries of the parish wrestled with three distinct problems. First, the glebe rents were always sadly in arrears; second, the stipend of the rector and although currency replaced tobacco, subscriptions were so slow that it was sometime several years after a rector had left before he was paid. The stipend for the Rev. David Ball, who began in 1806, must have been trifling, for 176 subscribers gave only \$357.

The only solution seemed to be the division of clerical support between two parishes but with one minister. In 1810 an arrangement was made with the Rev. Hamilton Ball to share his services with "St. James Chapel." An agreement was made with the mother church of All Hallows in 1817 to support one clergyman between them. It lasted for more than 30

years. The Rev. Purnell F Smith was the first dual rector.

When he resigned in 1819, the Rev. Mr. Indah was called and in 1824 he was succeeded by the Rev. Samuel C. Stratton. During his rectorship, St. Martin's was finally abandoned and a new church, St. Paul's was built in Berlin.

V

The passing of St. Martin's was the third and most disheartening of the vestry's cares. Even in 1806 the vestry had begun to meet in Berlin rather than at the church. A rector of the forties, the Rev. James Young, records that "the effect of irregular services began to be seen and felt and the congregations were growing thin. Most of them lived from six to twelve miles south and east of the church."

The Methodists were in full vigor about this time and seized this opportunity to spirit away a large number of St. Martin's people. The church itself began to suffer abuse, first in use as a barn. It deteriorated gradually but in 1844 was partially repaired by local people, for use in summer and was set aside for the worship of Almighty God by the Rt. Rev. Bishop W. Rollinson Whittingham.

Today's St. Martin's is as solid as it ever was, but its sturdy walls have seen all manner of vandalism. Many people thought of forming an association for the purpose of restoring the ancient edifice. Let us hope this may be accomplished so that one of the most interesting colonial churches of Maryland may once again be a place of pride in which the parish has never failed to believe.

Compiled by William A. Dryden and William P. Phillips

Members of St. Paul's Episcopal Church

Berlin, Maryland