

ALL SAINTS' EPISCOPAL CHURCH
SCOTCH PLAINS, N. J.
100th ANNIVERSARY
1873-1973

AN HISTORICAL SKETCH

"AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING"

It was eight years after the ending of the Civil War and the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, that All Saints' Protestant Episcopal Mission was founded. It came about through the Episcopal Church Extension Society when on November 1, 1872, the Rev. Dean Henry Rodman, Rector of Grace Church, Plainfield, — the Rev. Dr. Ward, Rector of Holy Cross Church, North Plainfield, — and Mr. Kyte of Fanwood, met together to talk over the need for holding and maintaining regular Episcopal Services in Scotch Plains. It was definitely decided to start the Mission services through the assistance of neighboring and visiting clergymen, — and to work toward the building of a church.

In 1873 Scotch Plains was a very small, slow-growing village and agricultural center. The group of Episcopalians living there was small in numbers but filled with a desire for their own place of worship. The first divine worship Service of these Brethren was conducted by the Rev. Dean Rodman on June 22, 1873. It was held in the School House, — a white brick building which still stands on Forest Road in Scotch Plains.

The Parish held its first Annual Meeting in the School House on October 26th. Notices of this important meeting had been posted in the "Railroad Depot" (then located at Midway Ave. and Martine, Fanwood), — and on the doors of the School House for 12 days before. An old church ledger tells us that "about 40 parishioners were present," and that after Dean Rodman read the law of the state regarding the incorporation of religious bodies, the parishioners elected Messrs. R. B. Duyckinck, W. C. Duyckinck, Charles Kyte, George Kyte, George Moore, and M. Pattinson as Trustees of the Mission Board.

Efforts had already been made to raise money for a Church Fund. A "Concert" had been held in the School House on September 24, 1873 at which \$200.00 had been raised.

Dean Rodman and Father Ward conducted the Sunday afternoon services alternately until in March 1874, The Reverend Mr. Charles Sykes became Priest-in-charge. This first pastor of All Saints' took up residence in the area, conducted a Sunday morning service, and established a Sunday School. The Mission services were now being held in the Old Excelsior Fire Company Hall, and in the Scotch Plains Baptist Church. An interesting story, passed down through the years, is that the Episcopalians prepared for their Christmas service by decorating the Baptist Sanctuary with Christmas trees and greens, and a fir cross, — and that all this had to be removed after their service before the baptists could hold theirs! In those days many protestant churches believed that no joyous note should be attached to the keeping of Christmas and other religious holidays.

Two generous parcels of land were donated to the All Saints' Mission. Christppher Bell, M. D. gave the land on which our church stands, with the provision that "the All Saints' Church would not be allowed to mortgage the properties so given, or use the church land for burial grounds!". "Mr. Seth B. Ryder and wife" gave land located on Main St. (now Front St.). The Right Reverend John Scarborough, Bishop of New Jersey advised the parish to build the church on the Park Avenue property because of its excellent location between Fanwood and Scotch Plains. The Land given by Mr. and Mrs. Ryder was later sold, and the money received for it was placed in the church building fund.