

## AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF ST. LUKE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

On the 13th day of April in the year 1843, John H. Holman of *Calvert's Hill*, Richard J. Gilliam of *Buena Vista*, and Richard W. Royster of *Manakin Farm* as trustees of the Episcopal Church (per the deed) acquired from William H. Harrison and his wife Deborah, of *Middlesex*, one and one quarter acre (per the deed) of land for \$62.50 on which to build this church.



Mr. Harrison, a veteran of the Battle of Waterloo, came to this area in the 1820s. In 1827, he bought part of the Middlesex tract of Millwood plantation from John Philip Barretier Harris and built Middlesex that same year. The tract of land that Mr. Harrison sold to the trustees was the northwest corner of his property.

As was the custom at the time, the clay was dug and the bricks were made very close to the building site. The church which was 32' by 36' and the original brick wall were built, it is believed, by Mr. Harrison's son, Thomas B. Harrison. The church was consecrated on April 10, 1845, by Assistant Bishop John Johns. According to vestry minutes, the slate roof was authorized in 1887.



In the 1890s the south end of the church was remodeled and the recessed sanctuary was built adding 12 feet to the length of the building. The magnificent rose window was installed at this time. The artisan, Scott Taylor, who conserved the window in 1998, stated that he thought the window was not made for St. Luke's, but, perhaps, was purchased from another church. It is believed that the windows in the church nave were replaced with stained glass during this same period of time. In 1911 a new wall of concrete that expanded the cemetery surrounding the church building was constructed in memory of Lt. James McCaw Pickrell, U.S.N. In 1915 the sacristy and vestry rooms were added and paid for by the Ladies' Aid Society (precursor of the Women of the Church and Episcopal Church Women). From vestry minutes, in 1916 a committee was authorized to have stained glass

windows installed in the sanctuary just under the roof line, and in 1922 Mrs. E. L. Tompkins was thanked for the memorial windows on the east side and Mrs. Martin Johnson was thanked for those on the west side. Also, in 1922 the Rev. John G. Scott presented his congregation at St. Luke's with an additional 2.02 acres adjoining the original tract which he had acquired for \$75 from Bernard Harrison and Annie Mayo, descendants of William Henry Harrison. The basement was dug in 1921 and a furnace was installed replacing the pot-bellied wood burning stove which had sat in the middle of the aisle toward the back of the church; four of the pews were shorter in those days to accommodate the stove.

In 1955 the congregation determined the church needed a Parish House for Sunday School with classes on the first floor and a kitchen, bathrooms, and a social hall in a walkout basement. Sunday School classes had been held in the sacristy and vestry rooms of the church and in an old one-room schoolhouse two miles to the east on Route 711; the church bathroom was an outhouse in the woods west of the church where the new Parish House was to be located. Much of the construction was completed with monetary contributions from parishioners, and the majority of the labor was performed

by Gen. Leroy P. Collins, Col. Alexander Quintard, Mr. Thomas Richardson, and Mr. Darrell Jervey. However, everyone pitched in, including children. The Women of the Church and others provided the furniture and furnishings in memory of loved ones. In 1967 a parishioner, Darrell Jervey, donated land on Jude's Ferry Road for a rectory (see section on rectories). The congregation approved the purchase of an additional 2 acres in 1979. In 1984 the church yard was expanded to the south and was enclosed by a brick wall with a concrete cap and two wrought iron gates. The concrete wall at the back of the church was removed at this time. Funds were raised for this project from the congregation. Central air had been installed in the church, and the windows, including the rose window, which had been opened by swinging them out by rope, were permanently sealed shut.

In 1988 St. Luke's was listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Landmarks Register. A parishioner, Tom Shearin, gathered the necessary data and completed the numerous forms required. These designations were achieved due to his diligence and determination.

St. Luke's had grown rapidly during the 30 years of the Rev. Lawrence W. Mason's charge. At a retreat in 1995, held at Roslyn Conference Center of the Diocese of Virginia in Henrico County, the 44 attending parishioners determined that St. Luke's could be an independent church, separate from Manakin.



A building committee was formed to determine what the congregation wanted, and could afford, to expand the Parish House to prepare for this separation before Mr. Mason's planned retirement at the end of 1997. Having received pledges and checks totaling \$500,000, an architect was hired to design an expansion to the rear of the existing Parish House in order to provide a modern kitchen, two bathrooms, storage space, and a larger social hall downstairs, and three new classrooms and two bathrooms upstairs, plus renovations to the front foyer to provide offices for a rector and secretary. Since 1960 St. Luke's had been a "cure" parish sharing the expenses of a rector and secretary with Manakin Episcopal Church, and these offices were located there, six miles to the east of St. Luke's. The addition was dedicated by Bishop Frank Vest in November 1997.

Over a period of several years, beginning in 1995, the beautiful stained glass windows including the rose window were conserved by the same artisan who had restored the famous Tiffany windows in Blandford Church in Petersburg, all made possible through funds from the Women of the Church and a very generous gift from two parishioners. The old pipe organ (1978) was replaced in 2003 with a new "top-of-the-line" electric organ purchased with gifts from the congregation and a wine and cheese/ silent auction fundraiser. There had been at least two other organs in the church—a pump organ replaced by another organ in 1958 as a memorial. The fenced and equipped playground to the west of the Parish House was a memorial gift made in 2002. The Episcopal Church Women (ECW) of St. Luke's installed a small St. Francis garden at the northwest exterior corner of the church wall in 2003. All of the brick walks and the bricked area in front of the church were made possible with funds from this same group of ladies and were installed between 1995 and 2013. The brick walk and pavers laid from the west cemetery gate to the back of the Parish House were a memorial gift made in 2011. The columbarium section at the rear of the most recently extended portion of the cemetery was funded by the ECW and several parishioners in 2008, and the Celtic Cross was placed there as a memorial in 2010.