

Souvenir Booklet

Ninetieth Anniversary



CHURCH

OF

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

BARRYTOWN, NEW YORK

1874 - 1964

*To the Aspinwalls
and all who have
gone before us and
are now at rest.*

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A Brief History

OF

The Church of St. John the Evangelist

BARRYTOWN, NEW YORK

(1874 - 1964)

THE REV. LEONARD F. NEILS, *Rector*



Compiled by Mrs. George Ahern



Early picture of St. John the Evangelist

The Church of St. John the Evangelist of Barrytown, New York, actually owes its founding to St. Stephen's College, now known as Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York.

John Bard, who had emigrated from England during the 18th century; feeling the need of Church ministrations for himself and the community, caused the Chapel of the Holy Innocents to be erected in Annandale (1860). In the same year, he and John Lloyd Aspinwall established St. Stephen's College on adjoining property. The use of the Chapel was given the College with specified conditions relating to the care of those living in the neighborhood.

About 1870, members of St. Peter's Brotherhood, the College Missionary Society, consisting of a body of students working under the direction of the Warden of the College, began holding services in the School House at Barrytown Corners. This was for the benefit of those living to the south and west who were unable to walk to Annandale. These students visited the people of the district, known as St. Augustine Ward, and then reported to the Warden the names of those who were unbaptized or desirous of being confirmed, besides providing care for the sick and the poor.

Mr. John L. Aspinwall, owner of considerable property in the area, became interested as he observed the efforts of St. Peter's Brotherhood. After his death in May, 1873 his wife decided to have a Church erected in Barrytown in his memory. Plans for the Church were prepared by architect, William Potter. The corner stone laying, May 9, 1874, was conducted by the Reverend John A. Aspinwall whose parish was in Washington, D. C. He was the son of William H. Aspinwall, who built the railroad across Panama, and Mrs. Bessie Aspinwall Wagner's father's first cousin.

On October 4, 1874 the Church was consecrated by Bishop Horatio Potter. An impressive gathering of clergy which had vested in "Breck Hall" entered by the front door and came slowly up the aisle reciting the 24th Psalm. They were the Reverend Messrs. Aspinwall, Olsen and Hopson, the Reverend Doctors Fairbairn, Breck and Oliver, followed by the tall and stately figure of the Right Reverend Horatio Potter, Bishop of the Diocese of New York.

The Church having been named St. John the Evangelist was put in charge of trustees. The first was Mrs. John Aspinwall, with Reverend Robert B. Fairbairn, D.D., Messrs. William Aspinwall, Samuel Breck, Charles E. Sands, the Reverend C. Potter, D.D., and Mr. Ambrose Kingsland. Services were placed under the care of the Warden of the College, Dr. Fairbairn, who assigned the morning services and the Pastoral work to the Reverend Professor George B.

Hopson. The Clergy of the College took the evening services in turn. William Aspinwall, an executor of his brother's estate, gave the Church for an endowment the money provided him as an executor. Mrs. John L. Aspinwall subsequently added to that a sum which would yield an income of \$1,000 a year.



R. B. FAIRBAIRN
Rector of this Parish for its first ten years

Professor Hopson continued in charge of the work of the Parish for ten years. On October 5, 1884 he resigned and the Reverend E. Shober was appointed in his place. St. John's was then made an independent Parish under the Reverend Fr. Shober who also conducted missionary services at the Hook School House, Upper Red Hook and Pine Plains.

In his closing sermon Professor Hopson reported 76 persons had been baptized, 9 adults and 67 children; an increase in Sunday School membership from 14 at the organization of St. John's to 70 in 1884 with an increase in communicants from 33 to 95. There had been 45 confirmations, 6 marriages and 19 burials. During this period offerings amounted to \$1,000 a year. Much of this money Professor Hopson advised had been distributed among the poor of the Parish in clothes and fuel. Some of the funds had been given to various missionary agencies of the Church while the children of the Sunday School kept up their scholarship contribution of \$40 to a school in Plain City, Utah. In summing up his review Professor Hopson stated: "We are in a small community which is never likely to be materially larger than it is today. If we grow, it must be principally in spiritual zeal and devotion." And to this day zeal and devotion continues to be an ever important ingredient of St. John the Evangelist.

Later Aspinwall Hall, originally St. Peter's Mission located at Budd Corners, and Breck Hall, which stood on the road a little south of St. John's, were moved to adjoin the church. This was done during the Rectorship of Chaplain Herbert S. Smith. The present kitchen was formerly the archway through which members arrived by horse and carriage to be discharged for Church services.

Mrs. George Barringer, who is still a communicant of St. John's, recalls her mother, who was the choir mother in 1881, relating that when she, Mrs. Barringer, was one year old, a horse drawn side-seater carrying about 20 people would go through the neighborhood on Sunday to bring the people to Church. Her husband, George Barringer, the oldest communicant of St. John's, was a member of the boy's choir of St. Peter's Mission which consisted of 22 voices. It was an outstandingly well-known choir which visited all local Churches contributing their efforts to numerous functions.

Manson E. Lown, baptized on the first Sunday after Epiphany, January 7, 1894 by the Reverend J. P. Cushing, confirmed in the class of 1902 by Bishop Potter of the New York Diocese, and a member of the boy's choir recalls, when his voice changed, he was promoted to the important task of pumping the organ. This was a manual affair operated at the rear of the organ by a long lever. Hidden from the organist and congregation Mr. Lown said it was difficult to know when to start and stop pumping. At times during pauses it would seem the hymn was over and a period to rest. Suddenly he would be jolted out of his lethargy by a head poking around the corner emitting in quite an audible stage whisper—"pump Manson, pump, pump." Before the bellows were again sufficiently inflated the embarrassed Miss Harris would be fingering the keyboard without sound

but a florid face. The stipend for pumping the organ was 25c for both morning and afternoon services. This lifted him into the affluency of "Barrytown kids" as such wealth was hard to come by.



Chaplain Herbert S. Smith and the choir

An outstanding Mother's Day in the history of St. John's occurred May 13, 1934 when the dedication of the Ascension Window was held. The Reverend Chaplain Herbert S. Smith recalled Mother's Day as one for which many years had been set aside to commemorate those who went down to the Gates of Death that we might live—our Mothers. He then said, "to be is the Man, Woman or Child who still has, on earth, a Mother, and well they should comfort and cherish them as their greatest earthly treasure. Those of us whose mothers have gone from earth to paradise are assured that they still love us and pray for us, even as they did in Childhood's Hour, and we cannot refrain from praying: 'May the Souls of All Faithful Mothers, through the Mercy of God, Rest in Peace.' Amen."

There was a celebration of the 60th anniversary of St. John's October 4, 1945. The Reverend Chaplain Smith reported two persons still in the choir, W. H. Plass and Mrs. Henion, who were present at its consecration in October 1874. A comparison of the Church in 1874 and 1934 followed: Previously the pulpit and lectern were

wooden desks. There was no rood screen in 1874 and the font stood where the litany desk now stands. The Aspinwall Reredos and the "Angel" windows given by William H. Aspinwall had been added.

Prior to the 60th anniversary celebration Chaplain Smith reported bids were obtained from various manufacturers in order to have the organ ready for Easter. A contract was signed on faith and prayer for \$25. Mr. Aspinwall meantime had sent word he would be visiting the Church and there were earnest prayers he might contribute a few hundred dollars. While waiting Chaplain Smith turned on the radio and heard a beautiful voice singing "O Rest In the Word, wait patiently on Him and He will give thee thy heart's desire." As the song finished Mr. Aspinwall arrived and asked "How is the organ?" Chaplain Smith had never asked him for anything and could not do so then so he changed the subject. Mr. Aspinwall then reported he had been fortunate in money matters and he would give the Church an organ. Later Chaplain Smith told him of his prayers.

Profound gratefulness was then expressed to the wonderful Aspinwall family and to the faithful pastors and members of the congregation who in past years by their labors and gifts helped in building the parish and spreading Christ's Kingdom in the community. There was an expression of gratitude for the many who came regularly to this Memorial Church to worship God, sing His Praises in choir and congregation, and by Prayer and Sacraments receiving strength and inspiration. Instead of complaining, *ALL* the money which *HE* enables them to earn, they regularly lay aside in preparation for a joyful offering. Instead of unkindly criticising their neighbors, they do all in their power to promote peace and prosperity. In conclusion Chaplain Smith said:

Dear Friends, each one of you, alone, knows, whether, in every respect, he or she is among those of whom I have just spoken. If you have been in the past, see to it by increased Prayer and Bible reading, you remain so in the future. If, on the other hand, a tender conscience tells you that some things have been left undone which ought to have been done—there could be no better time than today for making a fresh start. Re-dedicate yourselves, your souls and bodies, to God's service for that is the only way of obtaining true happiness here and hereafter. Resolve that you will not be an intermitten Christian but that you will be, ever, one who performs his or her "bounden duty" which the Prayer Book tells us is: "To follow Christ; To worship God every Sunday in his Church; and To Work and Pray and Give for the support of His Kingdom." Thus will be fulfilled the Prayer

which we prayed this morning; 'That we may make a right use of this beautiful Church; worship God therein both in Spirit and in Truth and in our lives, show forth His Praise.' God grant that we may thus grow in Grace and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, Amen.

Although St. John's continues to be small in size and congregation, it is replete with memorials and history. There are beautiful stained glass windows given in memory by the Sunday School, Americans who have fought in the Wars of our Country, St. Peter's Brotherhood who inspired the Church, the Aspinwall Family responsible for the building of the Church and the Windows obtained by Chaplain Smith from St. Mary's in Burlington, New Jersey. There are book covers formed from a French 75 MM brass powder shell which includes the names of all servicemen from this area starting at the time of the Revolutionary War to 1928, to an Ancient Tile dated 600 A.D., which includes a typed explanation as follows:

"Many years ago, in an excavation at the site of the Church built by St. Augustine at about 600 A.D. in Canterbury, England, I discovered this ancient tile. It was evidently one of four emblems of the Evangelists which had been in the floor before the Altar. It symbolizes St. John the Evangelist and is now presented to my beloved Church of the same name."
H. S. Smith

Chaplain Smith then had the tile framed in Olive Wood obtained from Bethlehem. Dutch tiles located in the outer vestibule of the Church were donated by Chaplain Smith's brother's estate. They are considered to be rare, Dr. Smith having obtained them on a trip abroad. His widow, Mrs. Drayton Smith, prized them highly. When she died her brother gave them to Chaplain Smith.

Over the years numerous plaques, thank offerings of every description have been given increasing the historical wealth of the Church.

St. John the Evangelist in the year of 1964, its 90th anniversary, is again undergoing a refurbishing program. Beautiful new electric hanging lights, and others, designed by George Schreiber, have been installed throughout the Church proper. There is a new heating system in the Church and in Breck Hall, along with lavatory facilities. The interior of the Church was painted while bids have been obtained for the completion of exterior painting as well as some remaining interior painting. Plans are underway for the laying of new roadways up and around the Church. Extensive work is being planned on the Moller Organ. In this and many other improvements such as

the recent painting of the interior of the Church, Mrs. Bessie Aspinwall Wagner has generously assisted.



90th Anniversary Cornerstone Laying
May 9, 1964

May 9, 1964 the Reverend Leonard F. Neils celebrated the 90th anniversary of the corner-stone laying of St. John the Evangelist. He was assisted by The Venerable Richard E. McEvoy, Archdeacon of the Diocese of New York, the Reverend Frederic Shafer of Bard College, a former Rector of the parish and William Nichols, Lay Reader of the Episcopal Church and Director of the Dutchess Community Library who was guest speaker at the ceremony.

The anniversary was well attended by neighbors and parishioners who adjoined to Aspinwall and Breck Halls after the service. The Women of St. John's provided light refreshments and dessert.

Mr. Nichols in his talk reminded us he had been acquainted with us since his attendance at Bard College in 1936. He said if he had to choose a text he would select the 3rd verse of the 3rd chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." Thinking back he recalled to mind

the group of students who were the forerunners of the parish. Obviously their deeds must have been saintly and had meaning. And so too, today when one recalls such names as Harris, Rollins, DuBois, Thompson, Barringer, McMichael, Delafield, Aspinwall, Fallon, Day, Smith and many others, who may all be counted as saints of God who in one way or another helped to make this Church what it is today. "You did not compromise," said Mr. Nichols, "you lived what you believed which is what God calls a Christian to do in this world, for a Christian must not only be an observer but a doer."

A number of the parishioners took this occasion to recite informally some of their own personal remembrances of happenings in the Church. It was a Happy and Joyful occasion. The official celebration of the Consecration of the Church October 4, 1964, was observed by a Visitation of the parish by The Rt. Rev. James Stuart Wetmore, Second Suffragan Bishop of New York, who presided and preached the sermon. The Rector celebrated the Holy Eucharist (Thanksgiving). A reception followed.



Confirmation Class 1963

The Rt. Rev. Horace W. B. Donegan, Bishop of New York,
the class and the Rector

REMEMBRANCES AND THANK OFFERINGS DISPLAYED AT
S. JOHN THE EVANGELIST, BARRYTOWN, N. Y.

1. Easter 1880—Cross on Altar
2. Chancel decorated in memory of Mary C. Stryker—1924
3. Organ thank offering from the Wagner family, 1938
4. Thank offering, 1927(?) Ikon
5. Bronze plaque—memorial to Frederick Fairweather Flewelling 1872 to 1914. Rector of St. John's 1912-1914.
6. Wood plaque—bronze picture of last supper—memorial to Thomas Gallaudet, priest.
7. Small plaque—George Bailey Hopson, D.D. Pastoral charge of Church 1874-1884.
8. Bronze plaque—Herbert Stanley Smith—Rector 1923-1944
9. Memory of Red Hook Post VFW 7765
10. Window—Sunday School—"Little Children Love One Another"
11. Window—St. Michael—memorial to All Americans Who Adventured Their Lives for God and Country
12. Book covers formed from French 75 MM brass powder shell — includes names of all servicemen from this area commencing with Revolutionary War to 1928
13. Organ dedicated to William Henry Aspinwall, Jr. 11-27-1868 — "Rejoice at the Sound of the Organ"
14. Bronze plaque—E. Powis Jones 1880-1927—trustee 1919-1927
15. Window—Light of the World
16. Window—The Holy Night
17. Bronze plaque—Annie E. and Willet Harris
18. Wood and brass plaque—Jane Shepherd 1913—bequeathed all she possessed to the Church
19. Ancient tile—600 A.D.—from excavation of site of Church built by St. Augustine about 600 A.D., in Canterbury, England. One of four emblems of the Evangelist which had been in floor before Altar
20. Window—Remembering St. Peter's Brotherhood who inspired Church
- 20a Window—Thank offering for Aspinwall family 1934
21. Remembering Bishop Doane for whom glass was placed in St. Mary's Church in Burlington, New Jersey