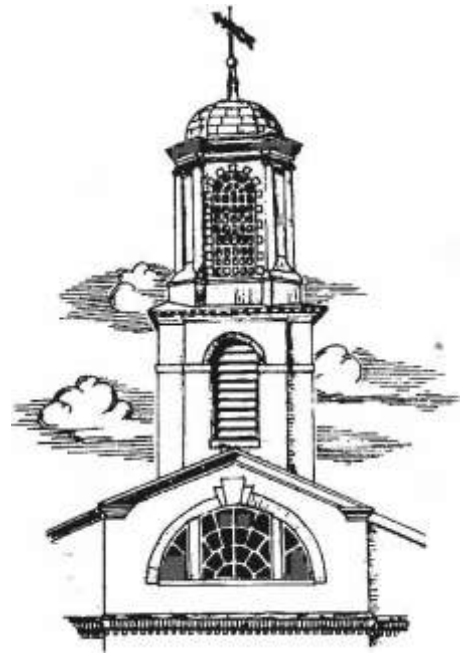


St. John's Church

PORTSMOUTH
NEW HAMPSHIRE



Historical Guide

The Baptismal Font (1) was a prize of war captured from the French at Senegal by a regiment organized by John Tufton Mason. It was presented to Queen's Chapel by his daughters, Sara and Anna, in **1761**. The inscription on the cover credits Samuel Livermore, Senior Warden and Wyseman Clagett, Junior Warden.



The Vinegar Bible (2) published by John Baskett, Oxford, 1717, with a misprint "Parable of the vinegar" instead of "vineyard" (top of page). There are a few others in existence though not plentiful. It was a gift from Queen Caroline, consort of King George II.

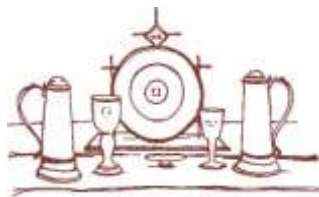
The Book of Common Prayer (3), also a gift from Queen Caroline, and published by John Baskett, London, 1739, was the official one used in England. Either during the American Revolution or soon thereafter, several pages were removed and others were inserted to conform to the official prayer book authorized by the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in United States 1789. The book is open at the new prayer for the President and those in Civil Authority rather than the King or Queen of England.

The Altar (4) contains several items of interest. The panels behind the altar contain the Apostles' Creed, Ten Commandments and Lord's Prayer, fundamentals of Faith, Law and Prayer, required by Canon Law in the Colonial Period. Note the Hebrew consonants J H V H (reading from right to left)

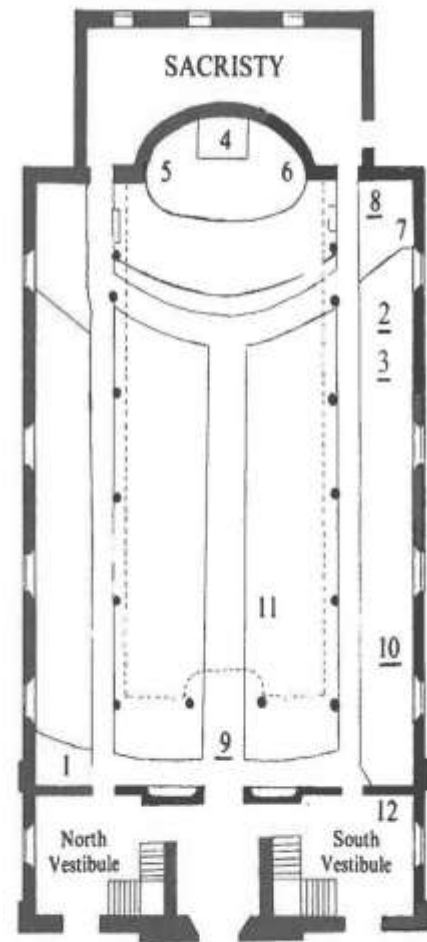


representing the unspoken name of God. The scallop design ceiling, a popular motif in the colonial period. St. John's Parish owns a set

of communion silver, consisting of two large flagons, a deep chalice and a footed paten presented by Queen Caroline to Queen's Chapel, the name given to the edifice in the Colonial Period. This set used at Christmas and Easter is stored along with other valuable items in a bank vault.



A Key to the Historical Treasures & General Points of Interest of St. John's Church



Note: () underlined numbers refer to features located upstairs in the galleries.

The two mahogany chairs (5) located within the sanctuary are very old. One of the two was saved from the fire which destroyed the original edifice December 24, 1806. This chair dates from 1763 and is attributed to Robert Harrold. The other was made to duplicate the one which was destroyed. When President Washington worshiped here in 1789, he occupied one of the two chairs. It is hoped that the one saved was that used by him.



The Letourneau pipe organ (the fourth organ since this edifice was built) was installed in 2001 and purchased with funds raised by parishioners and friends of St. John's to replace an electronic Allen Organ which had been in use since 1960. The first organ in this edifice was made in England in 1807 by Thomas Elliot, London and was used until an Estey Organ was installed in 1915.



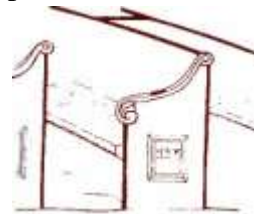
The Credence Table (6), in the chancel is attributed to Joseph Williams and was the original altar in Queen's Chapel and was saved from fire that destroyed the chapel on 24 Dec. 1806.

The Credence Table (7) located near the side altar at the right was made from oak timbers of the USS HARTFORD, the flagship of Admiral David G. Farragut. This table was presented to St. John's Church by Gustavus V Fox, Assistant Secretary of the United States Navy Yard. Admiral Farragut's funeral was held in St. John's Church August 17, 1870.

The Box Pews (1f) in the south gallery are original and were probably the same as those on the main floor until 1867 when the present pews were installed.

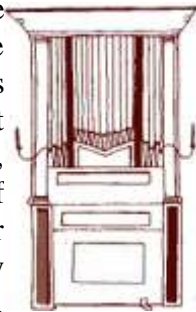


On several of these slip pews, the visitor will observe silver colored plates commemorating former parishioners, wardens, vestrymen, a governor and a statesman, Daniel Webster (11).



Although not an Anglican, Webster was a close friend of the Rector Dr. Burroughs (1809-1858) and attended St. John's regularly.

The Brattle Organ (8) located in the South Gallery is the oldest operative pipe organ in the United States. It was imported from England before 1708. It was given to King's Chapel, Boston, by Thomas Brattle, Treasurer of Harvard College, where it was used for forty years. Later it was acquired by St. Paul's Church, Newburyport, Massachusetts where it was used for eighty years. St. John's Church purchased it in 1836 for use in a new chapel on State Street, now demolished. This organ was renovated in 1963 by Charles B. Fisk, Inc., Gloucester, Massachusetts and subsequently used for a concert at a service of thanksgiving in 1965.



The bell in the steeple (12) cannot be visited. It was a prize of war taken at the Battle of Louisburg (1745) when colonial soldiers under the command of Col. William Pepperrell of Kittery besieged the stronghold there. When the expedition returned to Portsmouth, the bell was presented as a gift to Queen's Chapel. It was damaged in the Christmas Eve Fire of 1806 that swept Portsmouth, but was sent to Boston to be recast by Paul Revere and has been recast once since then.

The Main Organ (9) is a 3 manual handcrafted pipe organ built for St. John's by Orgues Letourneau, Ltd in Quebec, Canada. It was specifically designed to blend with the architecture of the church and boasts 36 stops and 2,425 pipes.

Other points of interest in the church include the beautiful needlepoint covered kneelers in the pews; our stained glass windows (many installed as memorials); and the memorial wall tablets. The shadow painting was done in 1848 and restored in 1951.

ST. JOHN'S PARISH

Seven years after Puritans settled Plymouth Plantation, traders and merchants, motivated by economic reasons came to the Piscataqua River Basin in 1630 and established a series of hamlets that became the first permanent settlement in New Hampshire. Originally named "Strawbery Banke" because of wild strawberries growing along the banks of the Piscataqua River Basin it soon became a prosperous shipping port and in 1653 the townspeople petitioned the Royal Governor of Massachusetts to have it renamed Portsmouth.

The first church in Strawberry Banke was erected in 1638. This Anglican church was located on what is today the southwest corner of Court and Pleasant Streets and The Reverend Richard Gibson was installed as Rector there in 1639. During the 1600's, the territory that is today New Hampshire, Maine and Massachusetts was all controlled by the provincial Government in Boston. Unfortunately, the Royal Governor of Massachusetts accused Rev. Gibson of conducting marriages and baptisms without authority and in 1641 Rev. Gibson was forced to resign and return to England leaving the Anglicans in Strawberry Banke without a church.

In 1732 New Hampshire was awarded its own Provincial Government independent from that of Massachusetts. As more English settled in Portsmouth the demand to reestablish an Anglican church was steadily growing and in 1732 a wooden church was erected on the present site of St. John's. It was named "Queen's Chapel" after King George II's wife, Queen Caroline, who donated many fine gifts to help the new parish. The first Rector of Queen's Chapel was The Reverend Arthur Browne, and the parish prospered under his guidance until his death in 1773. Soon after Rev. Browne's death the American Revolution broke out and those in favor of the war frowned upon Anglican parishes because of their connection to England. As a result of this, many Anglican parishes had a difficult time surviving both the war and the political restructuring that followed.

Queen's Chapel did not have another Rector until 1786 when The Reverend John C. Ogden arrived to revive the parish. It was incorporated by the young State of New Hampshire on February 15, 1791 and the name was changed to St. John's Church as Royal names had fallen out of favor since the Revolution.

The parish increased in growth until the tragic

fire of December 24, 1806 which destroyed over 300 buildings in Portsmouth including the original wooden structure of St. John's and most of its contents. The parishioners were not to be denied and began immediately to raise funds to erect the present brick edifice. The cornerstone was laid on June 24, 1807 and 146 years later in 1953 a new Parish House was built beside the church. Today, St. John's Church of Portsmouth stands as the oldest Episcopal Parish in New Hampshire and in 1978 it was officially listed on the Register of Historic Sites.

THE CHURCHYARD

The land adjacent to the northern side of the church was presented to the parish by the Hon. Theodore Atkinson in 1754 for use as a burying ground "for tombs, vaults and monuments" However, we know there were burials previous to this, as one headstone bears an inscription about the death of John Bradford in 1745. There are about 100 marked graves in this yard and today it's only used on very seldom occasions with expressed permission from the Vestry.

There are ten underground vaults which are accessible from the street. Six of them are located on Bow Street and four are on Chapel Street. Many prominent people of the colonial period are buried in these vaults including the Royal Governor Benning Wentworth (1741-1766) and the Rev. Arthur Browne, first Rector of Queen's Chapel (1736-1773).

ARCHITECTURAL NOTES

Various articles published since 1807 have ascribed the architecture of the present church edifice to William Durgin of Sanbornton, NH in the periodical *Historical New Hampshire Vol. XVIII No.3* (1973), James L. Garvin published an article, "St. John's Church in Portsmouth: An Architectural Study" At the same time, he was employed as the Research Curator at Strawberry Banke Museum. He concludes with documentation to support that Alexander Parris of Portland, Maine was the author of this church design. Parris (1780-1852) later became well known for his architectural talents. Garvin also cites names of many prominent craftsmen who participated in building the edifice. Since 1807 several changes have been made internally and externally, yet the nave of the church remains similar to the original design. The box pews were removed from the ground floor in 1867 and were replaced by slip pews. Also, an addition was placed on the east end of the church several years ago to provide more space for the sacristy.