

Grace Episcopal | Nutley Yesterday · Today - 1961

GRACE EPISCOPAL

OVER 110 years ago Thomas W. Satterthwaite purchased an estimate of about 140 acres in Belleville. From this fact stems the history of Grace Episcopal Church.

The Satterthwaites were Episcopalians and to attend church they had to travel to Newark or Passaic. Since this was not practical for children, a Sunday School was started in 1863 in a building on the Satterthwaite estate near the old river road.

In 1872 land was given by Satterthwaite for the erection of a church building on what is now Grant and Whitford Avenues. The congregation met, elected wardens and vestrymen and then formed "a body corporate under the name of the rector, wardens and vestrymen of Grace Church, Franklin, New Jersey."

Reverend William H. Carter, rector of Christ Church, Bloomfield, served as vicar. The first service was held on Easter 1873.

Three years later, Reverend B. C. Huntington was called to be the first rector. He remained for only three months resigning because his salary of \$500 a year could not be paid.

For almost three years the church was dependent for services on nearby clergymen. It was not until June, 1879, that Reverend William R. Nairn became the first permanent rector.

Under his leadership the membership grew, all debts were paid and the church was consecrated by the Rt. Reverend Thomas F. Starkey, Bishop of Northern New Jersey. Mr. Nairn served until his death in 1889.

The first church was very dear to those who worked for its existence. It was a small, frame building seating about 150 with a Sunday School room in the basement.

For a long time the lighting came from oil lamps. There was no carpet, no cushions on the seats, no kneeling benches.

The altar was a mahogany table holding two brass candlesticks. The choir was seated on one side separated from the congregation by red curtains. The small organ was pumped by various boys of the Sunday School.

There was no sexton - just an occasional "day's help." Always there was a struggle to keep financially afloat. The dinners, suppers and fairs were numerous.

Entertainments in Old Military Hall with local talent, picnics on the Fourth of July in the Satterthwaite woods (now a part of Chestnut Street), the barge trips

on the river sometimes going as far as Passaic and Clifton, the Christmas tree with a box of candy for every child, all these things are memories of a congregation that worked together and loved the work.

Reverend John P. Appleton, of Boonton, was called to be the second rector of Grace Church in 1890 and served until 1899.

During his rectorship, in 1891, land was again given by the Satterthwaite family-the site of the present church, parish house and rectory. Late in 1897 the present rectory was completed and occupied.

Reverend N. Field Saumenig, who served as rector from October, 1899 to September, 1903, was followed by Herbert D. Cone.

In April, 1904, the name of the town having been changed from Franklin to Nutley, the corporate title of Grace Church became Grace Church of Nutley and continued to grow.

In July, 1908, the building committee signed the contract for the erection of the present church and parish house with Henry P. Kirby giving his services as architect. The cornerstone was laid on September 19, 1908.

The first service in the new church was held on Christmas Day, 1908. In 1911 Mr. Cone resigned and was succeeded by Reverend Douglas Matthews who served until 1919. During his ministry, the east window, the altar and the reredos were given by the Sergeant family in memory of their son and brother.

The pulpit was the gift of John Howe and the organ the gift of Thomas Greenwood. Reverend Dr. Charles P. Tinker immediately succeeded Mr. Matthews.

The church and the Sunday School had continued to grow so that more room was imperative and the tower and the spire of the church and the tower of the parish house were erected in 1923 with William T. L. Armstrong as architect.

During this time the Church murals painted by Clinton Balmer, were installed.

On December 30, 1925, a fire starting at 3 a.m. seriously damaged the roof, the organ and the body of the church.

The reconstruction cost was over \$50,000 but was completely covered by insurance. In 1936 Dr. Tinker resigned from active service in the ministry. During his rectorship he had written "our purpose will be defeated if the note of prosperity is struck so boldly as to create an impression of smug self-satisfaction. There is no over-production in church work. There is no such thing as perfection in service."

Reverend L. Harold Hinrichs succeeded Dr. Tinker in 1937. During his rectorship the church and the Sunday School continued in a healthy condition.

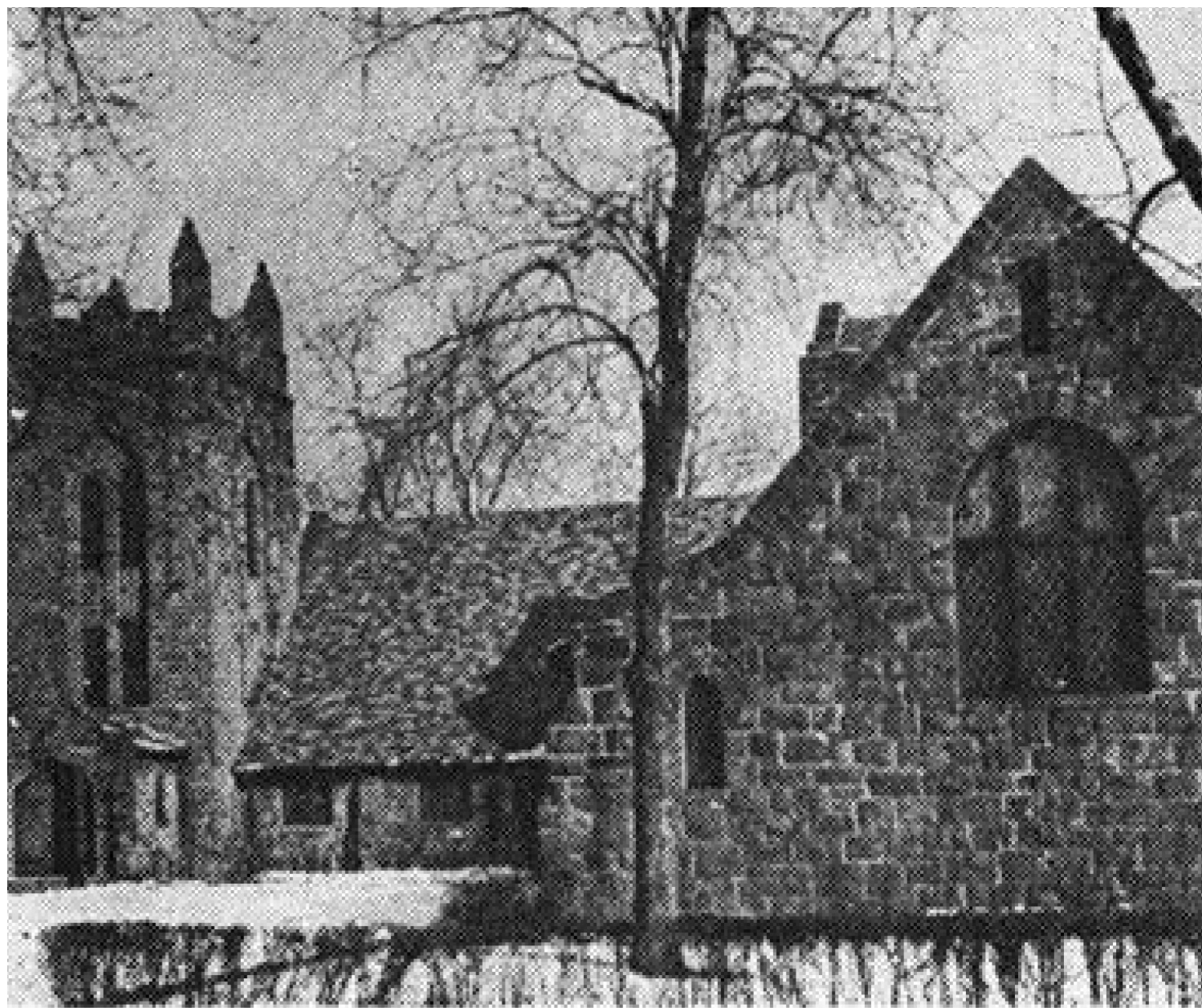
The various organizations grew satisfactorily. Due largely to the work of the women of Grace Church, the mortgage of many years standing was paid off

and at a service on March 2, 1947, was burned by the guild president, Mrs. D. D. Payne and the church consecrated by the Rt. Reverend Benjamin W. Washburn, Bishop of the Diocese of Newark.

Because of ill health, Mr. Hinrichs resigned in 1950 to be followed by the present rector, The Venerable Wells R. Bliss, on December 1, 1950. Under his guidance the church has continued to grow and all of the church properties put in good condition.

Credit for this work has been given to the success of the Annual Every Member Canvass and to the efforts of the women.

A long needed increase in church school facilities was finally realized in 1958 with the completion of an educational building containing a large kindergarten room, seven classrooms, a meeting room and the church office.



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