

### III - A NEW CHURCH

It is often said that America's founding fathers were deists, believers in "Nature's God," but most considered themselves churchmen in good standing. George Washington served on the Vestry of Pohick Church (across the Chesapeake from Old Trinity) as Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry and others served on their local Vestries. From that experience they insisted on the separation of church and state. They knew that true religion suffered when managed by the state, and New Englanders knew individuals suffered when religions held power.

Those who wrote the Constitution of the Protestant Episcopal Church were the same as those who wrote the Constitution of the United States. The new national church was to be governed by a bi-cameral legislature with presiding officers, not a single executive or primate. Bishops would not be appointed but elected by both clergy and lay representatives. These were significant democratic innovations in church governance. The General Convention of 1789 adopted an American version of The Book of Common Prayer. In addition to dropping the prayers for the royal family, the book added Bishop Gibson's "Family Prayers" as an appendix, and adopted parts of the Scottish Communion service.

Samuel Seabury, America's first Bishop, was consecrated by the Scottish Episcopal Church, and subsequently permission was granted for English bishops to consecrate three more bishops for America without requiring them to take the oath of allegiance. These four consecrated the first bishop on American soil, Thomas John Claggett, a native-born Marylander educated at Princeton, to be Maryland's first bishop in 1792. At that time, all of Maryland including Dorchester Parish was one jurisdiction, a vast territory to cover at the time. Bishop Claggett visited Old Trinity, and in 1814, James Kemp was consecrated as suffragan Bishop for the Eastern Shore. We had served the Dorchester Parish Church for a time and visited as bishop.

Public support for a church identified with England suffered more during "the Second American Revolution," the War of 1812, during which British troops marched through Bishop Claggett's parish and also raided Bishop Kemp's old home of Castle Haven in Dorchester. The Chesapeake region felt the war's impact directly through the presence of a British fleet, although the Dorchester militia from Tobaccostick won the minor triumph of capturing a British longboat on the ice.

Since the church had been disestablished there was no longer a regular mechanism even for the financial support of clergy. In 1819 Dorchester Parish adopted the new system of pew rents that had been pioneered in America by Anglican Churches in New England and was accepted by most 19<sup>th</sup> century Episcopal Churches. Still, the new Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA was facing a shortage of clergy, and little money for either salaries or upkeep of buildings.

But the church began to recover. The General Theological Seminary was established in New York City in 1817 and the Protestant Episcopal Seminary in Virginia in 1823. Bishop Kemp and other leaders encouraged the development of Sunday Schools and Missionary Societies. The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society in 1835 became an organization including every member of the church and has been the legal corporation of PECUSA since 1846. The first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century also saw a surprising recovery of a “high” view of the Church within Anglicanism linked with a recovery of ancient practices. There was, “*The rediscovered emphases on apostolic succession and the Catholicity of the church, on priesthood, on sacrament and sacrifice, on prayer, holiness and the beauty of worship.*”

This “high church” movement became linked with the Romantic movement and perhaps a wistful looking to the past as industrialization began to change the present. In any event, many came to believe with the architect Augustus Pugin, that Gothic was “*the only proper style*” of Church architecture. When funds became available to renovate the old Dorchester Parish church it was redesigned. Windows were rebuilt with pointed arches, the singer’s gallery was removed, and a “proper” choir and chancel fitted into the tiny church. When rededicated in 1853 it was also given a “proper” church name, Trinity. For half a century it had been called simply “the old church,” so for ever after has been called “Old Trinity.”

The new traditionalists and the old evangelicals battled over everything within the life of the church but ignored the great issue that was beginning to tear the country apart, slavery. In the South, a majority of churchmen were slaveholders, related to slaveholders or economically dependent on them. Even in the North, there were prominent church leaders who defended slavery as biblical. Yet Absalom Jones, a free African-American, was ordained to the Episcopal priesthood in Philadelphia in 1802. In 1834, Maryland’s Bishop Stone, who owned slaves on his Eastern Shore plantation, ordained William Douglass, the first African-American ordained south of the Mason-Dixon line. Many American denominations split over the issue of slavery, but the Episcopal Church did not. When the southern states succeeded from

the Union and formed the Confederate States of America (CSA), Southern churchmen and bishops formed the Protestant Episcopal Church in the CSA with a Book of Common Prayer adapted for worship in their new “nation.” The Northern House of Bishops continued to call the roll as if their Southern colleagues had simply been delayed in coming.



Anna Ella Carroll was an energetic newspaper woman who became an advisor to Abraham Lincoln during the American Civil War and is sometimes referred to as a “shadow member” of his Cabinet. Her father was a Governor of Maryland. Her brother, Doctor Thomas King Carroll, became a beloved physician in Church Creek and headed the 1853 “modernization” of Old Trinity. All three are buried in the Old Trinity churchyard as is her niece, Nellie Calvert Carroll. That last Miss Carroll was a cofounder of the Old Trinity Association and lived to see the restoration and rededication of the building in 1960. As a result of her final bequest, wreaths are placed on the Carroll family graves to this day as pictured below.

