

Archivist's Report 2021

For considering the flood of statistics involved and the difficulty there is for those who wish to enter upon the narratives of history because of the mass of material, we have aimed to please those who wish to read, to make it easy for those who are inclined to memorize, and to profit all readers. (2 Maccabees 2:24-25). And to think, that was 2200 years ago!

Diocesan and parish archives are required by the Canons of the Episcopal Church, and are organized under through the guidelines published by the Episcopal Church archives in Austin TX, along with recommendations from National Episcopal Historical Association.

BACKGROUND OF THE ARCHIVES OF THE DIOCESE

While there have been archives in the Diocese of New Jersey from the days of our first bishops, the beginning of a formal plan and staff for such an endeavor began with the efforts of the Revd Canon Laurence D. Fish. Larry had worked alongside Fr. King, who famously wrote and published the history of the diocese for the diocesan bicentennial in 1985.

Files and other memorabilia were collected and stored in the basement 808 West State St. in far less than ideal conditions. Eventually, part of the Matthews Conference Center was established to better store archival materials, especially those particularly susceptible to the vagaries of humidity and temperature.

Canon Fish brought to the position a strong sense of church and diocesan history, a vacuum cleaner like ability to acquire important new materials, and a graceful and clear writing style that gave freshness and vitality that made history of our diocese come alive.

After Canon Fish's death in 2010, Canon Cynthia McFarland, who was already serving as Diocesan Communications Director had Archivist, Historiographer and Register added to her portfolio. Cynthia continued updating the existing databases (adding one listing confirmations), began the process of culling through the papers and other correspondence of all of our Bishops, and did some valuable primary source research on the lives of the Rev'd John Talbot and the Rt. Rev'd George Washington Doane. Under her direction, many of our Diocesan journals were digitized and made available online. Tragically, Cynthia died in 2013, and her two assistants, Mary Ann Jensen and Paula Morgan died within a year of each other. I was appointed Archivist by Bishop Stokes in 2014. We also had the support of Allie Graham as Assistant Archivist for a year.

Presently, the Archivist's position is the duck-billed platypus among diocesan staff. While it is a canonical office, it is treated budgetarily as a contractor's position and not as an employee. As well, few diocesan programs have seen the drastic budget reduction the archives line has faced over the last decade. There has been a significantly increased volume of work due to the closing of churches, the deaths of clergy, a larger number of queries and the Ancestry.com project, so I estimate that I am now putting in 25-30% more time on a volunteer basis. As well, for much of what I do, I need to be in the building – there are limits to working at home when you are working with physical materials. While this is a labor of love and I do it gladly, I cannot hope but feel there ought to be a better solution.

By far the largest project completed this year was the completion of the Ancestry.com scanning project. Over the course of 18 months (mostly during COVID) the records for approximately 180 former and present churches in the Diocese of New Jersey were scanned. They are now in the process of being digitized, proof-read and indexed. Soon, free access to all of Ancestry's data bases will be provided free-of-charge to anyone at 808 West State Street. By July 2022 our records will be accessible through Ancestry, and in August 2022 we will receive a hard drive with all of the scanned records, along with an index of all the names in that data base.

To all those who volunteered to have your parish records scanned, I want to offer humble and hearty thanks for your cooperation and participation. I also want to thank Ann Notte, Mary Anne Clisham and John Conte who were so helpful in scheduling, picking-up and delivering the volumes. Kudos to Allie Graham as well, as she helped set up the connections with Ancestry that enabled us to start the project in the first place. And of course, many thanks to Bishop Stokes and all his support from day one. Soon, free access to all of Ancestry's data bases will be provided free-of-charge to anyone at 808 West State Street. By July 2022 our records will be accessible through Ancestry, and in August 2022 we will receive a hard drive with all of the scanned records, along with an index of all the names in that data base.

MATERIALS PRESENTLY KEPT IN THE ARCHIVES

Books: There is a library of parish histories, the Episcopal Church, historic hymnals and prayer books, and biographies and collections of writings from prominent New Jersey Clergy in our collection.

Files:

1. Clergy personnel files. Records of active, retired and deceased clergy, along with files of those no longer in the ordination process.
2. Correspondence and official acts of our bishops. Includes letters dimissory and some personal effects and items of historical interest, such as the signatures of those attending electing conventions.
3. Bishop Banyard's church files: We have the files our VIIth Bishop kept of his correspondence and visitations to our congregations during his episcopate.
4. The George Councill collection: In 2019 we were blessed to receive approximately 25 feet of files from Ruth Councill containing Bishop Councill's sermons with background notes and re- search documents covering the entire three year lectionary cycle.
5. Non-published parish histories. Often a part of landmark anniversaries, many are mimeographed or photocopied sheets.
6. Bulletins from Diocesan events, such as conventions, consecrations and landmark anniversaries.
7. Materials from Diocesan organizations (e.g. Episcopal Church women, Girls Friendly, Altar Guild, the Evergreens, St. Mary's Hall / Doane Academy, etc.). Includes newsletters, treasurer's reports, and regular publications.
8. Architectural plans: blueprints, architectural renderings and floor plans of churches and diocesan headquarters.

Photographs: These include historic black and white photos of churches (exterior and interior), clergy and lay leaders, photos that appeared in Via Media and other publications, photos of diocesan events, and a large collection of historic postcards.

Periodicals: Includes magazines and other regular diocesan publications, along with runs of the Historical magazine of the Episcopal Church and the Episcopalian (bound).

Extinct parishes: All extant records of churches that are no longer in existence, and include parish registers, registers of church services, Vestry minute books and treasurer's reports.

Multi-media.

1. Video tapes of major diocesan events and of television programs that included diocesan churches.
2. Audio tapes and phono records: Includes recordings of diocesan events and oral histories.
3. Microfilm: Colonial records of Christ Church Shrewsbury.
4. CDs/DVDs: Video and still photos of diocesan and parish events.

Data bases: There are both on-line and printed data bases with basic information on congregations, including

1. dates of origin and clergy. Included in this category are a series of card files which index the contents of
2. files and a list of books in the collection.

The Treasury: The archives are storing the ecclesiastical hardware of extinct congregations including chalices and patens, candlesticks and other brassware, missal stands, home communion sets, crosses, etc.

The Bishop's Closet: Vestments of all types are available, including cassocks, surplices, albs, stoles, chasubles and altar linens.

Miscellaneous ephemera: Includes commemorative plates and plaques, ordination certificates, vestments and linens, along with Prayer Books and other things saved from closed churches.

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