

## A Brief History of St. John's Parish

In 1759 the residents of this area petitioned the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to Foreign Parts, located in London, to send them a Priest and subsequently the Rev Jacob Bailey, lately graduated from Harvard as a classmate of John Adams. Jonathon Bowman and others arrived in this area to establish the first Anglican Church in the Northern Province of Massachusetts, which later became the Diocese of Maine.

Parson Bailey arrived here July 1, 1760 and began to hold services wherever he could find room until the Pownalborough Court House was built when he quickly pounced upon the Court Room for Divine Services.

By 1766 his Parsonage was built and on June 1, 1769 the contract was signed for the erection of the first St. John's Church.

Bailey served this Parish for 19 years when he fled Dresden for Nova Scotia during the Revolutionary War. He had refused to read the Declaration of Independence from his pulpit and to omit prayers for the health and well-being of His Majesty, King George, III of England. He left Dresden just ahead of a lynch mob!

Services were held from time to time in the old church until it fell into such disrepair it could no longer be used.

The year of 1832 finds this building constructed as the Dresden Union Meeting House, for the use of all faiths. And so it remained until June 11, 1848 when the services of the Episcopal church were heard within its walls as the Rt. Rev. George Burgess, first Bishop of the newly created Diocese of Maine began to re-organize St. John's Church and on January 26, 1849 this was done. November 17, 1852 this building was consecrated as St. John's Church by Bishop Burgess.

This Parish has seen its ups and downs over the years since that date but now you see it nearly restored with a new foundation, new bell tower, fresh paint, the gallery re-built, the 1870 Mason and Hamlin, two manual, full pedal board, reed organ re-built, all due to the hard work and generosity of the Friends of St. John's and the Trustees of Parochial Funds.

In closing this brief history let me tell you something about the Bell which you heard ringing a few moments ago joyfully announcing this celebration--On November 19, 1860, a letter was read to the members of the congregation dated "Norfolk House, October 15" presenting a Bell to this church which was thankfully accepted. It was cast by J.N. Hooper and Company of Boston, weighing 769 pounds. The letter went on to say that it "was to be rung on all proper occasions, such as July 4 th, Town Meetings, Fires, Funerals, Weddings and Public Worship."

Especially interesting to me is that the Bell was shipped here by the Schooner "Corene", Capt. Joseph Call, my great-great grandfather. Capt. Call and his family were staunch supporters of the church, he was buried from this church and his earthly remains are at rest in Pine Grove Cemetery about 1/2 mile from here.

Welcome to St. John's Church today.

Fr. Bruce Alexander