

A History of St James' Church

by Laverne McCurry, 1961

This manuscript was found amongst the papers of the late Ann Cleveland. It is published here (we believe), for the first time.

It appears that the honor of planting the church in Texarkana is given to Mr. H. M. Woodward who was associated with the Missouri Pacific Railroad. He secured the deed as gifts of that railroad to lots numbered 1 and 2 of block 4 in the town of Texarkana – (this location is known to us as the corner of 5th and Olive Streets, our present location). Also to two triangular shaped parcels – one across Olive Street which the church later sold to the Daughters of the Confederacy for the erection of a fine marble memorial statue honoring the men and women of the Confederate States of America. The other larger triangle at the intersection of 6th and State Live Avenue on the Arkansas side of State Line was later sold by the church. Deeds for these three parcels of land were delivered, April 23, 1877. The records show that “At the Marquand House” (a hotel downtown) on October 30, 1876 a meeting was held by persons favorable to organizing an Episcopal Church in this town, looking for the erection of a church building and organizing a parish.” The first meetings were held in a business building on Broad Street while later ones were held by the courtesy of the First Presbyterian Congregation in their house of worship (which was then located at 3rd and Texas Avenue).

The Rev. E. G. Benners, rector of Christ Church at old Jefferson, Texas, was a great help to proceeding properly and often came to minister at baptisms, marriages and funerals.

On the 12th day of February 1877, an application was made to the Rt. Rev. Alexander C. Garrett of the Missionary District of Northern Texas for permission to associates ourselves in communion with the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Untied States of America and the Missionary District of Northern Texas under the name of Saint James, whose authority and Canons we recognize conformity and to whose liturgy and mode of worship we promise conformity. The names attached are: H. M.

Woodward, W. E. Ehringer, H. P. Williams, Earnest Ringer, F. C. Marsden, J. C. Ives, W. H. Kakes, Dr. I. W. Taylor, E. R. Gaither, O. D. Scott, C. L. Pitcher and E. T. Dale.

The first mission in charge was the Rev. Claude Ritter in March 1878. During his stay, the first wooden chapel was completed and paid for at a cost of \$1,417.80 and was consecrated with the first baptism and confirmation by the Rt. Rev. Alexander C. Garrett on Sunday, May 3, 1878. The source of parish revenue was from “Pew Rent” until 1882. A minimum of \$20.00 per year was paid by the pew holders in quarterly payments of \$5.00. The original vestry was composed of Mr. H. M. Woodward, H. P. Williams, W. H. Kakes, Dr. J. W. Taylor, E. R. Gaither, Oscar D. Scott, C. L. Pitcher, Dr. E. T. Dale, J. T. Rosborough, W. A. Robinson, Earnest Ringer, F. C. Marsden, J. C. Ives and W. E. Ehringer.

The Rev. C. F. Newton came as Rector in January of 1879 and under him a church school was organized in 1881 for which a small wooden house was built behind the church. Bishop Garrett contributed \$50.00 and some school desks and the completing cost was \$555.00. The women of the parish contributed \$250.00. The first “Ladies Guild” was organized in May 1882 and became for many years a dependable source of revenue. Through the years they engaged in many (and sometimes unusual) forms of endeavor. Once they sponsored the showing of the Opera House of the great comedian Will Rogers. They had ice cream and cake “sociables”, chili suppers, and each Lent maintained at a downtown location, a tearoom for a “Bazaar” in connection.

In December of 1882, while the Rev. R. X. Collinson was rector, Mr. H. M. Woodward was called to the Life of Paradise” and the vestry, realizing his great contribution to the church in its beginning, adopted “resolutions of respect”. The lovely tall brass altar cross on our altar today was given as a memorial to this faithful churchman.

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To be continued.