

## Archivist's Report 2020

*Archivist (with apologies to Dr. Johnson): a harmless drudge that busies himself in tracing the original, and detailing the signification of historical records.*

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.

### 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 VIth 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 research 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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#### Accomplished in 2020

- Continued offering archival services for our Diocese and staff.
- answered over 60 inquiries,
- continued digitizing of 80 years of Confirmation records,
- held open houses in one closed churches
- took the lead in emptying the sacred items of one churches
- distributed vestments to clerics and churches in need in our Diocese and Haiti.
- Ancestry.com has completed the scanning of all the parish records of our extinct congregations along with several dozen active churches.
- received the collection the Rev. Elmer (Pat) Sullivan, including an entire run of Diocesan Journals.

In 2021 I will continue to offer the archival services to the Diocesan Staff and community. We are the repository of the records of 60 extinct congregations and have a number of requests for transfers and baptism records.

The major projects I am involved in during 2021 are:

1. To complete the scanning and digitizing of all our Parish Registers by Ancestry.com. I was desperate to get this project completed before we have another 'Sandy' event and more priceless records are lost forever.
2. Begin the scanning necessary to bridge the gap in digitally available diocesan journals, which is presently from 1921 to 2002.
3. To continue scanning the various Diocesan newspapers and newsletters, publication of which began in 1912.
4. To continue indexing the materials of our extinct congregations collection.
5. To scan and make available the sermons of the Rt. Revd George E Councill. Once the pandemic is over, I will be happy to invite some volunteers to assist with this project.
6. And one long-term goal: My predecessor, the Revd David R. King assembled the remarkable bicentennial book of the diocese and its congregations back in 1985. I have scanned it with the hope of making it more generally available. My hope, with our Bishop's support and the assistance of our clergy and congregations, to revise and update this work in time for the year 2025, the 240<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our diocese and 210<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the consecration of our first Bishop, the Rt. Revd John Croes.

It is a great joy to me and a reason for real pride for all our people that the resources located in our Diocesan archives preserve a treasure which catalogues the glorious 300 year history of our branch of the Church of Jesus Christ and ensures that this story will continue to be told.

We are in many ways the Diocesan attic, but the Archives are so much more. By providing outreach to individuals and congregations, services for our clergy and churches, and serving as a resource for sharing our inspirational story of faith through these three centuries, our collection is what gives context to our rapidly changing church and world. 'We are your stewards, O God. Guide us in your Grace.'

Respectfully submitted,

The Revd Canon Richard C. Wrede

Archivist, Diocese of New Jersey