

INVENTORY OF THE CHURCH
ARCHIVES OF DELAWARE

by the

HISTORICAL RECORDS SURVEY

PRELIMINARY DRAFT NOW BEING
CHECKED FOR FINAL ACCURACY

MARCH 1940

Binder #1

WORK PROJECTS ADMINISTRATION

DIVISION OF PROFESSIONAL AND SERVICE PROJECTS

OLD POST OFFICE BLDG.

WILMINGTON, DELAWARE

The Swedish church at Fort Christina (Wilmington) lost importance when the capital of New Sweden was moved up the river by Governor Johan Pritz in 1643. But in 1667 a new church of this denomination was built at Crane Hook south of Christina to accommodate Lutherans on this section of the river, including New Castle. This congregation in 1698-99 built a larger church on a site overlooking Fort Christina. It is now the Protestant Episcopal Holy Trinity Church (Old Swedes).

Grant of this territory to William Penn assured a continuance of religious toleration. As a member of the Religious Society of Friends he had been subject to persecution and had dreamed of a sanctuary, where each man might freely worship God according to his own conscience.

Congregations of the Dutch Reformed, Swedish Lutheran, Baptist, Friends, Presbyterian, and Episcopal faiths developed rapidly, in addition to small groups of Catholic and a few Jewish families.

Religious tolerance was continued when the Assembly of the counties that became Delaware separated from that Province of Pennsylvania in 1704. But in the colonial period there were limitations of religious tolerance statutory and otherwise in regard to officeholding. For a time, the required oath of county officials included not only a statement of belief in Christian tenets but also a declaration that the services of the church of Rome "are superstitious and idolatrous." These seeds of bigotry did not grow, and at the time of the Revolution the tradition of religious freedom was reflected in a bill of rights drafted by the conventions that formed the State, and was incorporated in the Constitution.

In such an atmosphere it is but natural that religious organizations of Negroes should get an early start. There were many freedmen in Delaware and even the slaves were customarily permitted by their masters to attend religious services, sometimes sitting the gallery of the "white folks' church" and sometimes meeting in their homes, or, in good weather, outdoors. Such meetings were conducted by lay preachers or occasionally by traveling evangelists. "Black Harry," the colored servant of Francis Asbury, is said to have preached effectively to both white and colored audiences. The earliest record of his preaching is May 13, 1781. There is also a record of Richard Allen, a colored minister, having preached in Wilmington as early as September 13, 1783.

The first organized colored congregation and the first to have its own church building was Zion Methodist Episcopal Church, established in Wilmington, in 1805. This organization was formed under the auspices of Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1813 some members withdrew under the leadership of Peter Spencer and organized the Union Church of African Members, which became the mother church of the African Union Methodist Protestant denomination.

In 1667 (three years after the English conquest of the Delaware) Lutherans in the vicinity of Christina and those of New Castle decided to build a new church at Crane Hook on the Delaware between these settlements. The small wooden structure accommodated Swedes, Finns, Dutch, (and it may be a few English families) in this region of the river and from the New Jersey shore opposite, until this church was abandoned in 1699 for the new church at the site of Christina (Old Swedes). The church was served by the Rev. Laurentius Carolus Lokenius (or Lars Carlson Lock), the only Swedish Lutheran pastor in this country at the period, by Domine Fabricius, a Dutch (originally German) Lutheran, and finally by Charles Christopher Springer as lay reader.

Occasional services of the Church of England must have been held in private homes during the last two decades of the century and as early as 1678 a minister of this denomination, Rev. John Yeo, from Maryland had preached in New Castle; but it was not until the formation in London in 1701 of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, that the English Church began to forge ahead rapidly through the efforts of missionaries sent, and in part supported, by the society.

Relations between these two denominations were close and cordial both in America and in Europe. In 1712 the Society sent a message to the King of Sweden, thanking him for his care of the religious needs of the Swedes on the Delaware, and Bishop Svedberg – whose son later founded the Swedenborgian faith (see Section XXXIII) _ was elected and honorary member of the Society.

The Swedish Mission to the Delaware was organized in Sweden in 1696, under the direction of King Charles XI, and three ministers were sent.

One Rev. Jonas Aureen came with instructions to return and report but before doing so he received news of the death on the King and, liking the country, he decided to remain. After preaching for a time on the Elk River in Maryland in a church not of the Lutheran denomination, he returned to the Delaware and to the Lutheran faith, becoming the second pastor of Trinity Church, Swedesboro, N. J. (see forthcoming Inventory of the Church Archives of New Jersey).

Of the other two, one took charge of the church at Wicocoa (now Gloria Dei, see forthcoming Inventory of the Church Archives of Pennsylvania), and the third, Rev. Erick Bjork, remained at Crane Hook. He later (Aug. 1709 et seq.) preached in English as well as Swedish and most of the clergy sent thereafter were bilingual.

The churches of the Delaware were part of the Diocese of Skara and of the Archdiocese of Upsala Sweden. As they increased in number and importance a Provost was placed in charge of the entire group. While no periodic conventions or conferences were held, there were occasional meetings of the Swedish clergy in the earlier days, and later such meetings included the clergy of German Lutherans and sometimes the Anglican clergy.

Rev. Megapolensis is contemporaneous and considered in connection with the above may reasonably be regarded as correct.

During the Dutch occupation occasional services of the Dutch Reformed religion were held at the fort but there is nothing to indicate an organized congregation at any later date. First settled clergyman, Rev. Reorus Torkillus, 1640-43.

B. SWANWYCK CHURCH, (defunct), Swanwyck.

Date of origin is uncertain but it is thought to have been a few years prior to surrender of the territory to the Dutch. Located in the town of Swanwyck about a mile above Fort Casimir. It is doubtful if any church building was erected, although this is not definitely known. However when Fort Casimir, built by the Dutch in 1651, was taken by Governor Johan Rising in 1654 and re-named Fort Trinity he stationed Rev. Petrus Hjort, one of the two ministers with his expedition, at the fort as the center of his parish. No church is known to have been built in the fort and had there been one at Swanwyck so close by it would logically have been selected as the parish church. When the church became defunct is likewise uncertain.

Services were probably held first by Rev. Lars Lokenius and later by Rev. Petrus Hjort, during the short period he was here. He was sent back to Sweden when the Dutch took possession in September 1655. A Dutch preacher, Abenius Zetseroon who seems to have been a Dutch Lutheran although not an ordained minister is said to have preached to the Swedes at "Swanhook," in 1663. This evidently refers to the Swanwyck congregation, its proximity to New Amstel (New Castle), often called "Sandhook", accounting for the error in the name. Zetseroon seems to have been the schoolmaster at New Amstel at the time as he was offered that position at Tinicum, where he preached to the Swedes in the fall of 1663, but the people of New Amstel did not consent.

Also we find from the court records, (Records of the Court of New Castle – Capt. John Carr, 1676-1681; Lancaster, Pa., Colonial Society of Pennsylvania, 1904, p. 247), that Rev. Jacob Fabritius, who could not have been in New Castle before 1670, borrowed seventy seven guilders from this church, the money being advanced by one of the trustees. We would infer the church was still active at that time were it not that other exploits of the Rev. Fabritius indicate he was quite capable of borrowing the funds of a church long since defunct. The above record shows, however, that regardless of when religious services ceased the church had assets consisting of this debt and a certain amount of wampum until November 4, 1678. On that day the widow of the trustee who had made the loan asked the court to decide to whom it should be repaid. Their order that it should be paid to "this Church of New Castle as the nearest to it, those of ye Crain hook having already received a good part thereof" ended the technical existence of the Swanwyck Church.

Its existence as an active congregation no doubt had ended some years earlier. The Crane Hook church was built in 1667 but two or three miles up the river. As many communicants of this church came from long

distances and many also from the other side of the Delaware, it is unlikely this new church of the same denomination would have been built so close or even on the same side of the river, if the Swanwyck congregation were still active. The court record cited above reveals that the Crane Hook congregation received some of the assets of the defunct church and presumably also some of its former members. At the same time it establishes the fact that it was not a direct successor to the older church, since then no question would have arisen as to disposition of its assets.

Swanwyck, originally a Swedish village, had become almost entirely Dutch by 1675, as a proposal to form two Swedish Lutheran parishes on the Delaware with Rev. Jacob Fabritius to the lower on was objected to by the Swedes and Finns, saying "if the Dutch priest desires to teach lethem remain among his own people at Swanwyck and preach before the Dutch." This shift in population together with the Dutch church in New Amstel, built in 1657, and the presence there for some time of an ordained minister probably resulted in a gradual decline in the Swanwyck congregation.

C. CRANE HOOK CHURCH, 1667-- , Crane Hook.

Organized 1667, holding services at Crane Hook until the present church was built in 1699. See, Holy Trinity (Old Swedes) Protestant Episcopal Church, entry 525.

United Lutheran Churches

The evangelical Lutheran Ministerius of Pennsylvania, organized 1748, combined in 1918 with two other Lutheran bodies to form the United Lutheran Church, of which all the older Lutheran churches now active in Delaware are members. The United Lutheran Church, 39 E. 35th St., New York.

185. ZION'S GERMAN EVANGELICAL LUTHEAN CHURCH, 1848-- , 6th and Jackson Sts., Wilmington.

Organized 1848 and incorporated October 25, 1856, by German immigrants, holding services in Old Central Hall at 4th and King Sts. Arrangements were made with Trinity Church (entry 525) for space in Old Swedes Cemetery, as the burial grounds of this congregation. They moved to 6th and Walnut Sts. in 1857 and again moved to 6th and French Sts. in 1865, remaining there until 1898, when the building was sold to the Orthodox Adas Kodesh Congregation (entry 179) and the present church was built. Dedicated the same year. Annex added in 1929. Romanesque style, with tower and bell. First settled clergyman, Re. Frederick Walz, 1848-52, educated in Germany. See: Rev. Paul Isenschmidt, History of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, (Reading, Pa., German Druckerei, 1898); Zion Messenger, published by church, 1933-- , article in Wilmington Every Evening, Dec. 1 19928.

Minutes, 1912-- . loose – leaf files; in possession of Harry S. Neher, 1123 W.5th St. Register 1848-- , 4 vols.; Financial, 1933-- , 1 vol.; loose – leaf; Sunday School. 1912-- , 3 vols.; in possession of pastor, Rev. Sterling F. Bashore, 1016 W. 8th St. Records of incorporation and

clergyman, Rev. Stevens Parker, 1857-83. First dean of the Cathedral, the Very Rev. Hiram Rockwell Bennett, 1935--. See: Victor D. Hanby, *Improvements and Additions of St. John's Church* (Wilmington, C. L. Story, 1919); Very Rev. Hiram Rockwell Bennett, "A Cathedral for Delaware," in *The Cathedral Age* (Washington, D. C., 1936, pp. 13-16).

Minutes, 1857--, 5 vols.; Register, 1857--, 3 vols.; Financial, 1857--, 5 vols.; Sunday School, 1857--, 5 vols.; in church safe in custody of Victor D. Hanby, Bursar. Records of incorporation and deeds: New Castle Co. Recorder's office, Deeds Record, vol. X6, p. 266; vol. V6, p. 492; vol. U26, p. 301; vol. V26, p. 362; Private Acts Record, vol. E1, p. 342.

524. BISHOPSTEAD AND CHAPEL OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD, 1887--, 14th St. at Orange St., Wilmington.

Official residence of the Bishop of Delaware Diocese, title to the property having been taken by the Diocese in 1887. Building had previously been occupied by the Right Rev. Alfred Lee, D. D., LL. D., first Bishop of the Diocese who purchased it in 1841, making extensive alternations. Building originally erected by Oliver Canby in 1742 of brick and stone. Early English style. Has been covered in recent years with stucco finish. The adjoining chapel was built in 1890. One story red brick structure with stained glass windows. Gothic style. Over the altar hangs a painting, a copy of Raphael's "The Transfiguration", said to be the most valuable painting in Delaware. It was presented to the Bishop stead by Mrs. John McLulick of New Castle, as a memorial to her first husband, Randolph Clay. This is the private chapel of the Bishop, but public services are often held there.

Register, (marriages, baptisms, deaths), 1837--, 4 vols.; in possession of the Bishop of the diocese. Record of deed: New Castle Co. Recorder's office, Deeds Record, vol. B16 p. 379.

525-526. TRINITY PARISH, Wilmington, 1667--.

525. HOLY TRINITY CHURCH (OLD SWEDES), E. 7th and Church Sts. The parish church, 1667-1830.

Organized in 1667 as a Swedish Lutheran Church, being an outgrowth of services held at Fort Christina since 1638. Congregation included Swedish Dutch, and English communicants, widely scattered along both shores of the Delaware, this being the only Lutheran church below Tinicum Island.

A building, probably of logs, was erected at Crane Hook, a low-lying, marshy section, below the mouth of the Christina River. The churchyard served as a burying ground. No trace remains of the old tombstones or the church, but its site is marked by a monument and is indicated by a marker placed at the nearest point on the Wilmington-New Castle road, erected in recent years by the Historic Markers Commission of Delaware.

At this time Rev. Lars Lokenius (or Lock), who had come to America during the time of Governor Johan Printz, seems to have been the only ordained minister on the Delaware. Rev. Reorus Torkillus had died in the fall of 1643, shortly after the arrival of Rev. Johan Campanius, who came with Governor Printz, and the latter had returned to Sweden in 1648. The Rev. Lokenius (or Lock), served the church until his death in 1688.

In 1677, Rev. Jacob Fabritius arrived from New Amsterdam and settled at Wicocoa, a little above the present site of Philadelphia. He served the churches there and at Tinicum, preaching usually in Dutch, as his knowledge

of Swedish was faulty. During the latter years of Lokenius' (or Lock's) ministry the Rev. Fabritius preached frequently at Crane Hook, and after the death of Lokenius (or Lock), this church was added to his itinerary, despite the fact that he had become blind in 1682 and the infirmities of age made the long trip quite burdensome. Shortly before his death in 1691 he asked that another minister be sent to relieve him, but without success.

This colony was no longer under the Swedish Government. It was in the midst of a populous community speaking a different language, and there had been no immigration from Sweden for many years. Aside from a few old folks, they were all American born and had no close ties with Sweden.

During the five years following the death of Fabritius, The Crane Hook Church almost dies for want of suitable minister. Services were held by lay preachers, but were irregular and poorly attended. Appeals to Sweden for a minister were fruitless until 1696, when the matter was brought to the attention of the King. Through the great interest he took in his former subjects, the "Swedish Mission in America" was formed. Ministers were sent, their traveling expenses being paid by the Government. With them were sent books for the religious and secular instruction of the people. Rev. Johan Campanius while in America fifty years previously had translated Luther's Shorter Catechism into the Lenni-Lenape language. This was printed by order of the King and five hundred copies sent to America.

Of the three ministers who came, one was commissioned as pastor at Tinicum, the "Upper Church", and the other, Rec. Erick Bjork, at the "Lower Church", Crane Hook. Within two years of his arrival work was started on the present church building. It was completed and dedication services were held on Trinity Sunday 1699. The name of the church was changed to Trinity. Although the old building was abandoned there were still interments in the old cemetery as late as 1714. The site of the new church on the brow of a hill overlooking Fort Christina had been a cemetery. To provide room for the church additional land was donated by a member of the congregation. A school for instruction of the children was opened in the congregation. A school for instruction of the children was opened in the church building before the end of the year. Work was started on a parsonage in 1701, but it was still unfinished in 1710 when the Rev. Bjork moved in with his family. It was probably completed about 1714 in which year Bjork was called back to Sweden.

For nearly a hundred years this church and the others higher up the Delaware were supplied with Swedish ministers by the "Swedish Mission in America". But there had been no further immigration from Sweden. The Congregation consisted almost entirely of American-born communicants, many of whom had little or no knowledge of the Swedish tongue. In the meantime, the Protestant Episcopal Church closely allied with the Swedish Lutheran, in the midst of a growing English-speaking community, had increased in members.

Finally, in 1786 the congregation asked that they be allowed to choose American ministers. Permission was granted by the Archbishop of Upsala after some delay, and in 1791 the Swedish pastor, Rev. Lawrence Girelius, returned to Sweden. Rev. Joseph Clarkson, an Episcopal minister, was called to the pulpit.

There is some question as to the exact status of Trinity Church during the succeeding years. Until 1833 it is said to have been included in the records of the diocese of Skara (Sweden) as a congregation of the Swedish Lutheran Church. Its pastor, Rev. Joseph Clarkson, was quite active in the affairs of the diocese, but whether or not he was acting officially as rector of Trinity Church is uncertain. The first mention of the church in the diocesan minutes was in 1817, acknowledging payment of its share of the expenses of the previous diocesan convention in 1816. Trinity Parish was