



Christ Church Looks Back

by Joseph A. Tomberlin

Recent monthly articles in *The Vineyard* have dealt with the history of Christ Church in the early 1950's. Now, we turn back a few years to the forties to examine the circumstances in which the congregation decided to build a new church at 1521 North Patterson Street.

During World War II, when Christ Church was still on East Central Avenue, the Vestry launched an effort to prepare for possible expansion by purchasing a lot behind the church. Vestrymen discussed the matter in a meeting on February 23, 1943, and asked the Vicar, Fr. Thomas Mundy, to write a letter to the owner offering \$350.00 for the property. The owner was Emma Wiley Griffin Hardman of Commerce, Georgia; she was the widow of Lamartine Griffin Hardman, who had served two two-year terms as Governor of Georgia between 1927 and 1931. She was a native of Valdosta and had been married to Hardman, who was twenty-six years older than she, from 1907 to 1937, when he died of heart failure at age eighty. The Hardman family also had owned a summer home south of Valdosta known as Alcyone Plantation.

Fr. Mundy dutifully wrote Mrs. Hardman and pointed out that her lot was of very limited value because it had no direct access to either Central Avenue or Hill Avenue. A copy of Fr. Mundy's letter is in the Vestry records, but Mrs. Hardman's response is missing. What is clear, however, is that she would not

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consider less than \$500.00 for the lot. Consequently, Vestry held a called meeting to comply with Bishop Middleton Barnwell's instructions to reconsider the \$350.00 offer to Mrs. Hardman in light of her demand for \$500.00 and of Christ Church's pressing need for the land. Having debated the issue, vestrymen approved a Carroll-McEachern motion to pay Mrs. Hardman her \$500.00. Parish records do not indicate whether the sale actually was consummated, but one can infer that it was, because, after the War's end, Vestry revisited the question of expansion to make Sunday School space available.

On the first occasion, during a Vestry meeting on October 9, 1945, discussion about the need for Sunday School rooms led to a variety of "proposals about tents, cinder-block classrooms, etc." Vestry reached no conclusions at that point but agreed to continue talking about the topic and did so at the next meeting on October 30th. What occurred between the two dates in October is unknown, but the Minutes of the October 30th session declared, "cinder block construction proving ill-advised at this time, a proposal to investigate a new site for the Church itself was raised and tabled after discussion to be reconsidered after more data is [sic] available."

On November 25, 1945, Vestry took two significant actions, one of which was unrelated to the matter of a new location for Christ Church. First, having recommended on March 4, 1945, that Clifton H. White, a communicant, be ordained

in the diaconate [and he was so ordained on April 29, 1945], vestrymen approved a motion that Deacon White be ordained priest and that their recommendation be sent to the Standing Committee of the Diocese. At the same time, they took up the possibility of buying from the J.F. Holmes family a lot directly across North Patterson Street from Georgia State Womans College at a price of \$6,000. A major aspect of the proposed purchase was that Christ Church would make a down payment of \$3,000.00, but there was no stipulation about a source for the remaining \$3,000.00. At the suggestion of James D. Carroll, the purchase in question was to be taken up initially with the property owners and then with Bishop Barnwell.

In the December 20, 1945, Vestry meeting, Senior Warden Abram Taylor Coppage read aloud both his letter to Bishop Barnwell about the desired acquisition of the Patterson Street lot from the Holmes family and the Bishop's response. Barnwell approved the purchase at \$6,000.00, including a down payment of \$3,000.00, and offered to sign notes for three annual payments of \$1,000.00 at 4 percent interest to complete the transaction. Horace Caldwell then offered a motion, seconded by Jamie Carroll, to carry out the process as the Bishop advised. But Mr. Caldwell also urged the Senior Warden to write Barnwell inquiring about "a commitment on the financial support which the Diocese would give toward the building of the Church."

Stay tuned; this story continues in the September *Vineyard*.