



# Christ Church Looks Back

by Joseph A. Tomberlin

**W**e learned in the December *Vineyard* that the source of the \$15,000.00 loan Christ Church used to pay for building the Parish Hall was a "Mrs. Simpson," who is not further identified in the Vestry Minute Book. No additional information about her has turned up. Zoë Coburn, Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Diocese of Georgia, deposited the proceeds of the Simpson loan in the Citizens and Southern National Bank in Savannah on March 8, 1949. A copy of the deposit slip remains attached to a letter from Miss Coburn in the Vestry Minute Book.

On March 11, 1949, Senior Warden Jerome Tillman received a letter from Bishop Middleton Barnwell about a five-thousand-dollar gift the national church had extended to Christ Church. Barnwell said that the offer had come in a letter from a Dr. Wieland and asserted, "I think the safest thing to do is to accept this gift. . . ." He wrote, "I quite agree with Dr. Wieland that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, but I await your instructions before replying." For whatever reason, Mr. Tillman delayed his response until March 28, 1949, when he informed Barnwell that he "had shown your letter to most of the Vestry here and they have agreed to follow your suggestion and accept the gift from the National Council." Tillman said also, "We are most grateful for any and all help we can get, and hope that you will express to Dr. Wieland our

sincerest appreciation of the interest he has shown in our behalf." The Bishop responded tersely on March 30, 1949, "I have written Dr. Wieland for the \$5,000. . . ." Christ Church's Vestry later used the gift, actually slightly less than \$5,000, to accelerate repayment of the loan from Mrs. Simpson.

About a year later, in the Vestry meeting on February 5, 1950, Mr. Tillman declared that he had asked for "the remittance of the \$5,000.00 (approximately) obtained through the Bishop - to be applied, if possible, in the reduction of the principal, if such a course [is] acceptable to the mortgagor [Mrs. Simpson]." He said that, in any case, Christ Church had to pay the specified amount due in 1950. If the "extra payment" were not satisfactory to Mrs. Simpson, he would explore means of investing the \$5,000.00 "and report to the Vestry, with his recommendations, for action by the Vestry as a whole."

Mrs. Simpson obviously considered the additional payment acceptable. According to the Vestry's financial report of February 28, 1950, the five thousand dollars turned out to be \$4,956.28. With that sum added to the amount already due on the principal, Christ Church paid Mrs. Simpson \$7,555.56, as Treasurer Noah Fry disclosed to the Vestry on March 4, 1950. Mr. Fry noted, "Future payments have so been arranged as to clean up the balance of the obligation [in] four years." And he added,

"Present funds are a bit on the low side, but it is felt that generally

speaking, the entire financial situation is in fair shape."

Just after Christ Church made the first large payment on the mortgage a seeming complication occurred. In a called Vestry meeting on March 25, 1950, Mr. Tillman requested action on a letter from Bishop Barnwell, who asked that "the Vestry furnish him with proper evidence of the obligation on the mortgage to be used by him in backing up his unsecured obligation to the Diocese." Vestry then approved a motion that the President and the Treasurer of the Christ Church corporation, meaning the Senior Warden and the Treasurer [Mr. Tillman and Mr. Fry], "be empowered to prepare and submit to the Bishop the proper papers in such form as would be correct and suitable."

The same issue arose again at the next regular Vestry session on April 14, 1950. This time, Mr. Tillman informed Vestry that, "so far as the Diocese was concerned, the obligation of the Vestry, as regards the mortgage, was improperly worded and that the Bishop requested a duplicate of the note to Mrs. Simpson with the payments as made - signed by the corporation," meaning, presumably, the Christ Church corporation. Vestry thereupon approved a motion to prepare and to submit the requested papers to Bishop Barnwell, with Mr. Tillman and Mr. Fry handling the process. Mr. Fry, as Treasurer, duly reported to Vestry on May 7, 1950, that "the papers requested by the Bishop, in reference to the mortgage, had been executed and delivered."