



Christ Church Looks Back

by Joseph A. Tomberlin

November's history article began tying up loose ends from the building of the new Christ Church, including the Parish Hall, in 1948 and 1949. One unfinished piece of business was Mixer Electric Company's \$156.00 bill for wiring the stove and oven in the kitchen. As previously related, Vestry received the written invoice on May 1, 1949, and approved payment "as part of the Church installation." Also, as reported, the charges, for reasons now unclear, provoked controversy that continued meeting after meeting in the remainder of 1949 and did not end until September 1950.

For example, the Vestry minutes of March 4, 1950, stated, "[Senior Warden Jerome] Tillman is handling the Mixer situation." The minutes of April 14, 1950, reported that the "Mixer situation was mentioned. In view of no figures from Mixer, no action." Minutes from the May 7, 1950, meeting declared, "In the absence of details from Mixer as to his long outstanding bill, matter was left in status quo, pending further advices from him." On July 21, 1950, Senior Warden Jerome Tillman "requested that he be placed on record as rejecting the Mixer bill as presented." The parish records provide no indication of the nature of the Mixer bill "presented" at that meeting. The culmination of efforts to clear the disputed charges from Mixer Electric came finally at the Vestry's session on September 10, 1950. At the bottom of the minutes of that date appears the following blunt statement:

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"There will be no further discussion of the Mixer bill in any Vestry meeting." Christ Church's minutes book does not contain any further reference to the issue, so, as pointed out in November, "it is not clear that it was ever resolved. . . ."

The remaining topic to be clarified is the financing for the building of Christ Church's Parish Hall, then known as the "assembly hall." For those wishing to refresh their memories, Christ Church's efforts to obtain \$15,000.00 to construct the Parish Hall were explored in considerable detail in the June 2012, July 2012, and August 2012 issues of *The Vineyard*. In brief, as Bishop Middleton S. Barnwell recommended, Christ Church's Vestry incorporated itself to be able legally to mortgage church property to borrow the necessary funds. Barnwell also suggested the Citizens and Southern National Bank in Savannah or in Valdosta as the source of a loan. In the Vestry meeting of February 6, 1949, Senior Warden Jerome Tillman spoke of "a slight difficulty" with obtaining a loan from the local C & S and said that "he was endeavoring to straighten the matter out." He also mentioned that Christ Church might acquire the money from a private source instead of C & S. That is precisely what occurred; regrettably, Christ Church's records contain a very slight paper trail for the historian to follow in reconstructing the story. However, scattered clues provide enough information that the story can be told in a sketchy fashion.

First, on March 8, 1949, Zoë Coburn, of the diocesan office, sent a letter to Mr. Tillman, in which she wrote, "Immediately upon receipt of your telegram today I made up deposit [of \$15,000.00] as requested and left this with Mr. Joseph Harrison, Vice President of the Citizens & Southern National Bank here [in Savannah], copy of deposit slip enclosed, and he said he would take care of the matter as you requested." The copy of the deposit slip for \$15,000.00 is still attached to Miss Coburn's letter in Christ Church's Minute Book. But there is no copy of Mr. Tillman's telegram outlining his instructions for the bank deposit.

Neither Miss Coburn's letter nor the deposit slip provides an indication of the source of the \$15,000.00, but I assumed that the money came from the Valdosta C & S National Bank. Eventually I found evidence, in Vestry minutes of February 5, 1950, of the inaccuracy of my assumption. Back in March of 1949, Christ Church had been offered a gift of \$5,000.00 by the National Council of the Episcopal Church to aid in defraying construction costs. Now, in the Vestry meeting on February 5, 1950, Senior Warden Jerome Tillman reported that he "had requested the remittance of the \$5,000.00 obtained through the Bishop---to be applied, if possible, in the reduction of the principal of our mortgage, if such a course [is] acceptable to the mortgagor." The next sentence identified a "Mrs. Simpson," not C & S, as the holder of the mortgage.

This story continues in the January 2013 *Vineyard*.