

# OLDEST TOWN IN STATE HAS OLDEST CHURCH

**Bath, Quaint Colonial North Carolina Town, Fell Asleep Two Centuries Ago—St. Thomas' Episcopal Church Mecca for Tourists.**

(GERTRUDE CARRAWAY.)

Few people know that east Carolina has a cathedral. Not a cathedral in the narrow sense of the word as a very handsome edifice built elaborately for the seat and throne of the bishop in the most important part of the diocese but a real cathedral in the broad sense of being the bishop's own church and parish, his special charge, of outstanding importance and interest.

### Oldest Church in State.

This cathedral is St. Thomas' Episcopal church at Bath, in Beaufort county, the oldest church in North Carolina, built in 1734, in the oldest town of North Carolina. The church has been designated as the direct charge of the Rt. Rev. Thomas C. Darst of Wilmington, bishop of the diocese of East Carolina, as his only special parish and cathedral.

Rev. J. M. Bynum, who has been acting as vicar of the church, has recently moved from Belhaven to Roanoke Rapids. Rev. Stephen C. Gardner, rector of St. Peter's church in Washington, has been appointed by Bishop Darst to succeed Mr. Bynum as vicar of the church. Rev. J. A. Vache, candidate for the Episcopal priesthood, has been named by the bishop to hold services there on the first Sunday afternoon in every other month at 3 o'clock, alternating with a morning service at 11 o'clock there on every other first Sunday.

These services will very likely serve to recreate interest in the historic old parish. Last summer an unusually large number of persons attended services there and many more visited the edifice to inspect the interior and exterior. With the opening of the 15-mile paved highway there from Washington many visitors have been there. Increasing numbers are expected this summer.

Pilgrimages will probably be taken by Episcopalians in the section at certain times during the year. At other times, when regular services are not being held, visitors will be shown around the buildings by guides that are well versed in the history of the church. Even when the church is found locked a special guide may be found in a nearby house to take visitors on a personally-conducted tour of the edifice.

The small brick church is attractively situated in a grassy yard on a hill at Bath. A stone walk through bordering hedges leads through the front yard to the church doors. Graves in the yard date back for many years. Bricks used in the structure came from England. The exterior is severely simple. There is no steeple. A few plain brick decorations surmount the door. Ivy has crept up the front and sides and lends much to the appealing setting of the old church.

Above the narrow front door is a marble slab, with the name, "St. Thomas' church. Built 1734." Higher up is an old brick, with the inscription, "Bath, 1705. Church, 1734." This is thought to be an original brick and original inscription, removed mysteriously from the church some time ago and recently restored to its original position. Some doubt still remains in the minds of some residents as to the correct version of the disappearance of the brick. One theory is that it was removed by two boys, who carried it by bicycle to Washington, where it was sold to a New Yorker, who in turn disposed of it to a north-

ern museum. Upon seeing it there, a former resident of Bath had it returned to the church after a suit for its recovery.

The other story is that the brick was missing for a long time until found and taken to Miss Lida Rodman of Washington, who had it restored to its proper place.

At the right of the front door is another marble marker, with the inscription: "Erected by Wm. Walling, Esqr., A. D., 1871. In Memory of John Lawson, Joel Martin and Simon Alderson, Founders of Bath Town, in the Year 1706."

A similar tablet on the left has the wording: "Thomas Boyd. Born March 7, 1774. Died Near Long-Acre Bridge, Beaufort County, January 3, 1864. He Was an Honest Man. The Sweet Remembrance of the Just Shall Flourish When He Sleeps in Dust."

### Original Doors.

The doors of the church are the original ones, hand-made and pegged. The tiles that form the floor are square, as long and wide as modern bricks are long. Originally designs were traced on them, but the passing of many feet has almost obliterated them. In spots there are still faintly visible traces of dragon heads, flowers and other designs.

The church is small inside. On both sides are old wooden pews, cut by hand. They are placed on platforms raised above the floor. Underneath are graves of early settlers, the coffins being said to have been packed in as closely as possible. These colonists were buried thus inside the church for fear of Indians.

Wooden markers used to be there, telling the names, dates and distinctions of the buried. These were taken up several years ago and placed in the church yard. From there they have been carried away by souvenir hunters.

Huge hanging lamps are still used in the church. Electricity has not been added. On the altar are large silver candelabra, given to the church by King George II of England. These are still in use, but have been somewhat damaged by frequent handling. English visitors stated recently that British museums would pay large sums for them.

A silver communion cup, said to have been given the parish by English royalty, is reported by the guides to have disappeared about thirty years ago. It can not be located.

On display there, under a glass case, is an old Bible, given to the colony in 1703 by Queen Anne of England. It has been presented to the church and is kept carefully under locked cover. The old bell that is still rung for services is said to have been presented by Queen Anne. Visitors are sometimes permitted to pull the old rope and hear the tones of the bell.

At the right side of the altar is a tablet with an epitaph. Apparently the grave has been disturbed. Tradition says that some men some years ago went to the church at night to dig up the corpse, probably for jewelry. They got out the coffin, examined it and were putting it back, when the wind shifted and began to shriek loudly. Uncanny noises frightened the men and they left the place hurriedly, without finishing their task of sealing back the grave.

The plate there reads: "Here Lies the Body of Mrs. Margaret Palmer, Wife of Robert Palmer, Esqr., One of His Majesty's Council and Surveyor General of the Lands of This Province, Who Departed This Life Oct. 19, 1765. Aged 44 Years. After Labouring Ten of Them Under the Fervent Bodily Afflictions Brought on by Changes of Climate and Tho' She Went to Her Native Land Receiv'd No Relief, but Returned and Bore Them With Uncommon Resolution and Resignation to the Last."

Although St. Thomas' church is the most important and popular historic site in Bath, there are other interesting places there. On June 19, 1924, a granite boulder was unveiled there on the main square by the North Carolina Historical Commission, board of commissioners of Beaufort county, the North Carolina Society of Colonial Dames and the mayor and board of aldermen of Bath.

On the bronze plate, beneath the state sign and motto, is the following inscription:

"Bath, originally the Indian town of Pampticough, was settled by white men about 1690 and incorporated in 1705. It is the oldest town in North Carolina. Its first commissioners were John Lawson, Joel Martin and Simon Alderson. Here was founded in 1709 the first public library in the colony. St. Thomas' church, built in 1734, is the oldest church in the state. The

general assembly met in Bath in 1744 and in 1752."

In 1709 the spot was described as "not the unpleasantest part of the country—nay in all probability it will be the center of trade." The prediction has failed to come true, as the town is still only a small place. It is, nevertheless, in a lovely location and has the charm of old historic centers.

The town used to be the county seat of Beaufort county and many prominent personages resided there. Governor Hyde lived there and records show the purchase of land by his successors Governor Eden.

Tobias Knight, secretary of the province and judge of the admiralty, also resided in Bath, as did the famous pirate, Edward Teach. No proof was offered for the accusations and the men were not punished, but an old inhabitant wrote of these persons:

"Near the mouth of the creek on its western bank stood the palace of Governor Eden, and from the creek to the steep bank was cut a subterranean passage through which Edward Teach, or Black Beard, in complicity with Governor Eden and his secretary, Tobias Knight, received goods captured by Teach on the high seas and through this passage deposited in the cellar of the palace. What he did with them has never been known. Outside the palace of the governor was a rock wharf, the stone foundation still remaining, and buried in the mud just beyond this wharf is one of Teach's old cannons."

Teach had a dwelling on Pamlico river about a quarter of a mile from the mouth of Bath creek, which flows by the town. Bricks are still evident from its foundations. Remains of his reputed ships may also be seen.

### Capture of Teach.

In Bath Town it was said that after a raid in the Caribbean sea, he "worked the town, firing indiscriminately upon all, or any, of its citizens, using such fiery oaths as never man heard before." As North Carolinians know, Teach was finally captured near Ocracoke inlet, in Pamlico sound, by Lieutenant Maynard of the British navy.

With the capture of Teach's sloop Maynard cut off the pirate's head, it is said, fastened it to his bowsprit and sailed up to Bath Town, where there was great rejoicing.

Christopher Gayle, chief justice of the colony, lived at Bath, as did John Lawson, surveyor-general under the crown, the first historian of North Carolina and an assistant in the settling of New Bern, second oldest town in the province. Lawson boasted that his colony was the only one of which he knew that had been founded in peace without bloodshed by the natives.

The first library in the state was brought to Bath by Rev. Thomas Bray, founder and secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. He had been a missionary to the province and had married Martha Pollock. His collection of books was valued at £100.

The town was visited in 1765 by George Whitefield, British evangelist, who also went to other places in the province. His reception at Bath was said to have been so cool and indifferent that he is reported to have shaken its dust from his feet and to have invoked the curses of heaven upon the place.

One of the oldest and most interesting places in Bath is the old Marsh home, built in 1744. The old English brick chimney is said to be 17 feet broad and 4 feet thick with windows in it which opened on closets.

### Family Burial Ground.

The family burial ground was behind the building. Mrs. Mary Evans is among those interred there her tombstone bearing a medallion of the lady herself, surrounded by scroll work. In addition to her name and dates, a poem tells of her youthful grace. She is said to have died of a broken heart after her husband had been lost in a wreck at sea.

The epitaph on the soapstone tombstone follows, the old "t" being frequently used for "s":

"Here lies the body of Mrs. Mary Evans, who departed this life Jan'y 31st, 1758. Aged 19 years. Cou'd bloom of youth, cou'd universal love, cou'd tears of parting friends to pitty, move relentless fate sure fate had been inclined to spare a maid for other joys design'd. But since one common death, one common grave awaits the youthful nymph the generous brave since nought on earth, but yields to God's decree and heaven declar'd that short man's joys muf't be let this fair flower cropt in its frefhet bloom teach us that life's a span, that death's our doom, that all our hopes on our Redeemer rest

like her with Him to rise like her with Him be blest."

Among other interesting old places to be seen in and around Bath is the old Ormand estate, about two miles north of the town. There was another plantation owned by a bachelor of the Ormand family whose wealth aroused the envy of his slaves. The negroes are said to have smothered their master by throwing a large feather bed over him while he was asleep. Tradition says that three of the negroes were burned at the stake in Bath.

### Remains of Old Fort.

Remains of the old fort, built during an Indian massacre in the early part of the eighteenth century, may still be seen near the southern end of Front street in Bath. There was also another fort on Pamlico river.

The first road and the first ferry in the province were said to be on the way from Bath to New Bern. Old residents of the section say now that they have seen old sign boards on the road directing the way to Core Point, on the south side of Pamlico river, opposite Bath. Tradition says that the Core Point road was originally an Indian trail leading from Bath to the Swansboro section, through New Bern. Core Point took its name from the Core Indians.

Bath and the surrounding section are just beginning to receive their due share of attention from the rest of the state. Its historic interest, its relics and reminders of past happenings and its present beauties of situation and waterfront are attracting increasingly large numbers of visitors.

### NO FISHING BEFORE 11TH.

No fishing will be permitted before Thursday, according to an announcement from the attorney general's office. The season is closed through June 10th. Many have interpreted the law to mean that the tenth day is not included in the closed season. However, it is held that the season will not open until the eleventh, and all found fishing on Wednesday will be arrested.

The 150 acres planted to lespedeza in Currituck county this spring show a good stand of the legume and indications are that the crop will become increasingly popular in the county.

## MR. JOSEPH GRANT, AGED 77, DIES

**Ferry Man Claimed by Death Friday Afternoon—Locals and Personals.**

Ferry, June 8.—Mr. Joseph Grant, aged seventy-seven, passed away at his home Friday afternoon after an extended illness and much suffering. He is survived by his widow and four children at home, and one son by a former marriage, Mr. Lee Grant, of the Mt. Vernon section. Mr. Grant was married three times, last to Mrs. Fannie Atkinson.

Funeral services were held Saturday afternoon at Floyd's Creek church where he became a member in early manhood. Rev. T. C. Harris conducted the services. Pallbearers were Messrs Broadus Pearson, Robert Gordon, Jack Henson, Clyde Gordon, Timmons Dyer and Thomas Gordon. The girls who bore the nice array of flowers were Misses Lovenia Scruggs, Lizzie McEntyre, Amy Dyer, Ruby Jolly, Hazel Scruggs, Marie McEntyre and Mrs. Jack Henson. The grave was beautifully covered with the floral offering.

Rev. A. G. Melton preached his final sermon at Floyd's Creek Sunday, he read Matthew 24, his subject "The second coming of Christ" Matt. 24:44, was well discussed. Floyd's Creek is just now without a pastor.

Mrs. Chas. E. Keeter and daughter, Mrs. Walter Ware and Miss Faye Daniel all of Lincolnton, Ga., are visiting Mr. J. S. Sherlin and family they all attended memorial services at Round Hill church at Union Mills Sunday.

Mr. Wriston Alexander, of Omaha, Nebraska, recently visited his brother Mr. W. P. Alexander. He is now visiting his sisters the Misses Alexanders in Shelby, he expects to be here among relatives for some time before returning to his western home. Mr. Alexander is a retired soldier having seen about thirty years regular service. He was a ward officer at Ft. Riley, Kansas, at the time of his discharge.

Italy and France are said to be building up their navies, with Great Britain watching the proceedings and ready to increase her own. Under the circumstances, do we need a

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