

A Brief History of All Saints Church

The first documented Episcopal services held in the Hamlet of Hoosick took place during the 1850's at the old stone schoolhouse at the junction of Routes 22 & 7. These services were conducted by laymen with the Rev. G.B. Manser, D.D., Rector of St. Peter's Church in Bennington, Vermont attending from time to time to preach and administer the sacraments. In 1864 George Mortimor Tibbits, Troy businessman and Hoosick farmer, began construction of what would become the nave of All Saints Church. The structure was built with native stone quarried locally and trimmed with sandstone brought from Connecticut by sloop up the Hudson River and carted by wagon to Hoosick.

It is interesting to note that the church was not intended to be built where it now stands. Before leaving on a trip to Europe Mr. Tibbits ordered the stone quarried and "brought to a hill". The workmen misunderstood him and when he returned from his trip he was startled to find the stone cut and piled at the current location of the church. After some consideration Mr. Tibbits instructed that the church be built there rather than once more moving all the stone.

A temporary wooden spire was attached to the original building but by 1871 work began to expand the structure by adding a chancel and a stone tower. This work was done under the direction of renowned designer of Gothic Revival architecture, Henry C. Dudley. At that time the floor of the nave was lowered by about three feet. A set of detailed instructions on how this was accomplished can still be found in the Tibbits family papers.

With the new tower complete, the Tibbits family presented the church with five bells, cast in Florence, which had won the Grand Prize for a peal of bells at the 1867 Paris Exposition. The little bell at the top of the tower is an ancient sacring bell (ca. 1578) and was brought here from Munich, Germany. It is probably one of the oldest church bells in the United States. It is also said to have an association with Martin Luther.

In 1872 the current pipe organ was installed in the church. It was built by E. & G.G. Hook (& Hastings) of Boston. In its day, Hook was the premier organ builder in the United States.

During the early 1860's one of George's sons, John Bleeker Tibbits, had experienced a religious awakening which led him to study divinity. He was ordained a deacon in 1866 and placed in charge of the new All Saints Parish. Since he could not administer the sacraments, the rev. G.H. Nichols, rector of St. Mark's Church in Hoosick Falls, came from time to time to celebrate the Eucharist.

During this period the church was listed in the Diocesan records as 'St. Mary's Church, Hoosic' and only later became known as All Saints Church.

The ground on which All Saints Church is situated remained in the Tibbits family until the death of George M. Tibbits in 1878. In his will he stipulated that the property continue to be used for a parish church and be associated with the Reformed Episcopal

Church (which had just broken away from the national Episcopal Church a few years earlier). How All Saints ended up as an Episcopal parish is unclear. However, a document from 1882 containing "Articles of Association" between the Episcopal Diocese of Albany and All Saints Parish seems to indicate some form of connection between the two.

On October 10, 1885, the Rt. Rev. William Crosswell Doane, D.D., the Episcopal Bishop of Albany, traveled to Hoosick to ordain Edward Dudley Tibbits, the son of Rev. John B. Tibbits, as a deacon. Three years later Edward was ordained a priest by Bishop Doane at the Cathedral of All Saints in Albany. For the next four decades the life and work of Edward Dudley Tibbits and All Saints Church would be inexorably intertwined.

In 1867 All Saints Parish began the Mission of the Holy Name in nearby Boyntonville and in 1889 a church building was consecrated there by Bishop Doane. That same year All Saints Parish also expanded to Raymertown and in 1893 St. Paul's Mission was consecrated, again by Bishop Doane.

A day school for the parish was established by Rev. Edward Tibbits in 1889. In 1892 it became the All Saints Choir School and later the Hoosac School. For many years the parish and the school were closely related, with the church property actually belonging to the school. On May 17, 1923 All Saints Parish was incorporated under the laws of the State of New York and was placed in union with the convention of the Diocese of Albany, thus making it a fully organized parish.

Then in 1933 the church property was deeded back to the parish by the Hoosac School and was consecrated by the Rt. Rev. G. Ashton Oldham, then Bishop of Albany. A short time later the rectory (which stood where the grove of white spruce now graces the driveway) was destroyed by fire. In 1947 the parish entered into an agreement with the Diocese of Albany whereby the Troy Deanery Missionary was to reside at Hoosick and also be the Rector of All Saints.

In the mid 1950's the Hoosac School campus was moved from the environs of the church to its current location west of the Hoosick River at the old Tibbits estate. While the school continued to use the church several times a year, All Saints Parish and the Hoosac School were now quite independent of each other.

By the late 1960's the bells of All Saints Church had fallen silent, not because the congregation was no longer active, but because the bells could only be sounded manually and the mechanical apparatus for ringing them had fallen into disrepair. In 1971 the members and friends of All Saints started a fund to repair and modernize the system so that the bells could be pealed electrically. The fund drive was successful and on Easter Sunday 1972 the Bells of All Saints were once again heard throughout the "Valley of Owl".

Thus has the story of All Saints Church run through the years. It remains but to look into the future. All Saints Parish stands as the representative of our Church over a large territory. As we believe in the faith and religious life as maintained through the ages by the Anglican Communion, we see for this parish a mighty work and golden opportunity. In the care of faithful clergy much shall be done. Yet "the harvest truly is plenteous but the laborers are few." The great work for which this parish exists can only be done through the willing hearts of our parishioners who bear out in word and deed the good news of the Kingdom of God. May the Lord grant that we open our eyes to behold that vision, and to make it so.