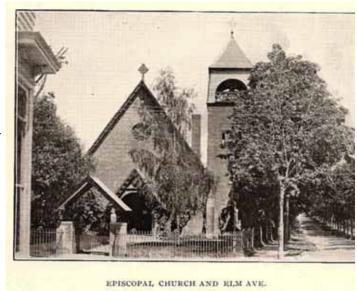
WELCOME TO PHILMONT NEW YORK

Old Philmont #14 – Episcopal Church

This brief account of the St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Philmont will conclude the account of all four of the churches the Village had.

The year 1882 sets out the founding of this church, even though the church building was not completed until 1885. The first service in the parish was held in 1882 for the 'comfort of one family'. Early services were held in Richardson's Hall, and rooms in the 'Fowler Block' on Main Street. In April of 1883, there was a confirmation class of 4. In that same year a building

fund was started. In July of 1885 a meeting was held to incorporate into a Church, or Congregation with the Protestant Episcopal Church in the State of New York. It was named St. Mark's. Land appropriate for a church at the corner of Maple Avenue and Main Street was sold to the church for \$1.00 by James Aken. The Aken family owned and operated prosperous textile mills in the Village for a number of years. In June of 1885, the Church was complete as shown in the first photo. The photographer mentioned Elm Street, not Maple Avenue!



The small edifice in front of the Church proper

is called a 'Lychgate', or 'Lichgate', a holdover from the middle ages. It was used in more

modern times as a place for the clergy to receive the casket when performing a service before burial.

On the 15th Of June the cornerstone was laid. In 1886 the first marriage was performed.

In 1892, plans were made for improvements to the

Church. In early spring James Aken gave the Church enough money to build and equip a Guild

Hall as well as a strip of land to build it on. At the same time, he loaned the Church enough to build a rectory and erect an iron fence around all the Church property on the corner. The project was complete in the fall of this year, and another cornerstone laid – this time by the Grand Master of Masons of the State of New York. It was further celebrated by a plaque inside the building dated 1893.



The Church interior is imposing – the wood ceiling reminds one of the upside down boat hull ceilings found in some English and European buildings. The photos below show the front and back respectively.





The exterior is alike in being impressive. It is, without question, with the Guild Hall and Rectory attached, the largest Church in Philmont. Photos above show the length on Maple Avenue side.







Two interior views, the first one of the stained glass windows, the second showing the pulpit give some idea of the interior.



References in the Vestry records to 'gasolene' were puzzling (no cars in 1893). The mystery was solved by the notations to buy a 'Springfield Gas Machine' to provide lighting to the Church, Guild Hall, Rectory and Choir room. Similar in action to the familiar Coleman lantern, the distilled spirits under pressure provided light. This improvement was courtesy of Mr. Aken. One interesting development was a request from the Philmont National Bank, in 1903, to pipe gas from the Church to their new building across Maple Avenue. The installation of gas mains by the Village made this request moot.

Through the years, finding sufficient funds to operate the Church was a constant problem. Renting out the Guild Hall was one option, and performances of the 'Bohemian Glass Blowers'; 'Mrs. Jarley's Wax Works'; 'Turn of the Tide' and 'The Confederate Spy' are noted. The most important source of funds from the Guild Hall came from renting it to the Philmont High School next door for a gymnasium. Many older Philmont residents remember this use – the author included!

The early 1900's were not a time of spending money on the Church – the country, and the Village, were in a state of recession/depression. Still, the bills were paid, the Church and Guild Hall electrified in 1915, and as a sign of catching up with the times, in 1916, women were empowered to vote at annual Parish meetings

In the later 1900's, the depression was in full bloom, and money was very hard to find. The Vestry minutes reflect the concerns, and also the determination to keep going.



Above is a confirmation class is dated 1916. The lovely young girl, front row right, is my Mother-in-Law!

At the end of 1929, having dances in the Guild Hall was approved. Twenty years later, no dancing after 12pm Saturday night was allowed! In 1936, approval was given to rent the Rectory.



A group photo of the congregation dates from the 1940's.

After the war, from the middle 1940's, the financial situation eased slowly. Some modest improvements were made. Superintendent Clay North reported 30 Sunday School students in 1947. Also in that year, 1200 sandwiches were to be prepared for the Fireman's Convention! In 1949 a new organ fund was in place, and a new organ ordered.

In later years this Church, in common with all other membership organizations has suffered a decline in membership, but the current Vicar, Deacon Mark McDarby, and his wife & family have been active in turning this trend around.

Church services are on Sunday, at 9:30 AM. All are welcome.

My thanks to the Vicar for allowing me to see the church, and review the records.

Charles R. Nichols