

**Sandwiching in History
Trinity Episcopal Cathedral
310 W. 17th Street, Little Rock
December 2, 2016
By Revis Edmonds**



Intro

Good afternoon, my name is Revis Edmonds, and I work for the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

Thank you for coming, and welcome to the “Sandwiching in History” tour of Trinity Episcopal Cathedral. I’d like to thank Rev. Christoph Keller and Michael McNeely for allowing us to tour this amazingly beautiful church!

This tour is worth one hour of HSW continuing education credit through the American Institute of Architects. Please see me after the tour if you’re interested.

Trinity Episcopal Cathedral is located within the Governor’s Mansion Historic District and was added to the National Register on May 13, 1976. Architecturally Trinity Cathedral is 'significant in that it is possibly Arkansas' best preserved example of "Band-saw” or “Jig-saw" Gothic (also called Rural English Gothic and Collegiate Gothic). This form of architecture is an architectural movement that

began in the late 1740s in England. Its popularity grew rapidly in the early 19th century, when increasingly serious and learned admirers of neo-Gothic styles sought to revive medieval Gothic architecture, in contrast to the neoclassical styles prevalent at the time. Gothic Revival draws features from the original Gothic style, including decorative patterns, finials, scalloping, lancet windows, hood mouldings, and label stops. Its low, massive, asymmetrically-placed tower, flanking hipped roof side chapel, and transept arms of unequal length clearly identify it with the English Parish church model which was particularly popular within the Episcopal Church in the second half of the nineteenth century. Trinity Episcopal, true to its name, incorporates various symbols of the Trinity into its design, such as the trefoil, shamrock, and triangle.

Trinity Episcopal Cathedral is the oldest Episcopal church building in central Arkansas and the third oldest church building in the area. It is also one of the oldest cathedral churches in America; in fact, Trinity is older than the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. or the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. Trinity also serves as a parish to one of America's largest Episcopal congregations, having met since it was established in 1884.

The architectural composition and events relating to its construction make Trinity Cathedral an important historical feature of religious growth in Arkansas. As the Episcopal Bishop's first official chair of authority in Arkansas, Trinity was organized and built to become the principal church of the Arkansas Episcopal Diocese. Construction of the church was largely the responsibility and achievement of its founding Bishop, the Right Reverend Henry Niles Pierce. When Reverend Pierce was elected the fourth Missionary Bishop of Arkansas and the Indian Territory in 1870, he set out establish religious order in what was still undeveloped Arkansas, even after the Civil War and Reconstruction.

After nine years of service as a missionary bishop, Reverend Pierce recognized the need for a cathedral at Little Rock and approached the people of Christ Episcopal Church about assuming cathedral responsibilities. They declined the

offer, so he set out to single handedly raise the money to build a cathedral. Contributions for the cathedral came in small amounts, with the largest single contribution in the amount of \$250.00. To give you an idea of the current value of that contribution, that \$250 would have a value in today's dollars of \$5,852.16. In 1882 Pierce had enough money to buy land at the corner of 17th and Spring Streets, and construction started two years later. The plans for constructing the building came from Pierce's son, the Reverend A. W. Pierce, and the responsibility for the task of construction was placed in the hands of master builder Ambrose Pettefer. Pettefer was a prolific builder during that period in Little Rock's history, producing such structures as the John A. Pirtie Residence, the A.J. Kempner Store, the J. B. Miller Cotton Warehouse, the Crystal Ice Factory in Argenta, and the Fort Steel Public School located near the present site of Philander Smith College.

The Cathedral was built in three stages, as finances permitted. The first service was held on October 19, 1884, when only the nave and baptistery were finished and the altar was placed under the west window on an improvised chancel. The east end of the structure was boarded up at the crossing leaving only a small entrance there. At the convocation meeting in the spring of 1885, Trinity reported 67 members. In the spring of 1889 the crossing and transepts were completed, and the altar was moved to the north transept wall. Due to a lack of funds, Reverend Pierce was unable to finalize construction on the chancel until 1892 when the altar was at last moved to its proper place in the east end of the building. It had taken Reverend Pierce thirteen years to realize the fruits of his labor.

Memorials and gifts have been presented through the years, the first being the brass altar crosses in memory of the first acolyte, Halfden Degen, who died in 1886 of typhoid fever. The window over the altar is a memorial to Bishop Pierce and was dedicated on Easter 1909. The carved eagle lectern was donated in 1918 in memory of Edmond Urquhart.

A major addition to the church came in 1924 when Pierce's daughter, Mrs. Elizabeth Lyman, gave the chapel in her father's memory. The chapel is attached to the northeast intersection of the transept and nave walls; it completed the embodiment of the structure of the cathedral.

The cathedral is the traditional cruciform plan with its transepts ascending to full nave height at the crossing. The nave is framed with wood beams trimmed with bent pine planks and molding to resemble the towering stone and carved wooden arches of larger, more costly cathedrals. Sawn wooden brackets over the side-aisles at each column bay are extended to give the illusion of flying buttresses. The cathedral is dimly lit and all wood is darkly stained. Light streams down from above through six lancet clerestory windows above the intersection of the side aisle and nave.

Above the chancel to the east and over the main entrance to the nave from the west are large drop-arched windows with round trefoil tranceries. The North and south transept windows also have drop arches but with intersected tracery. Smaller lancet arch windows are located throughout the building. Small eye windows are employed directly beneath the gables of the nave and transepts and in the centers of the two exposed sides of the tower. Stained glass is used in all of the windows to create colorful pictorial representations of religious ideas. The chancel altar, which has a large mod carving of Christ, was given to the church in 1924. The original altar was removed and placed in the smaller chapel shortly after it was completed.

The exterior is dark brown brick laid in common bond with brick buttressed walls. The building is asymmetrical, having an engaged spherical baptistery at one side of the nave and a two-story engaged tower to the other. Dormers emerge from the nave roof at each clerestory window. Trinity Cathedral is in an excellent state of preservation, and, again, is a fine example of "Band-saw Gothic" religious architecture in Arkansas.

The Parish House was erected in 1951, inspired by a large gift from Mrs. Beauregard Morrison. Cathedral House was completed in 1953. Lyman Annex (named for Bishop Pierce's daughter Elizabeth Pierce Lyman) was added in 1966. In 1981, Chancellors Hall was erected and the Parish House and Cathedral House were extensively remodeled.

As was stated earlier, the cathedral was designed in a cruciform shape. From the Narthex, (the double door entrance) we will observe these points of interest:

1. **Baptistery:** The Baptismal font located in the Baptistery was given in 1902 by the young men of the Sunday School at Trinity. The only remaining stained glass window from the original stage of the cathedral's construction in 1884 is found in the lavatory off the Baptistery.
2. **North Nave:** To your right, or east of the Baptistery, are the North Nave windows. The Nave windows on the north and south sides of the building were manufactured in London, England. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, they were installed to replace earlier Victorian style windows. The North Nave windows are depictions of the prophets who foretold Christ's coming to Earth. They include images of Obadiah, Malachi, Hosea, Zechariah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. The window coming from the Baptistery has the stained glass signature of Terrance Randall, who created it. It is the simple line illustration of a salamander.
3. **North Transept:** The windows on the Nave level contains depictions of clergy associated with the Anglican Church. In the North Transept they include Bishop John Coleridge Patterson and William Porcher DuBose. Bishop Coleridge was a missionary to the people of Micronesia, and DuBose taught at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee. The theme of the large stained glass window in the north Transept is the "Benedicite Omnia Opera Domini" canticle (defined as a hymn, psalm or other song of praise taken from biblical or holy texts other than the Psalms) from Morning Prayer. The window was made in England by artist George Beadle, whose stained glass signature, the beetle, may be found

under the figure of the Virgin Mary's blue mantle. The quatrefoil above the large window, which dated from the 18th century, was given to Trinity from the Sunday School of Trinity Episcopal Church in Pine Bluff.

4. **Pierce Chapel:** Located east of the North Transept, the Chapel is a memorial to Bishop Henry Niles Pierce. It may also be called the Angel Chapel due to its stained glass windows which are the finest in the cathedral. In order to pay for the nave windows in the Chapel, Bishop Pierce's daughter sold a cold cream recipe called "Angel Cream," which was developed by her mother in the 1890s.
5. **Chancel:** The first of the Chancel's significant structures is the eagle lectern used for scripture readings. Referred to as the Urquhart Eagle, it was donated on the Feast of the Epiphany by the Edward Urquhart family in 1918. Mr. Urquhart, a native of Kingston, Ontario, came to Little Rock in 1876 and established the Little Rock Oil Works, becoming one of the pioneers of the cottonseed oil industry in the state.

Prominent upon entering the Cathedral is the presence of the High Altar in the Sanctuary of the Chancel. The altar is overlooked by a statue of Christ and the large stained glass window with Quatrefoil. For those of you who are not familiar with Quatrefoil, as I was until just recently, it is an ornamental design of four lobes or leaves as used in architectural tracery, resembling a flower or four-leaf clover. The window's theme is St. Augustine's "City of God." It was donated by the congregations of the Episcopal Diocese and was dedicated to Bishop Pierce's memory, and the Quatrefoil above the window is Bishop Pierce's Episcopal crest. The Chancel window is the largest work done by New York's Charles Maginn Company outside of their metropolitan area.

The High Altar and the statue of Christ are made of German oak and was carved by Anton Lang, a member of the famed woodcutting family of Oberammergau, Bavaria.

Above the choir stall on both sides are Clerestory stained glass windows depicting angels playing various musical instruments. The most prominent,

and may I add, amazing instrument here is the organ. It is the largest pipe organ in the state at over 5,000 pipes, and is made up of four manual keyboards and 82 ranks of pipes, including the trumpets at the nave's rear. The lectern in front of the organ was manufactured in Little Rock and was given to the Cathedral by Mrs. Margaret Wick in 1905 on the Feast of the Epiphany.

6. **Cloister Room:** To the left of the pulpit is the Cloister Room where the Acolytes, Choir, and Clergy assemble prior to the beginning of a service, as well as holding banners used in the procession. Adorning the south wall is a 1907 stained glass window from the chancel of St. Paul's Episcopal Church which was once at 4th and Victory. It is flanked by two 1895 lancet windows, which are tall, narrow with a pointed arch at the top.
7. **South Transept:** On the nave level are the images of Philippine Missionary Charles Henry Brent, World War II-era Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple, who, as you can see, is holding a model of Canterbury Cathedral; and Bishop Samuel Schershewsky, who once served as Missionary to China. The fourth lancet window on the south wall depicts 16th Century theologian Richard Hooker, who wrote *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, which defines the Anglican "Via Media" or middle road, which urges moderation in life's pursuits.

The large window in the south Transept has the theme, "Suffer the Little Children to Come Unto Me," and was installed in 1939. A drawing of the window's creative scheme can be found over the credence table in the back. When exiting the south Transept, two windows on the Nave level begin the collection of the images of the witnesses of Saints. The first four depicted are St. Peter, St. Andrew, St. James the Great, and St. John.

8. **South Nave:** These windows show the Apostles who spread the news that the Messiah had come, and was a common Middle Ages-era theme. Among the images depicted here are St. Thomas, St. James, St. Phillip, and St. Matthew, among others. You will notice that the eyes of the saints depict them as looking toward the Chancel and the High Altar.

9. **Bell Tower:** Part of the Cathedral's original 1884 construction, funds were raised a century later to reinforce the tower so it could support additional bell weight of 4,500 pounds. The full-octave eight bells were cast in 1987 by London's Whitechapel Bell Foundry, and installation was completed the next year. The bells were dedicated at the 1988 Feast of Pentecost, and have continued to contribute to music ministry through the art of English Change Ringing, which is the art of ringing a set of tuned bells in a controlled manner to produce variations in their sounding order. The bells' peals are witnessed by St. Cecilia and St. Francis of Assisi, whose images are depicted in the two stained glass windows located in the bell tower.
10. **Narthex and Clerestory Windows:** The Narthex, or architectural antechamber, porch, or distinct area at western entrance of some early churches, is the small landing area just inside the exterior front doors, and leads to the interior front doors. Lancet windows, which represent an abbreviated history of Anglicanism, depict St. Constantine, St. Augustine of Canterbury, and "The Window of Queen Elizabeth." Enhancing the natural light of the Cathedral are the Clerestory Windows, whose purpose is to admit light, fresh air, or both. They can be seen on all sides above the Nave, Transepts, and Chancel Wall windows, were installed in 1937, and represent various saints and symbols of the church.
- At the back, above the Narthex and the organ trumpets, is a large stained glass window filled with Trefoils, which are a symbol of the Trinity. Above the glass casement is a Quatrefoil given in 1895 by the Women's Auxiliary, now known as the Episcopal Church Women. As the "four leaves" framework is the symbol for the Alpha and the Omega, it is fitting that our tour begins and ends at this spot in the Cathedral.

Thank you all for coming today! Please join us for our first Sandwiching in History tour of 2017 on Friday January 6 at Pulaski Heights United Methodist Church at 4823 Woodlawn Drive in Little Rock. in Little Rock. We will begin at Noon. Hope to see you there!

