



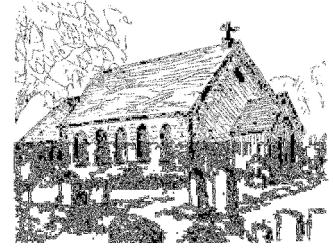
FRENCH & INDIAN WAR  
COMMEMORATION

*250 years*

# Old St. Luke's

CHURCH, BURIAL GROUND AND GARDEN  
Scott Township, Pennsylvania

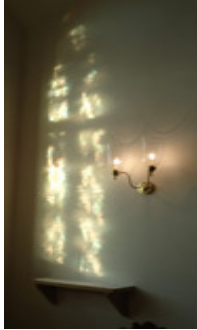
NOVEMBER 2010 — VOL. XXIX NO. 3



## Thanksgiving Vespers

Sunday, November 21  
at 4 p.m.

And the Homily by  
The Rt. Rev. Kenneth L. Price, Jr.  
Provisional Bishop of the  
Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh



Old St. Luke's chancel wall

## Christmas Evensong

Sunday, December 12  
at 4 p.m.

And the Homily by  
The Rev. Paul Johnston  
Community Arts Chaplain of  
Trinity Cathedral, Pittsburgh

*"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good Works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." Matthew 5: 16*

## Memorials Now in Place

Two years ago the Ambient Intelligence Lab at Carnegie Mellon University scanned their choice of 28 illegible headstones in the Burial Ground as part of their development of computer technology. This gift gave us the names and dates we could not read on the headstones. We did not want to record this information only on paper or in our web site [www.oldsaintlukes.org](http://www.oldsaintlukes.org) We asked how could we actually show visitors the names and dates we now know. How could we use the CMU scans to allow viewers and students to reflect on the choices the grieving families made in burying their adult or child in a churchyard?. The answer was to place granite replicas in front of the scanned headstones. Church burial grounds and community cemeteries are resources for understanding both resurrection faith and local history. We see this is a vital part of our overall mission.

Thanks to the family of the late Doris Judge Crawford, this has now been made possible. Doris faithfully served on our Board of Directors and her family has now given these memorials in her name and as a witness to the loyalty she showed for this historic church.



This memorial concrete bench has been placed in front of the church. It has already been used by visitors, and by our docents who have served during the Summer Sunday Open House hours.



In front of this illegible headstone is one of 28 replicas showing the name and dates from the original inscription. The inscriptions cut into sandstone are usually made illegible by time and weather. The inscriptions and art work cut into granite and marble headstones are enduring.



This replica now clearly tells us that Laura M. Lea lived from 1860 to 1863. She was a descendent of Major William and Dorathy Lea, the founding settlers where Old St. Luke's now sits.

# Grave Changes over the Decades in Pittsburgh

When a family commits their loved one to a grave, it is expected that the grave will remain undisturbed without end. That is not always the case, as shown by the exhumation and relocation of graves in the churchyard of Trinity Cathedral, Pittsburgh.

Thanks to the indefatigable work of the late Helen Harriss, genealogist, and her book *Trinity & Pittsburgh—the History of Trinity Cathedral (1999)*, we know the names of many persons buried around Trinity Church, now Cathedral. We also know the names of some of the graves that had to be relocated, including those of the notable parishioners of (Old) St. Luke's Church, Brig. Gen. John Neville and his wife Winifred.

In the years preceding 1753 and the start of the French (British) and Indian War, native Americans buried their dead in a tumulus mound near the point of Pittsburgh's three rivers. In 1754 the British started to build Fort Prince George, almost immediately replaced by the French Fort Duquesne..

The French chaplain at the Fort maintained a register of major rites, including funerals and interments at "the place set aside for burials," which was the Indian mound that was approached from the Fort on a path named "L'Allee de la Vierge Marie," later renamed Virgin Alley. That mound became the churchyard of Trinity Cathedral, and a plaque outside the Cathedral states that some 4000 burials were made over the decades. The earliest legible headstone is for Captain Samuel Dawson, September 6, 1779.

In 1787, the William Penn heirs gave grants of land to the trustees of the German church on Smithfield Street, and to the Presbyterian church and the Episcopal Protestant Church on Sixth Avenue. Amazingly, in 1805 the first building for Trinity Church was on another lot at Liberty, Sixth and Wood streets, which was purchased from Isaac Craig, the husband of Amelia Neville. Of interest also to us was the marriage there of Presley Neville, and a Miss Kerr, July 28, 1818. The Joseph Harvey pipe organ, a later gift to (Old) St Luke's Church, arrived from London in 1823 and was used in the church. Due to population growth in Pittsburgh, it was decided to build a larger church on the Penn grant land on Sixth Avenue. In order to build the second church, graves had to be moved. The building was completed in 1825.

In 1835 a Lecture Hall, which included a free public library, was built at the corner of Carpenter's Alley and Virgin Alley. Lots were purchased for additional graves.

Between 1835 and 1846 there were burials between the church and Carpenter's Alley, a 10 feet wide boundary of the commercial lots facing Smithfield Street. (The new Trinity Church was spared the devastation of the massive Pittsburgh fire, April, 1845. The church caught

fire in 1849 and again on June 18, 1967.)

In the 1850's two non-denominational cemeteries were started: Allegheny Cemetery and Uniondale Cemetery. Families began to ask that their family graves be moved to the new cemeteries. All of the graves in the Presbyterian site were moved, and further burials in Trinity's site were halted. In 1852, Trinity Church initiated the construction of St. Peter's Church at Grant Street and Diamond Way, and another building for (Old) St Luke's Church, Woodville, where burials already existed and were continued to be held in the churchyard.

It was decided in 1869 to build the third Trinity Church plus a chapel. However, it would mean the moving of graves again, either to the newly expanded churchyard, or to one of the two new city cemeteries. Many families chose relocation to the new cemeteries. The new church was completed in 1872. In 1895, a real estate company sought to rent part of the burial ground beside Carpenter's Alley. Since graves would have to be moved, the request was declined. A hotel owner wanted to rent the unused Lecture Hall for a laundry. It, too, was declined.

In October, 1900 George T. Oliver, and his brother, Henry W. Oliver, proposed leasing for 100 years the 10 feet by 125 feet of occupied burial ground, from Virgin Alley to Sixth Avenue, to erect a 21 story office building. The transfer of graves required family or Allegheny County Court permission. In 1902 the Oliver brothers donated a 10 foot strip for reburials beside the 10 feet strip already owned by the Church. They offered to provide a mortician and mortuary in the Church for this task. By 1904, the transfer of deeds was completed and erecting the Henry W. Oliver building began.

Of interest in Old St Luke's Church history is the transfer of the graves of Winifred Neville, who died in 1797, and John Neville, who died in 1803. Their graves were moved to Allegheny Cemetery in 1902.

In 1904 the City of Pittsburgh notified the Church that Virgin Avenue would be widened to 54 feet. This meant the razing of the chapel and removal of more graves from a part of the Penn grant area near the Alley. The workmen discovered burial bones and carefully removed them. To honor the Oliver family, Virgin Avenue was renamed Oliver Avenue. The new three story Parish House was dedicated on January 25, 1906. The graves that remain today in the Cathedral's Burying Ground have been conserved and restored in an extensive project which was completed in 2009.

#### References:

Helen Harriss, *Trinity and Pittsburgh—the History of Trinity Cathedral*, 1999.

Ronald C. Carlisle, *The Story of Woodville*, PHLF., 1998

Trinity Cathedral, [www.trinitycathedralpgh.org](http://www.trinitycathedralpgh.org)

Old St. Lukes, [www.oldsaintlukes.org](http://www.oldsaintlukes.org)

## Teaching History Outside of Books

In 1788 Noah Webster said that every child in America should rehearse the history of his own country.

In 1823 Thomas Jefferson said that a morsel of genuine history is a thing so rare as to be always valuable.

In 1933 David McCullough was born in Pittsburgh. He has often repeated the plea for placing greater emphasis on history, both in school curricula and in the minds and memory of Americans.

Similarly, columnist George F. Will wrote that what is not often taught is the fact that history is turned in its course by great individuals. He once asked what would have been the course of history if the musket balls in the French and Indian War that sliced through his uniform had instead fatally pierced George Washington's flesh

Students today rely on the Internet. Google gives 122 million results for "Civil War." Is this a better way to learn history? Is so much too much?

In 1992 the social studies teacher Robert Rodrigues in Chartiers Valley High School called together representatives of four sites related to the Whiskey Rebellion. Old St. Luke's, the Neville House, the Miller Homestead, and the Bradford House responded. Thus began a unique field study immersion plan to allow students to get engaged with the 1794 Whiskey Rebellion in more ways than just reading pages in a book or the Internet. Each year since 1992 about 300 ninth grade students have gone to each site to see, touch, listen and for several years even to savor an early American meal at the High School, as docents tell about people the major local event that impacted American history.

For several first years students came to Old St. Lukes to hear the details of the Rebellion. We soon learned that 9th graders did not relish sitting in pews for two hours. In 1995 Richard Davies wrote a one act, half hour play entitled "A Burning Faith,



Photo by Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

The Chartiers Challenge" in which nine students become costumed actors to depict what might have occurred at the church on July 17, 1794 when the Neville mansion was burned by rebelling farmers.

On this past October 9 students, in three groups of 100 each with their teachers, came to the church for performances of the play. Each year the students have experienced history as their peers presented a facet of American history in a dramatic and visual way. Reading about and discussing the Rebellion can now have a greater meaning and place in the student's memory.

## A Promise to Submit to the Laws

As we can hold and admire the many sparkling facets of a diamond, we at Old St. Luke's have looked at the Whiskey Rebellion from diverse sides. We have become aware of the names of men who chose to support the government's tax on distilled spirits, and the men who were anti-federalists in opposition to the excise tax.

Once the rebellion was subdued, the federal government required that citizens declare their loyalty to the laws of the nation, as follows:

*"I do promise to submit to the Laws of the United States; that I will not directly nor indirectly oppose the execution of the Acts for raising a Revenue on Distilled Spirits and Stills, and that I will support as far as the Laws require the civil authority in affording the protection due to all officers and other Citizens." September 11, 1794*

Signers were assembled by their residence and in what County. The names printed below are the affirming members of (Old) St. Luke's Church, as recorded in the government record.

### Fayette Township—Allegheny County September 11, 1794

W. H. Beamount (\*)  
Operated "Mineral  
Springs" Spa at Thoms  
Run near Woodville.

Isaac Craig  
Son-in-Law of John  
and Amelia Neville

Thomas Nixon (\*)  
Husband of Jane Lea

Daniel South (\*)  
Husband of Euphemia  
Smyth Nixon

(\*) Buried at Old St Luke's  
Burial Ground and Garden.

The records of Trinity Church, Wall Street, New York City, indicate that 11,850 graves were placed around the Church since the 17th century, when the church first served as the town burial ground and then as the church's cemetery..

## Pittsburgh's Oliver Brothers

Henry W. Oliver, born in Ireland in 1845, came to Pittsburgh and after serving in the Civil War. He progressed in the iron business to eventually form the Oliver Iron and Steel Company. He died in 1902.

George T. Oliver was born in Ireland in 1848 and came to Pittsburgh. He graduated from Bethany College, West Virginia and joined with his brother in the iron and steel business. He prospered to the point of purchasing three newspapers: the *Pittsburgh Gazette*, the *Chronicle-Telegraph*, and the *Pittsburgh Times*. He merged the *Gazette* and *Times* to form the *Gazette-Times* newspaper.



George became active in politics under the Republican party and he served as a Pennsylvania Senator from 1909 to 1917.

He had a leading role in the controversy over the spelling of Pittsburgh. From 1758 to 1909, Pittsburgh was spelled with the "h." In 1909, The U. S. Geographic Board removed the "h" to standardize all cities ending in "burg." A campaign was fought to keep the "h." In July, 1911, the Board notified George that the city could keep the spelling "**PITTSBURGH, a city in Pennsylvania.**"

## Nixon Chair Presented

When a church is closed these days, treasured movable items are distributed to other church facilities for safe keeping. This might have taken place when (Old) St. Luke's was closed in 1930 by the Rev. Thomas Cooper. Over the past several years, we have received back three upholstered chancel chairs from families with historic links to this church.

Earlier this year, William Davis from Kalispell, Montana emailed us that he had a chair he wanted to give to us, one that he believes was crafted in the 1790's when our pioneer family William and Dorathy Lea gave their daughter Jane to be married to Thomas Nixon. The chair has been passed down through the Nixon families coming to Izetta Nixon Davis, who died in 1982.



On October 22, William (Bill) Davis, and his son Kris from Kalispell, Montana, came to Old St. Lukes and presented us with the Nixon chair. Bill's brothers, Jack, Homer and Arthur, all agree that the chair should be a part of our heritage. We thank the family for their thoughtfulness.