



The history of St. James' Church reveals a struggle over twelve decades to preserve this Church in the face of difficulties. It reveals, too, the gifts of faith and love and hope that the Lord has conferred on us to meet the challenges before us. May the knowledge of our past draw us nearer to those who have served here in their generations and unite us with them in giving thanks and praise to Christ our Lord throughout the ages.

1848 Bishop G. W. Freeman and the Rev. Charles Gillette visited; Gillette preached in the old frame courthouse.

1848-49 Henry N. Pierce appointed missionary; most of his work done in Washington County.

1852 The Rev. Edward Fontaine, passing through in May, performed the first Episcopal baptisms, of Mrs. Julia Lee Sinks and kin, in her parlor. Previous to this, Miss Leonora Hill was the only member in the county. Mr. & Mrs. Benjamin Shropshire arrived during the Spring, greatly adding to the Church's support.

1853 The Union Church was built by Presbyterian and Baptist churches; it was often used later by the Episcopal congregation.

1854 Bishop Freeman conducted the first confirmation for Mrs. Julia Lee Sinks.

1855 The Rev. H. N. Pratt, new missionary at Columbus and La Grange, preached his first sermon. He was engaged to preach monthly, and a parish was organized and named Trinity. The name was subsequently changed to St. James because there were too many "Trinity" churches in the Diocese.

1856 St. James' Parish was received into communion by the VIIth Diocesan Convention at Galveston. Initial assessment was \$5.00.

1857 Mr. Pratt continued to hold services until his health failed; he died December 11. Services afterward were sporadic, but the church was kept alive by a flourishing Sunday School & the ladies' work.

1860 Bishop Alexander Gregg's first visitation, confirming four ladies.

1866-67 Following intermittent service through the war years, the Rev. J. W. Tays held regular services here; an outstanding Sunday School was conducted under the supervision of Mr. James W. Mathews. Growth was hampered by the yellow fever epidemic in 1867, taking both Mr. Mathews and Judge Shropshire.

1868 John Rosenburg taught school and studied for the ministry here, conducting services weekly; he was ordained deacon in 1869. Mrs.

Georgiana W. Shropshire signed over deed to property near where the church now stands to Vestry on September 4.

1869 "In July of this year, occurred the remarkable overflow, which blighted the prospects of the town so much that it turned al the channels of thought into self-preservation" (from the Parish History by Rector Smith). Rosenburg left, and Mrs. G. W. Shropshire left for New York to raise money for building the church. she raised some \$800.

1872-75 The Rev. John W. Phillips served monthly on a circuit out of Austin. In 1873 the Old Academy Building at Walnut and Jefferson was purchased for \$800 and the upstairs level made to serve as "St. James' Chapel" while the ground floor became Sunday School classrooms. Mrs. Shropshire taught Sunday School until her death in 1877.

1876 The Rev. W. G. W. Smith of New York began to serve as missionary for Bastrop and La Grange. Mr. Smith being frequently absent for poor health, so Judge Livingston Lindsay, the Senior Warden, served as lay reader. There were 40 communicants at this time.

1881 Mr. Smith was called as rector of La Grange and accepted. Smith continued to make trips to New York, raising money and drawing plans for the new church.

1885 The cornerstone of St. James' Church was laid by Bishop Gregg. First services were held in the unfinished building July 5. Smith left for the North, and returned with a bride. Membership had risen to 110.

1886 The new church was consecrated on February 28th by the Bishop, having been built for a total cost of \$6,000.

1887 At the closing of the sermon, the church was struck by lightning; no one was hurt, but the building was badly damaged. A national appeal was made to help raise the needed \$450 for repairs.

1889 Mr. Smith's annual Report showed a loss of 16 communicants, who were, he said, "an unruly faction who tried to ruin the Parish because they could not rule it upon worldly principles...the parish...is stronger without them."

1891 His health and eyesight failing, Smith tendered his resignation. His successors served from Bastrop.

1892 New bell was placed in the steeple in January; the font was added to the church in September. Electricity was added the next year.

1895 A new organ was donated to the church. Average attendance was 35 in the mornings

and 70 evenings. Sunday School headed by Capt. H. B. Richards had 66 students, and continued even after clergy ceased to serve here.

1900 Annual report stated the cure was vacant; only 38 communicants. The church was closed.

1907-08 The Rev. William H. Hart attempted to revive services, but declining "American" population made this futile.

1917-19 The Rev. J. Cross Gray, deacon, became "rector." Restored the church, built up the guild. He was deposed from the ministry in 1919 after resigning for a Presbyterian call.

1921 The Parish was remitted to mission status by the Bishop.

1927 On Bishop Quin's visit he noted, "This is one of the few places where I am privileged to pay my own hotel bill."

1929-38 Services were held by the Rev. Clarence Lake of Bastrop. During this time the St. James' Guild (Church Women) seems to have served in place of a vestry, under leadership of Mrs. Faison, Miss Mary Kaulbach, Mrs. Jopling, and others. This continued into the later 1940's.

1951-52 The Rev. Arthur G. Edmonds, deacon, arrived as first resident minister since 1919. he died after six months service, April 4, 1952, and was succeeded by the Rev. Arthur J. Lockhart.

1955 Dedication service for new parish hall, named for W.G.W. Smith. Rectory built.

1973 The parish adopted a St. James' Advance Fund to support a drive for parish status.

1975 The Rev. Frank A. Fuller appointed resident vicar the first in over 15 years. Set a goal of reaching parish status in 1978; membership rose from 29 in 1970 to 94 in 1975.

1979 Reinstated as a parish of the Diocese of Texas.

1985 The Education Building, garden and Centennial of Nave were completed.

1998 Sold original rectory and purchased larger 4-bedroom, 3 bath home.

2000 Parent's Day Out Program established. Purchase of property immediately south of the Parish Hall (formerly Service Lumber Co.) allowing access from Highway 71 (business).

2002 In August, the licensed St. James Episcopal Preschool opened.

The Church and its Furnishings

The Church was designed by Richard M. Upjohn of New York, son of a famous church architect, and follows an American version of the English Queen Anne style. Carl Michaelis of La Grange was the contractor. The Church was built in 1885-1886.

The Queen Anne style was based on a revival in England and made popular by Richard Norman Shaw. The style reached the U.S. in the 1870's and was transformed from half-timber and brick to an entirely wood fabric. In this wooden-framed building shingles cover most of the walls and steeply pitched roof. The tower is decorated with boards in geometrical patterns. Tudor spindles support the porch roofs. This church is also noteworthy for the manner in which the design responded to the climate. Louvered and screened openings, closed by removable panels on the interior, flank the pews, allowing for air circulation in hot weather. (Air-conditioning was added in 1973).

The interior is typical of Episcopal designs of the period, with warm wood hues enriched with brilliant color from the leaded stain-glass windows. The interior is composed to accentuate the altar, the "holy of holies," where the sacrament of Holy Communion is celebrated. Secondary emphasis falls on the lectern and pulpit, where the Word is read and expounded.

In addition to commissioning the plans and raising most of the money for the church, the Rev. Mr. Smith, the rector, also designed and built the altar, lectern, communion rail and Bishop's chair, which are still in use. The windows and the cross on the tower were also his selection. The pews are original - they were designed by Mr. Smith and built locally in the shop of Mr. Frank Reichert.

The memorial window in the south transept, "Faith," was made in Europe and given in 1885 in memory of Judge and Mrs. Benjamine Shropshire by their children.

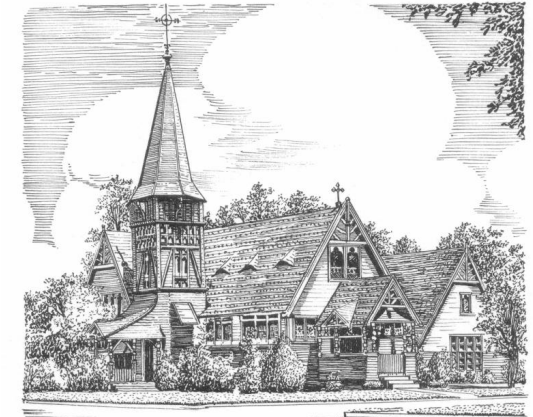
The brass cross was given in 1887, a legacy from Mrs. Charlotte Critchley.

The tower bell, weighing 711 pounds, was struck by the Meneely Bell Company of West Troy, N.Y., and hung in the tower in January, 1892, and electricity replaced the original kerosene lamps in 1893.

Acknowledgments: *W.B. Robinson, Texas Public Buildings of the 19th Century*; *John A. Logan, Jr., "St. James' Church"*

Protestant Episcopal Clergy Serving La Grange

1848-49	Henry Niles Pierce (Independence)
1853	Lindsey Powell Rucker (Washington)
1854	Elisha H. Downing (Brenham)
1855-57	Hannibal N. Pratt (Columbus)
1858	Lucius H. Jones (Seguin)
1861	John M. Goshorn (Columbus)
1862	Henry B. Monges (Seguin)
1866-67	Joseph Wilkins Tays (Richmond)
1868-69	John Rosenberg, Deacon
1872-75	John W. Phillips (Austin)
1876-81	William G. Smith (Bastrop)
1881-91	W.G.W. Smith, Rector
1891-95	A. Basil Perry (Bastrop)
1895-96	Percy W. Jones (Bastrop)
1898-1900	John Sloan (Bastrop)
1901-06	VACANT
1907-08	William Hart (Eagle Lake)
1908-17	VACANT
1917-19	Joseph Cross Gray, Deacon
1919-25	VACANT
	Parish remitted to mission status: 1921
1925-27	F.M. Johnson (Eagle Lake)
1929-38	Clarence H. Lake (Bastrop)
1939-40	John P. Phillips (Bastrop)
1941-43	Leo S. Cook (Bastrop)
1943-44	Richard A. Park (Bastrop)
1946-47	L. I. Insley (Bastrop)
1948-50	William Meade Brown (Taylor)
1951-52	Arthur G. Edmonds, Deacon
1952-56	Arthur J. Lockhart, Vicar
1957-59	Ellsworth R. Stewart, Vicar
1959-60	Calvin Sachers (Columbus)
1960-61	James H. Watt (Bastrop)
1961-62	Earl C. Pyle (Columbus)
1963-68	James H. Watt (Columbus)
1968-75	Edward M. Hartwell (Austin)
1975-1980	Frank E. Fuller, Rector
	Parish status: 1979
1980-85	David Puckett, Rector
1985-88	Bryan Porter, Rector
1989	John Christopher Hines, Rector
1990-92	Karl M. Choate, Rector
1992-97	Dena A. Harrison, Rector
1997-2000	Anne K. Hoey, Rector
2001	Tom E. King, Interim Rector
2001 -05	Robert P. Viggiano, Rector
2005	John H. Loving, Interim Rector
2005-present	Daryl T. Hay, Rector



St. James' Episcopal Church

La Grange, Texas

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Founded 1855

A Brief Chronicle