

W. J. A.

History of the A. M. E. Zion Church of Poughkeepsie, N. Y.

On November 12th 1937 this church completed 100 years of its organization in Poughkeepsie; this fact is mentioned in the History of Poughkeepsie by the Platts, also by Rev. L. H. Taylor, an ex-pastor of this church and is attested by the following public record; Vis KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS that the male members of the congregation that sttedly meet for devine worship at the Lancaster School House in the Village of Poughkeepsie, Dutchess County in the State of New York persuant to due notice given, did assemble at the aforesaid school house on the 12th day of November 1837 for the purpose of organizing themselves under the title of the African Methodist Episcopal Church of Poughkeepsie according to provisions of an act of the legislature of the State of New York for such purpose made and provided, whereupon the Rev. William H. Bishop was called to act as chairman and William M. Dichason, John Taber and Nathaniel Blout as inspectors of the election, and John Cole was appointed Secretary. The meeting then resolved to organize themselves under the above title and to elect three trustees who should serve for one year or until others be elected in their place. Whereupon at the balloting for that purpose the aforesaid inspectors declared that Ezekiel Pine, Uriah Boston and Peter Lee were elected to serve as the first trustees of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Poughkeepsie.

GIVEN UNDER OUR HANDS AND SEALS THIS 12TH DAY OF NOVEMBER 1837.

William H. Bishop, Chairman
 John A. Cole, Secretary
 STATE OF NEW YORK
 DUTCHESS COUNTY

On the 12th day of November in the year 1837 before me, David V. N. Radcliffe, Supreme Court Commissioner and authorized to do the duties of a Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of said county, personally appeared the within named William H. Bishop and John A. Cole to me known to be the same persons described in and who executed the within instrument and who severally acknowledged the execution of the same for the uses and purposes therein mentioned, all which I certify according to the Statute.

David V. N. Radcliffe, Supreme Court Commissioner.

This was the beginning of our church, and there are those still living today who distinctly remember Mr. Uriah Boston one of the original

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trustees of this church who served on its board 100 years ago. He is described as an old fashion aristocrat with the bearing and manner of the better bred of that period.

The old Lancaster School house stood on the North side of Church Street between Market and Academy Sts.; it afterward became the Church Street public school and is now owned and occupied by the Germania Singing Society. Earlier, it has been learned, these citizens of Pougjkeepsie worshiped with the congregation of the Washington Street M.E. Church, at Mill and Washington Sts. and upon withdrawing themselves, organized their own society in the old Lancaster School house.

From public records available it would seem that the old church on Catharine street was built about 1840, because the Dutchess County Clerk's records show that on July 3rd 1840 the First African Methodist Episcopal Church gave Solomon V. Frost a mortgage for \$450. and this mortgage was signed by Peter Lee, one of the three original trustees, as president of the Board of trustees, and was afterward assigned to Gaius C. Burnap and was satisfied thereafter, and the description of the land in the mortgage corresponds with the description of the old church property on the west side of Catharine Street and the money thus raised by the mortgage was undoubtedly used to build the old structure. The fact that the Catharine Street ^{small} church was established in 1840 is carved in a bronz tablet serving as a paper weight in the home of Miss Grace Deyo. Also a newspaper article written in April 1860 refers to the old catharine street organization which has existed for twenty years. In those days it was known as the property at Mansion Square.

There is very little chronicled of what took place during the first twenty years of existance, but it is quite certain that the church was very much alive, and that there was harmony at times and also discontent. A division occurred in the congregation sometime in the 1850s when a certain faction accused the Catharine St. organization of driving them out of their property at Mansion Sq. to a hired tenament on Main Street, so from that time on there were two societies

of the church which was organized in the old Lancaster School House in 1837. The Main Street A. M. E. Zion Church and the Catharine St. A. M. E. Zion Church. For awhile the Main St. Society appeared to have the larger membership and congregation. They also made some appeals to the public for financial assistance with some success. But when the Catharine St. organization with its smaller following sought to make public appeal, they were bitterly attacked by the Main St. brethren accused of not representing any regular and religious organization, but of holding the property occupied by them by force, and not by law and right, thus being unworthy of any sympathy or consideration of Christians and of public aid. In the early part of 1860 a bitter newspaper debate occurred between the two factions, each representing their plea to the public and aiming relentless attack upon the other.

The following were the trustees of the Main Street A. M. E. Zion Church

James Davis	Abraham Bradford
Angevine Deye	Leonard Du Bois
Joseph Wright	

The following were the trustees of the Catharine St. group

Isaac Deye	Abraham Bolin
James Treadwell	Stephen Smith
Thomas Gray	

These fine Christian Brethren were contending for public sympathy in those days of 1860.

Later a proposition to bring about a union of the two societies by the Catharine Street group was rejected by the officers of the Main St. group. The population did not warrant the existence of two colored churches and together they could make a stronger appeal to the public with the idea of building a new church. Main Street continued to carry on until their numbers dwindled down to such an extent that they were compelled to abandon their Main St. abode and region with the Washington St. M. E. until they passed out of the picture one by one. I think the last one retaining her membership there, faithfully, died just a couple of years ago in the person of

Many returned to Catharine Street, increasing the congregation, and they received much recognition from the public and succeeded in the project of rebuilding. The corner stone was laid in 1860 while the Rev. Jacob Thomas was

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pastor.

With the Civil War came local enlistment of soldiers for the cause of the Union. Draft riots occurred right here in Poughkeepsie with bitter animosity directed toward the colored population and their church. When a mob threatened to burn it down, some of its male members, with the permission of Mayor Innis, patrolled Catharine Street night and day for sometime, with fire arms, prepared to protect it with their lives. After the war was won a huge freedom rejoicing meeting was held in the church presided over by Isaac Deyo who presented as speakers James De Garmo,

Handwritten notes:
 131 Poughkeepsie
 of Madison
 J. A. Burkhos

ship of the

have endured in the past, we of today have pledged ourselves to continue in their footsteps in order that the A. M. E. Zion Church of Poughkeepsie retain its self as a power for good and for righteous and for christian living, and continue in the honorable course it has pursued for the past 100 years.

In 1891 the old church was remodeled at a cost of \$3,033.50. The total amount and over was raised. Over \$600. was given by the efforts of its members and the other churches of the city and philathopists contributed large sums. The largest single donation was from the 1st Presbyterian Church \$1,034.86, another from the 1st Reformed Church \$466.34; other churches contributed substantially, and some Vassar Legacy of \$476.25 was received at this time. All together \$3,248.51 was raised leaving a balance of \$232.26 in the treasury.

A good and complete job was done and paid for, and the old Catharine Street church was enjoyed by the congregati on for twenty odd years, with a succession of ministers up to the time of the Rev. Benjamin Judd. Rev. Judd came with a reputation of a statesman in many of the places he had pastored, and in looking for a minister he was a builder of christian institutions. Out of this friendship and through the kindness and generosity of Mr. Smith this church was erected in 1910.

This article is just a sketch of the progress of this church and people over a period of 100 years. The story of Poughkeepsie, the old ministers, members and congregation is fascinating and intensely interesting and it is to be regretted that time and the occasion will not permit a more delving into the story. There are old members, ministers and bishops whose names could be mentioned and their works reviewed. Knowing and appreciating the hard work and sacrifices which they