



*Bishop Abram Littlejohn*

# FOUR

## THE CONSECRATION OF GOD'S PROPERTY

In the 1873 Journal of the Diocese of Long Island, in the section called "Visitations and Acts of the Bishop", Bishop Littlejohn reported that on July 14th he consecrated St. Andrew's, Yaphank, made an address, and celebrated Holy Communion. Fortunately, thanks to Clara Weeks, we have the full text of his address. In addition, we have an excel-

lent account of the occasion. After twenty years as a family owned chapel, visited by diocesan clergy, the time had come for St. Andrew's to become a church. Since all debts related to the construction of the church had to be cleared up before a consecration, and James Weeks had desired that the congregation should participate fully by sharing the costs of the building, it was made known that there was a balance of \$500. which he had paid and which was not intended as part of his personal contribution.

According to Clara's brief history, recorded on the old parish register, the remaining \$500. was then contributed by Susan's cousin, Charles Jeffrey Smith, of Mastic, in memory of his deceased wife, Letitia Suydam Smith. We have a copy of the deed, signed by James and Susan, conveying the property to the diocese.

At the consecration, the Bishop was assisted by five other clergymen, the Rev'd Thomas Cook, in charge of the associate Mission at Riverhead; the Rev'd Mr. Pierson of Rockaway, who preached the sermon on the occasion; the Rev'd Mr. Hewlet of Islip; the Rev'd Mr. Prescott of Sayville and Patchogue; and the Rev'd Mr. Buckmaster of Greenport.

### CONSECRATION ADDRESS

of the Rt. Rev'd Abram Newkirk Littlejohn, I Bishop of Long Island

As recorded by the hand of Clara Weeks

"We are assembled here today to do what may appear to some a very needless thing. It is now nearly 20 years since this edifice was built. During all that time it has been used for sacred purposes; within its walls have been performed with more or less frequency the offices of our holy Religion, here the message of salvation has been proclaimed, here little children have, by Baptism, been grafted into the Body of Christ and have been taught the way of God's commandments; here the steps of youth have been directed into the way of life; here manhood and womanhood have found a heavenly balm to soothe the cares and mitigate the sorrows of this present world; here old age borne down with infirmities and oppressed with the shadow of life's evening has been taught to lean on the Christian's hope which is an anchor, sure and steadfast; within the walls here, too, the last rites have been performed over the dead, and thus by Baptism and Eucharist, by preaching and worship and all kindred means of grace this place has come to be regarded as the House of God. Tender memories and holy attachments have grown up around it.

"What more then, can we hope to do for this building by the services of this day? This office of formal consecration will not alter a line or timber in this structure; it will add nothing; it will

take away nothing visible to the eye, and yet as Christians and as Churchmen we believe that it will change the spiritual character of this House and fill it with an atmosphere of religious feeling to which it was a stranger before. In our thoughts and associations it will make it more sacred than before - to the eye of faith the Divine presence and blessing will be vouchsafed as they were not in time past. Heretofore this building has been man's property - subject to encumbrance and alienation; henceforth by solemn deed and covenant it will be God's property and set apart as the special tabernacle of his glory. We are here, we the official representatives of the Church, nay of God himself, the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, to publicly and formally accept the gift and to put upon it the seal of Divine ownership.

"And then how shall I speak suitably of the givers, - those aged servants of Christ, who have so long and patiently waited for this day. Their offering is bathed in tears of holy joy and gratulation. It goes up to God laden with the prayers, the toils and anxieties of many years. They desire me to qualify their agency, their liberality so far as may be required by the grateful acknowledgment of the gift of \$500- from Mr. C. J. Smith of Mastic in memory of his deceased wife, who, while living, was a warm friend of this Church. This gift has canceled the only debt remaining upon it and prepared the way for this service of consecration.

"These venerable and venerated servants of God are near the close of their earthly pilgrimage. Their day is far spent and the night of death is at hand silvered over though it be with the sweet and restful light of eternity. The act itself is one that will speak when they shall be no more seen. It's influence will be felt by their posterities. Their reward is only in part seen now. On the bright shores of the world unseen they shall reap the most of it. There it may be permitted them to greet many a soul that in these courts will have been turned from darkness unto light and from the powers of Satan unto God. Let us, bishop and clergy and people, so far as we may enter into their feeling - a feeling which rises into the dignity and pathos of that holy fervor which filled the breast of aged Simeon when he called upon God to let him depart in peace now that he had seen the glory of Israel. God grant that, full of blessing as this Sanctuary may be to others, it may be to them, when God shall call them away, the bright and hallowed gateway through which they shall pass from the storms of this troublesome world to the rest that remaineth for the people of God."

As soon as the parish had become an official diocesan mission church, it was made a part of the "Episcopal Associated Missions", under the direction of the Rev'd Thomas Cook of Grace Chapel, Riverhead. Clustered in the ministry were also Port Jefferson, Holbrook, Sayville, Patchogue, and Brookhaven. St. Andrew's remained in this group far beyond the existence of the Associate Mission. The particular mission churches yoked together with one priest changed frequently; St. Andrew's shared clergy with St. John the Baptist, Center Moriches; St. Andrew's, Mastic Beach; St. James, Brookhaven; Christ Church, Bellport, St. Luke's, Bohemia and St. John's, Oakdale.

The old parish register, 1874-1957, is a mine of information for our history, though not complete; some entries were made in other parish registers, wherever the clergyman at the time was resident. The fact that the book has been in the care of over forty priests, deacons, and lay readers since 1874, is cause for thanksgiving that it has survived. Equally fortuitous is the fact that families manage to keep letters and pictures for many years, thus enriching generations to come.