

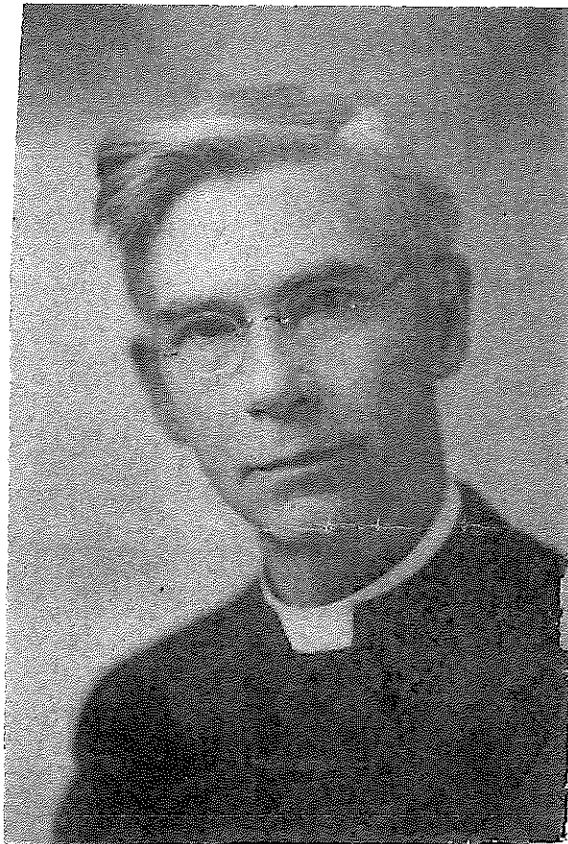
St. Andrew's: Year 100
JANUARY 2019 ⦿ ⦿ VOLUME 1, NO.1
IN SERVICE SINCE 1919 - HILTON VILLAGE, VA

**My Great-Grandfather, An "On-The-Spot Rector", The
Reverend Mr. Arthur S. Freese**

By
Peggy Woodall



The Reverend Arthur S. Freese and his wife
Miriam in Maine



St. Andrew's photo of its first rector, The
Reverend Mr. Arthur S. Freese c. 1920

My family history is tied directly to St. Andrew's Church. As a mission parish of St. Paul's Church, The Reverend Mr. Arthur S. Freese was called to Hilton Village to be the first priest of St. Andrew's. He brought with him his wife Miriam, his daughter Dorothea (my Great-Aunt Dots), my grandparents Zaida and Thomas Kelley with their three daughters, Marian, Elizabeth (my Aunt Bets), and my mother Margaret. These three children are listed in the church's historical notes as members of the first Sunday school. Their address was given as 209 Hurley Avenue. There are 82 names listed on the Sunday school rolls on June 6, 1920!

We all have family histories, and, when they are researched, they tell us of our individual heritages, how we happened to be born in a certain place and perhaps something about our family values and characteristics.

During the Spanish-American War, Reverend Freese's daughter Zaida was a missionary nurse stationed in the Philippines. While working in a hospital there, she met Thomas Michael Kelley, an injured soldier. They fell in love, were married and had three of their six daughters while living there. Their second daughter, Margaret (my mother), was born in 1913. After Tom finished his time in the Army, the family moved to Maine to be with Zaida's family.

Zaida's father, Arthur Samuel Freese was born in La Grange, Maine, Dec. 9, 1865. His Freese ancestors had come from England in the 1600s. Some fought in the Revolutionary War and the Civil War, and some were ministers. A Baptist minister, his brother Forest was said to be "a preacher of marked ability". Arthur married Miriam Ellen Cassoni then studied for the ministry in Bangor, Maine. He was then placed in charge of missions in Kansas under the auspices of the Episcopal Church. I know of two churches he started in Maine as well. In the family history of Mr. Freese it was written, "He is poor, it may be in worldly goods but rich in the possession of a loving loyal family." Miriam and Arthur had eight children, my grandmother Zaida being the oldest, born in Lewiston, Maine in 1884.

As I read through the historical notes of the formation of our church, what stands out to me are the following: the people who founded Hilton Village realized that the residents not only needed housing, stores where food and other necessities could be purchased, and transportation to get to work at the shipyard. But to be a community, the spiritual needs of the people should also be addressed. Thus, the property for the four church buildings was allotted. It was up to the people to establish their churches. With the help of the Reverend Mr. H. G. Lane of St. Paul's Newport News, the early parishioners of St. Andrew's met, organized, and laid the groundwork for what is St. Andrew's today. With their first "on-the-spot rector", The Rev. Mr. Arthur Freese, they dug the footings for the church building not only to save money but "to give us the right to call the church the work of our own hands".

My Great-Grandfather Arthur Freese was described as a beloved priest. He celebrated the first service of Holy Communion in the Hilton Auditorium on Sept. 28, 1919 and under his leadership the early church buildings were constructed and the membership grew. After a lengthy illness, he died on Nov., 25, 1924 at the age of 59.

My grandparents remained in Hilton where they had three more daughters. My grandmother Zaida was the school nurse at Hilton School, and my grandfather Tom worked for the C & O Railroad. The church remained the center of their faith and community lives as it continued to be for my parents and for my life as I grew up on Shirley Road. I remember my grandmother singing in the church choir, and our family sitting together on one of the front pews. We sat up front because my grandfather was hard of hearing,

then because my dad was hard of hearing. Butch and I still sit up there out of habit. When I look at the woodwork, I see my Uncle Bob's carpentry. I see the beautiful round stained-glass window that moved from the old church building. It remains an inspiration of "The Lamb of God" for me to this day.

My father, John Samuel Robertson, called Sam, was born on what is now the property of the Mariner's Museum. He also attended Hilton School. Later, after the death of his mother the family moved to Hilton. By marrying into the Kelley family, he had little choice but to join St. Andrew's Episcopal Church. He had been raised a Methodist. We were baptized together when I was an infant. He went on to be the church treasurer for over thirty years, serving on the vestry most of that time. For one of the church construction bond drives he became a licensed insurance broker, although he never sold insurance. He and my mother Margaret both taught Sunday school. Mother worked in the kitchen, on the bazaar, lead the girl scouts which met at the church, loved her circle and all the many friends we all had from the church.



Sam Robertson teaching Sunday School Class
c. 1950



Margaret Robertson teaching Sunday School Class
c. 1950

I share this rich heritage with my sister Nancy Orrison. Through the years, we both assisted in EYC, worship, and Christian Education. Nancy died on December 22, 2016. As a child, Nancy attended St. Andrew's School and loved singing in the choir. The church was always an important part of her life. In college, she majored in voice and piano, but later on she mostly played the mandolin. She loved playing it with the guitar choir in church and on the end of Hilton pier for the Easter sunrise service. Her family scheduled their summer vacation around Bible School where she helped lead the music. Nancy had a heart for children and their education. Professionally she taught special education, but on Sundays, she taught Sunday school which became Children's Chapel. She also helped and sometimes led Tweens, a Sunday afternoon program for those children not quite old enough for EYC.

Some of my best memories are the times we shared at St. Andrew's sitting on the second row of pews with our grandparents, our parents, our husbands, children, and grandchild through the various stages of our lives. There are many memories there. Thanks for letting me share them with you. As a church community we celebrate together, worship together and grieve with one another. Thanks be to God for saints past and saints present who have made and continue to make the church what it is -- a good place with good people.

ST. ANDREW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

HONOR ROLL

Each month, this page presents a listing of past members, beginning this month with the first congregants in 1919.

Mrs. Amy Curwood

Mrs. Mary N. Deal

Mrs. L.C. Granberry

Mr. William E. Granberry

Mr. W.C. Granberry, Jr.

Mr. J.M. Granger

Mr. Frank Hartin

Mrs. Frank Hartin

Mrs. Elizabeth Houghton

Mrs. Elizabeth F. Leigh

Mr. William M. Mahon

Mrs. William M. Mahon

Mr. E. T. Massey

Miss Rose Massey

Mrs. Leslie McCorkle

Mr. James C. Milroy

Mrs. W.M. Mooers

Mr. Frank L. Pierce

Mrs. Frank L. Pierce

Mrs. Francis Patterson

Mrs. George W. Roberts

Miss Margaret Roberts

Miss Lottie Roberts

Mr. R.H. Seward

Mrs. R.H. Seward

Mr. J.O. Steptoe

Mrs. J.O. Steptoe

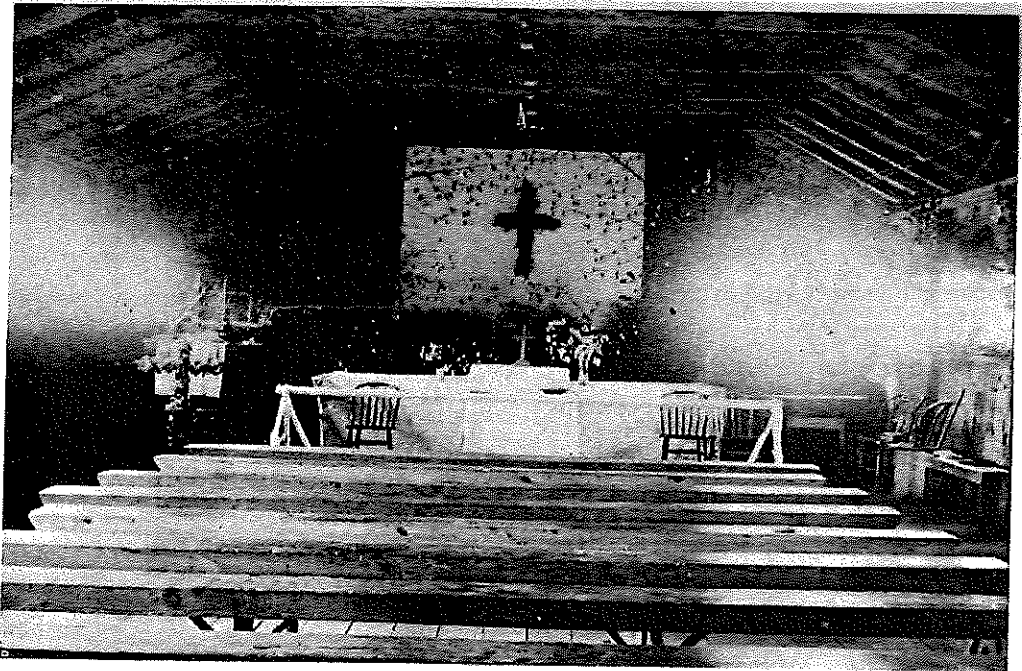
Mr. H.G. Twyford

Mrs. H.G. Twyford

Mr. Gordon Twyford

Mr. Warner Twyford

Mr. H.H. Winegar



Auditorium in the 1919 Hilton Village Recreation Building as arranged for services of the Saint Andrew's congregation.