

CHAPTERS IN TRINITY'S HISTORY  
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**CHAPTER VII - A FLOURISHING ANTEBELLUM CHURCH**

In 1851, for only the third time in its history, the convention of the Diocese of South Carolina voted to meet outside the city of Charleston. And, for the third time, the delegates voted to meet at Trinity Church in Columbia. It had only been nine years since the last convention in Columbia, but there were several factors for convening in the capital city. One was the threat to freedom of worship that Bishop Gadsden and others felt was taking place at the South Carolina College (which was under the firm control of the militant Presbyterian James Thornwell). Another reason was the remonstrance from the delegates of Christ Church, Greenville, on the lack of missionary effort in the upcountry where there were only four Episcopal churches.

The new church building provided an impressive setting for the 1852 diocesan deliberations. Edward Brickell White, the state's favorite ecclesiastical architect of the day, favored the Gothic Revival style and had designed a number of other churches, including the Huguenot Church and Grace Church in Charleston and Holy Cross in Bluffton. A contemporary reporter noted that the west facade, with its twin towers and great west window "was suggested by the west front of Yorkminster." The design of the ceiling, the reporter commented, was executed after that of St. Mary the Virgin in Oxford.

It had taken less than a year to erect what one observer called "the only complete specimen of Ecclesiastical Gothic in the Southern country." The rectangular brick structure was covered with stucco that was scored in imitation of stone. In order to create the proper color, a pigment was mixed with the stucco before it was applied to the walls. This technique was quite popular in Columbia in the 1840s and 1850s. It was used at the South Carolina College when the buildings on the Horseshoe were stuccoed in the 1850s and appeared in the foundations of domestic structures such as the Maxcy Gregg House and Kensington Plantation. On the exterior, the tower and false buttresses supporting the walls were capped by pinnacles of cast lead.

The interior consisted of a narthex separated from the nave by a wooden screen with sliding panels. The panels could be opened to provide for ventilation during Columbia's warm weather months. Like the exterior, the interior walls were scored to resemble stone. They were painted gray and the scoring lines were painted black to make the "granite" stone blocks stand out more. All of the heart pine woodwork, including floors, pews, and ceiling, were stained dark to resemble dark oak.

There was no center aisle. The nave was separated from two side aisles by a series of six ornamental arches supported by clustered columns. Side aisles were common in a number of lowcountry churches and were considered typical for the period.

At the east end of the nave, the pulpit and lectern stood in front of the last of the six pillars supporting the roof. Both items were wooden with open pointed Gothic arches. The dark oak graining on the church furniture was lightened by gilding and crimson velvet placed in the openwork. The pulpit and lectern were placed so as to "leave the view of the entire Chancel unobstructed."

The chancel was separated from the nave by a large central arch and two smaller flanking arches. Set into the chancel screen were black marble panels on which were engraved in gold the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, and the Ten Commandments.

During the decade of the 1850s, Columbia's population increased 25 percent, but Trinity grew at an even greater rate: 33 percent. As early as 1854 the vestry had consulted with Edward Brickell White about expanding the sanctuary. In August 1860, construction work was begun on enlarging Trinity. The congregation began holding its church services in the chapel at the South Carolina College.