

CHAPTERS IN TRINITY'S HISTORY

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CHAPTER XI - PETER SHAND AND "DEAR OLD TRINITY"

During the two decades after Reconstruction, South Carolina's pre-war elite attempted to reestablish - as much as it could - the world that had existed prior to 1860. Economically that was not possible; however, politically and culturally, there was a concerted effort to ensure that organizations and institutions of the Old Order would become community icons. Buildings that had survived the war - especially those that had survived Sherman's March - were honored not for their age or beauty, but because they were visible symbols of antebellum South Carolina. Trinity's sanctuary was only thirty years old when Reconstruction ended; however, it was the oldest church building in the city. Ebenezer Lutheran, St. Peter's Roman Catholic, and Washington Street Methodist had been built before Trinity, but they had been destroyed the night of February 17, 1865, and Trinity had not.

Not only was Trinity the oldest sanctuary in the capital city, but on its rolls were a significant number of the pre-war elite, most notably the venerated Gen. Wade Hampton. By the end of the century, Trinity, surrounded by its oaks and graveyard, was widely recognized as a symbol of the Old Order, and often referred to in the press as "Dear Old Trinity."

Peter Shand, Trinity's venerable rector, had also become a revered symbol of Columbia and South Carolina establishments. In diocesan affairs, Shand was one of the senior clergy in the state. From 1854 to 1860 he had been a delegate to the national convention and from 1861 to 1865 had represented the diocese in the conventions of the Episcopal Church in the Confederacy. From 1859-1882, he was a trustee of General Theological Seminary.

In his earlier years Shand had been known to preach "a tolerable mean sermon. By the 1880s, however, his health was in decline and a throat ailment prevented him from preaching. That was of no consequence to his congregation, one of whom remarked: "We do not want him to preach to us; only to look at him on the street or in the chancel is a sermon good enough for anyone."

In 1884, Shand marked the fiftieth anniversary of his ministry at Trinity. The congregation and the diocese celebrated the occasion with a special worship service. The rector prepared an anniversary address, but because of failing health he was unable to deliver it. In his stead, the Rev. Ellison Capers of Christ Church, Greenville, read his remarks. On order of the vestry, the complete proceedings of the service were published. At a subsequent diocesan convention, Bishop William Bell White Howe described Shand as the "purest type of a clergyman in the Anglican Church..., the faithful Parish Priest, who has cure of souls, and knows his parishioners as a shepherd knows his sheep. The popularity of the brilliant preacher easily wanes, but the pastor who remains long years with his people, who is with them in their sorrows, and when contagious sickness overshadows their homes, is long enshrined in their hearts." He then compared Trinity's rector to Chaucer's "poore parson" and Goldsmith's "country parson" who "went about doing good."

By 1886, Shand had baptized and married several generations and buried more than two-thirds of those interred in the churchyard. And he had willingly married and buried Columbians who were not members of his congregation.

Less than two years after the golden anniversary celebration, Trinity's beloved rector died, on All Saints Day, 1886. "The Harvest Home—A Good Man Has Fallen in Israel" headlined a local newspaper. The funeral was held at noon the following day. Bishop Howe conducted the service and "departed from the usual custom of the Episcopal Church and made a brief but beautiful address" to the hundreds of mourners present. Peter Johnson Shand was laid to rest in the churchyard among those to whom he had ministered.