

THE HISTORY OF TRINITY MT. POCONO

Our church was born on a September evening in 1892 when a group of vacationers met on a rented cottage porch on Mt. Pocono's Pine Knoll to worship together. Leading the group was Episcopal priest and Divinity School professor Loring W. Batten. When he impulsively proposed that a collection be taken to start a building fund for a church, everyone agreed, including attendees from other faiths. Vacationing architect Thomas V. Lonsdale volunteered to donate building plans. The Harry S. Cattell family offered a piece of their large property as a building site.

During the following three years, sporadic fundraising took place. When Dr. Batten was asked to conduct Sunday services at a large Mount Pocono hotel in 1894, he agreed on the condition that all of the offerings go to the building fund he'd started. The result was an explosion of craft fairs, bake sales, church dinners, Ladies Aid activities and an organized solicitation drive.

By May 1896, enough money was in hand or pledged so that ground could be broken. The first service was held in the completed church on July 12. At that memorable event, Captain John M. Walton, Chairman of the new Board of Directors, and his wife donated \$1000 to be applied to the mortgage. Their magnanimity prompted other parishioners to more than match the amount and the mortgage was burned at a special ceremony that same summer.

Trinity was consecrated on August 9, 1896 at a service conducted by The Rt. Rev. George Kinsolving, missionary Bishop of Texas and a friend of Dr. Batten. Also present and participating were The Rev. Thomas C. Yarnall, DD; The Rev. John C. Lord, Rector of All Saints Memorial in Navesink, NJ; and The Rev. Dr. Batten. Dr. Batten had contacted Bishop Kinsolving, who was vacationing in Nova Scotia, when the Bishop of Bethlehem fell ill and could not consecrate the Chapel. Kinsolving made a rapid and adventurous trip via boat, railroad, and horse and carriage to arrive in time.

Loring Batten preached that day, and his sermon contained words that have become a standard for all subsequent additions and improvements to Trinity's physical facilities:

"Everything shall be done on the assumption that anything that is to be devoted to the service of God must, above all things, be not only appropriate but, as far as may be possible, beautiful."

When Trinity was a summer chapel, folks came from all the nearby Pocono hotels and boarding houses to attend. They weren't necessarily Episcopalians, although many were. A

few "locals " also attended. Sometimes only a handful worshipped. At other times, the chapel pews were full as almost 200 worshipers crowded Trinity on an anniversary of its consecration or to hear sermons by especially well-known or well-loved priests.

In 1921 and 1922, the first years that attendance records were kept, attendance ranged from 7 to 29. Attendance rose in 1923 and 1934. The smallest congregation consisted of 9, the largest of 87. In 1932, 125 attended a Confirmation service on July 24, and 96 celebrated the anniversary of Trinity's Consecration in August. From that point on, attendance averaged from 30 to well over 100.

Trinity celebrated its first baptism in 1898: baby Francis Joseph Smith, whose parents were Lewis T. and Martha. His sponsor was Angelina F. Wilson. As years went by, more baptisms took place, weddings were celebrated and the Bishop of Bethlehem blessed confirmations. Between 1898, when baby Francis was baptized, and 1962, when a full-time Vicar began to work at Trinity, 56 infants and children were baptized at the font.

A total of 38 marriages were held in the beautiful Sanctuary between 1907, the first recorded, and 1961.

A variety of Episcopal priests served the chapel as summer followed summer. Their names are found in the old Record Book, which is carefully preserved in the Parish Office. Some names are familiar to Trinity history.

In 1924, the summer attendees at Trinity Chapel decided to build a "Guild Hall." At that time, they figured that they would need to raise about \$8,000. As is the case in Trinity style, they quickly did, breaking ground for the project in 1926.

By 1960, a growing number of full-time residents in the Mount Pocono area expressed their desire to worship year-round at Trinity. On October 13, a meeting was held after church services. The modest congregation voted to keep Trinity open all year for worship. Bishop Warnecke of the Diocese of Bethlehem was asked to come to Mount Pocono to confer. The Episcopalian Department of Mission surveyed the area and determined that a full-time program was feasible. The Diocese was willing to make arrangements to hold family services at Trinity each Sunday, and Trinity would be classed as a Mission congregation.

By 1962, The Rev. Ernest Young, who first served the parish while an intern, was called as Vicar. Organists played the old Hook and Hasting pump organ. A water-driven turbine in the basement of the Church was fed from the Hawthorne Inn cistern to power a fan that, in turn, blew air in the pipe organ chests. Later that year, the embryonic congregation voted

to build a rectory in the woods up the hill from their church. Fr. Young remained with Trinity until 1967.

The next Vicar to be called was Father Ralph Roth. He and his family moved into the rectory in 1967. Soon Father Roth was able to enlarge the congregation so that it became a "congregation of record," no longer financially dependent on the Diocese, leaving behind its former mission status.

In 1990, thanks largely to the persistence and vision of one Trinity member, Trinity Parish extended its Parish Hall and added the rector's study, the church office, a modern and well-equipped kitchen, an inviting library, along with three classrooms and adequate restrooms.

Trinity has remained relatively debt-free throughout the long process of growing from a small group worshipping on a cottage porch, to a summer chapel, to a Mission congregation, to a "congregation of record," to its present-day status. Inspired by those visionaries who built a chapel of enduring beauty, succeeding generations have added the Great Parish Hall, rectory, offices, classrooms, kitchen, and library. Each building project has been designed in keeping with the church itself, and executed to maintain the original design's artistic integrity.

A vision of the Kingdom, commitment to service, and dedication to future generations of God's children have inspired Trinity's members from the congregation's earliest beginnings. Trinity has never been a large parish. In fact, since its humble beginnings in 1896, a relatively small congregation of faithful parishioners worked diligently and well to create the facilities that house the church today.