



History of Christ Church

by

Rev. Henry E. Hovey

(The following article is taken verbatim  
from the Christ Church Register. Spelling  
and punctuation as in original.)

## History of Christ Church

### The Marsh Family

The first mention of the name of Marsh in the Register of Queen's Chapel Portsmouth - is that of Anne - daughter of John and Sarah Marsh who was baptized July 23rd 1769 - by Rev. Arthur Browne - Rector. The parents - John Marsh and Sarah Sheafe had been married in May of the previous year by Rev. Samuel Haven D.D. - Pastor of the South Parish - In the year 1773 - Matthew Sheafe Marsh - another child of the above parents was born - This baptism doubtless occurred during the troublous years of the Revolutionary War - for it is not recorded as far as known - there being a gap in the records of the Parish from the death of Rev. Arthur Browne in 1773 - to the year 1795 when Rev. Joseph Williard became Rector -

On Sept. 29th 1796 Mr. Matthew Sheafe Marsh was married to Sarah Coffin Massey - both of Portsmouth -

On Feb. 3rd 1799 Almira - infant daughter of the above was baptized in private

On Sept. 21st 1800 - Joseph - a son - born July 24th 1800 was baptized in church - the sponsors being Hon. & Mrs. James Sheafe - and the father -

On Sept. 6th 1801 - Mehitable Massey - a daughter - was baptized in private - the sponsors being the parents -

The above offices of Marriage and Baptism were performed by Rev. Joseph Willard - Rector

On June 3rd 1814 Mr. Matthew Sheafe Marsh - died of a malignant fever - having been sick only four days - He was forty-one years of age

On August 21st of the same year there were baptized in church by the Rector - Rev. Charles Burroughs -

George Massey - aged about 8 years -

Matthew Sheafe - aged about 3 years

and Sarah Ann - aged about 9 months - children of the late Matthew Sheafe Marsh and his wife Sarah Coffin (Massey) Marsh - The sponsors were Hon. & Mrs. James Sheafe - and the widowed mother -

Life of  
Mr. George M.  
Marsh

Mr. John Blunt of Brooklyn - N.Y. - in a letter dated Feb. 24th 1885 in answer to enquiries addressed to him - states that his mother Mehitable Massey (Marsh) Blunt - then surviving at the age of 84 - tells him that: George Massey Marsh was born on Monday Oct. 21st 1805 - at 6 P.M. - in a house then occupied by his father on State St - Portsmouth - opposite the residence of the Elwyn family - where the Rockingham House now stands - Mr. Blunt adds of his uncle "Mr. George M. Marsh left Portsmouth when quite a young man and went to Northfield - Vermont, - where he kept a store a few years - He then returned to Portsmouth and was engaged in business in the city a short time and then retired to take care of his property - He was a devout churchman and was connected with St. Johns Church from an early age.

He had four sisters and two brothers - one of his sisters (my mother) survives him and resides in this city (Brooklyn) - and is now in her eighty-fourth year

I am sorry I can give you no more information about Mr. Marsh but there is little to write about of one who lived so quiet a life - He was an earnest Christian and all through his life here he was continually preparing himself for the next world."

Very respectfully yours - John Blunt

Within a few days of the writing of this present history (All Saints - 1885) Mrs. Mehitable Massey (Marsh) Blunt, referred to in the above letter, from her son - departed this life - in Brooklyn - L.I. - She was the last survivor of the brothers and sisters of Mr. George M. Marsh.

Mr. Marsh never married - After his return to Portsmouth - from Northfield Vt. - he lived with his mother - Mrs. Sarah Coffin Marsh - and sister - Miss Almira Marsh - in the brick house adjoining St. John's Chapel - which had been built by his great uncle Hon. James Sheafe - for his grandmother Mrs. Sarah Sheafe Marsh - after the destructive conflagration of 1813 which swept through the entire lower part of Portsmouth - Upon the death of his mother Jan 6th 1848 - Mr. Marsh purchased from his brothers and sisters their shares in this property -

Miss Almira Marsh died suddenly on March 26th 1866

Will of  
Mr. George M.  
Marsh 1868

On Sept. 3rd 1868 - Mr. Marsh executed his last will and testament, in which after sundry legacies - he bequeathed the greater portion of his property "to the following trustees, namely.

"The said Matthew S. Marsh - John Blunt - Col. Charles E. Blunt - John Blunt Jr. and Col. Matthew S. Marsh - and the Bishop of the Diocese of New Hampshire - and the Rector of the St. Johns Church of this city, their successors and assigns, for the following uses and purposes - namely - To purchase a suitable lot of land in the westerly part of the city of Portsmouth - N.H. - and to build thereon a stone or brick church to be called Christ Church - and to be used solely for the worship of Almighty God - Father, Son, and Holy Ghost - according to the doctrines and discipline of the Protestant Episcopal Church - in the United States of America, and for no other purpose whatever.

"And in case after the building of said Church and having it furnished with suitable baptismal font, bibles and prayer books - silver christening basin and communion service, organ on the right hand of the chancel and bell - there should be a remainder, the said remainder shall be paid over to the wardens and vestry of said church to be safely invested by them and the

annual interest to be given to the poor of said parish -

"And it is my wish that the house No 68 State St be the parsonage of said church - And in case the said church should ever be used otherwise than for the purpose within named, then the whole property shall revert to my sister Mehitable M. Blunt and my brother Matthew S. Marsh - to have and to hold, to them and their children and their heirs and assigns forever - And it is my desire that the parishioners of said church shall for at least the term of five years defray the expenses of said church by voluntary contributions and the seats be free and I do hereby constitute and appoint the said M. S. Marsh - John Blunt - C. E. Blunt - J. Blunt Jr. - and Col. M. S. Marsh - to be the executors of this my last will and testament Signed - sealed and delivered by the said George M. Marsh, on this third day of September A.D. 1868 to be his last will and testament in presence of us who have hereto subscribed our names as witnesses in his presence and in presence of each other.

"M. B. Vennard

George M. Marsh (Seal)  
(signed)

"George Henderson

"William B. Lowd

Codicil to  
Will

Codicil

"I now add what I intended to be written within i e that neither my brother M. S. Marsh - nor my nephew Charles Blunt, John Blunt Jr. or Col. M. S. Marsh shall be required to give bonds with securities to the Judge of Probate as I have entire confidence in their probity and ability to execute this trust as God's Stewards

The silver christening basin is consecrated to the Church. In honor of my beloved mother I present it to Christ Church in her name.

"Signed - sealed and declared this 16th day of November A.D. 1872 in presence of M. B. Vennard - William B. Lowd - George Henderson."

"George M. Marsh (Seal)  
(Signed)

Death of  
Mr. George M.  
Marsh 1878

On the evening of Tuesday November 19th A.D. 1878 Mr. Marsh was gathered to his fathers - having the testimony of a good conscience - in the communion of the Catholic Church - in the confidence of a certain faith and in the comfort of a reasonable religious and holy hope. His funeral took place from St. John's Church - on the afternoon of Saturday November 23rd being conducted by the Rev. Charles A. Holbrook - Rector and his body was placed in the tomb of his family - near the corner of Chapel and Bow Streets - in St. John's Churchyard\* -

Appointment and  
Organization of  
the Board of  
Trustees 1880

Of the Trustees named in his will - Mr. Marsh's brother Matthew S. Marsh and his brother-in-law John Blunt had departed this life before the death of the testator - Col. Charles E. Blunt, John Blunt, Jr. and Col. Matthew S. Marsh declined the trust on account of their distant residence and business engagements, - whereupon the Judge of Probate of Rockingham County appointed John Hatch Esq administrator - with the will annexed to take charge of the

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\*In 1879 a Sunday School was organized at the Creek - by Rev. C. A. Holbrook - Rector - At the opening of the Church - 3rd in Lent [Feb. 25, 1883] this school in a flourishing condition was transferred thither - Mr. Wm. Bates & Rev. Mr. Hovey walking arm in arm at the head of the procession from Morning St. to the Church - the School following. Arriving at the Church all marched up the middle aisle and there knelt in prayer. This was the first occupation of the church.

estate - and Hon Albert R. Hatch - Christopher C Jackson and Chief Engineer David B. Macomb U.S.N., - as Trustees to fill the place of those who had declined - the Board - consisting of these three gentlemen together with the Bishop of the Diocese of New Hampshire and the Rector of St. John's Church - Portsmouth met in November 1880 and organized by the election of Hon Albert R. Hatch - chairman - and John Hatch Esq Clerk - shortly after this - the Bishop of New Hampshire finding himself unable to attend to the duties of his trusteeship - resigned his trust -

Work of the  
Trustees  
Nov 1880 to  
Nov. 1882

In the fulfillment of the sacred duties committed to them - the members of the Board of Trustees spent much time and energy during the next two years - the property in their hands more than doubled in value before the completion of their work. In accordance with the terms of the will a large and "suitable lot of land in the westerly part of the city of Portsmouth - N H" being at the corner of State and Madison Streets - was purchased for \$2000 from the heirs of Joseph W. Pickering

Architect

Mr. Henry M. Langdon was appointed architect of the building - and on the acceptance of his plans by the Trustees - proposals for the work were invited by advertisement and the contract was awarded to Messers Jeans

Builders

and Taylor - of New York City -

Assets

The following assets were in the hands of the Trustees

Amount decreed due Trustees - by Probate Court	31.666.13
Increase on sale of Stocks and bonds	50.533.31
Interest # #	<u>1.566.82</u>
Total	\$ 83.766.26

Cost of various portions of the work The following was the cost of various portions of the work

For land and expenses	\$2003.38	Glass	\$4675.61
Architect	3295.51	Bells	3242.00
Contractors	40188.62	Organ	3096.24
Stone	4849.91	Pews	2126.38
Taxes	238.25	Chancel furniture	2743.32
Corner Stone	161.55	Furnaces	717.00
Safe	106.26	Font	359.07
Capitals	450.00	Tablet	451.92
Lightning Rod	52.90	Gas fixtures	819.25
Painting	1500.00	Carpet	560.38
Plumbing	104.93	Books	228.65
Gutters	45.46	Book marks	26.25
Alms Box	61.50	Communion Service	310.15
Cushions	56.82	Storm Door	38.40
Lecturn	32.70	School Room furniture	264.80

Laying of the  
Corner-Stone  
St. John Bapt-  
1881

On Saint John the Baptists Day June 24th - 1881 - the corner stone was laid by the Grand Lodge of Freemasons - of the State of New Hampshire - being the same body which laid the corner-stone of Saint John's Church - on Saint John the Baptists Day - 1807 - the oration for the occasion prepared by Hon Albert R. Hatch was delivered by his son. John Hatch Esq. Clerk of the Board of Trustees, and the corner stone was laid in ample form by Mr. Frank A. McKean, Grand Master of Freemasons of the State of New Hampshire - assisted by the members of the Grand Lodge - the DeWitt Clinton Commandery of Knights Templar and in the presence of a large number of citizens - there were deposited in it a copy of the Holy Bible - a copy of the Book of

Common Prayer copies of various current periodicals of the day - and a collection of ancient and modern coins which had been gathered in previous years by Mr. Marsh

Death of Hon. A.R.Hatch  
March 2 - 1882 On March 2 - 1882 Hon Albert R. Hatch departed this life - and on May 9th of the same year John Hatch Esq was appointed by the Judge of Probate - to succeed him as Trustee -

In the Autumn of the year 1882 the Trustees notified the Bishop of the Diocese that Christ Church was ready for occupancy -

First Service in the Church  
- Third Sunday in Lent-1883 On the evening of February 25th 1883 - being the third Sunday in Lent - the first Service was held therein - Evening Prayer was said by Rev Henry E. Hovey, who on the previous Sunday had entered upon the Rectorship of St. John's Church - and the sermon was preached by Rt. Rev William Woodruff Niles DD Bishop of the Diocese of New Hampshire - from the text I Kings III 1

Organization of Parish -  
March 28th 1883 On Monday Evening March 28th the Parish was formally organized according to the laws of the State of New Hampshire and with the consent and in the presence of the Bishop of the Diocese - Mr. John H. Knox was elected clerk - Mr. John H. Slater and Howe Call Esq - Wardens - Mr. Frank J Philbrick - Treasurer and Messers Edwin B. Prime and William A Bates vestrymen - these being legally convened April 10th as the Wardens and vestry of the Church - elected Rev. Henry E. Hovey - Rector

Surpliced Choir  
St John Bapt 1883 On Saint John the Baptists Day - June 24th - being the Fifth Sunday after Trinity the choir of men and boys appeared in surplices - it being the first surpliced choir in the Diocese of New Hampshire\*

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\*Not so -- choir of St. Paul's Concord, organized in 1882. (C. LeV. B.)

Consecration  
July 3 - 1883

On Tuesday morning - July 3 - the Church was consecrated to the worship of Almighty God according to the doctrines and discipline of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America - by the Bishop of the

Consecration  
1883

Diocese - who also preached the sermon - the following clergy were present of the Diocese of New Hampshire

Rev. Edward A. Renouf - Rector of St Peters Church - Drewsville -

Rev. George B. Morgan - Rector of Christ Church - Exeter

Rev. David C. Roberts - Vice-Rector of St Pauls Church - Concord

Rev. Lucius Waterman - Rector of Trinity Church - Tilton

Rev. John B. Richmond - Residing in Dover

Rev. William Lloyd Himes - In charge of St. John the Baptists, Wolfborough Junction

Rev. Henry E. Hovey - Rector of the Parish -

Of the Diocese of Massachusetts

Rev. J. Frank Winkley - Rector of Trinity Church - Woburn

Rev. Joshua R. Pierce - Rector of St Anne's Church - Dorchester

Rev. Charles L. Hutchins - Rector of Grace Church - Medford

Rev. Louis De Gornin - Rector of St Stephens Church - Lynn

Rev. Alfred E. Johnson - Assistant Minister of St Annes Church - Lowell

Rev. Jeremiah J. Cressey - Rector of the House of Prayer - Lowell

Of the Diocese of New York

Rev. Morgan Dix D.D. - Rector of Trinity Church - New York -

Of the Diocese of Ohio

Rev. J. W. Gilman - Rector of Christ Church - Kent -

Beside the above clergy, there were many laymen present from various parts of the country - the day having been selected because it was the day previous to the decennial gathering in this city of the Sons of Portsmouth - After the close of the service - the visiting clergy and others were entertained at dinner at the Rockingham House.

Courtesy of the Portsmouth Athenaeum, Portsmouth, N.H.

- Confirmation of Rev. W. H. Cutler 1884 Later in the day - the rite of Confirmation was administered in the Church to Rev. William H. Cutler - recently Congregational pastor at Hampton - N.H. now seeking Holy orders -
- Altar Guild On Epiphany 1884 the Altar Guild was organized for the reverent care of the chancel and sacristy of the Church
- 1886 In November 1886 all the windows in the Church which were then uncovered with wire-netting, to protect the glass, were so covered at an expense of \$70 -
- 1889 Movement for an Assistant During the Spring and Summer of 1889 a movement was in progress by which to procure an Assistant to the rector whereby both Morning and Evening Services could be held at Christ Church on Sundays - A subscription paper was prepared and circulated and a considerable sum was pledged for this purpose
- Extract from Bishops address 1889 The matter was referred to the Bishop of the Diocese who proceeded as is stated in the following extract from his address to the Diocesan Convention of that year
- "From persons interested in Christ Church at Portsmouth and a little later from the Wardens of the parish, a request came to me last spring for permission to have an Assistant to the Rector (who is also Rector of St. John's Parish), and to hold Morning Service in the Church as well as the Evening Prayer now held. To the first of these petitions I replied by a letter, setting out that I had never been able to find a very satisfactory solution of the problem which the new parish brings, and that I was not then able to see any better way of going on than the not very fruitful way in which we had been going. Nor did I see how enough money could be had to maintain the system desired.
- "The Wardens requested the Bishop to come to Portsmouth, look over the ground, have a conference with those who sought the change, and judge

for himself. I submitted to the Standing Committee, as my Counsel of Advice, certain questions, with the entire subject, and asked for their counsel. The reply was, that while unable in the peculiar circumstances to advise the Bishop to open the Church for Morning Service, they did nevertheless urge him to go to Portsmouth and give a hearing. This I did, in a room connected with Christ Church, on the fifth day of July. At this hearing the Rector was present, and such other persons caring for Christ Church as chose to attend. After a full expression of opinions, and a careful weighing of them, this end was reached: That when one thousand dollars for a year shall have been pledged in good and valid subscriptions, without soliciting contributions from persons connected with other religious bodies who do not purpose to worship in Christ Church, or from members of St. John's parish at all, and if and when a clergyman can be had who is satisfactory both to the Rector and the people of Christ Church, to work as the Rector's Assistant, then they shall be permitted to make the experiment. It was explained by me that neither Bishop, nor Vestry, nor Trustees of the Diocese (who hold the title), nor all of them combined, could do this without the Rector's consent.

"This consent the Rector gave then and there. The Bishop, though taking a moderately hopeful view, was not very sanguine. It seemed to us both to be right that a fair trial, if the people can compass it, should be permitted. Possibly solvitur ambulando will hold in this case, under the guiding of Divine Providence. Neither of us would dare to take in his hands the solving of these intricate problems,--problems that involve so many unknown quantities. The Rector and I thought we ought all to act in good faith, prudently, with prayer, and to leave the future with Almighty God. The Rector has, I am sure, acted with kindness and prudence, and in

the earnest desire best to subserve the interests of the Church in Portsmouth.

"I believed it my duty to render to this Convention an account of my action in the matter. Let no one imagine that I take a gloomy view of the Church in general in this old city by the sea, and of its future. Very recently the quota of St. John's parish in the Episcopal Fund has been so honorably completed as to remove, incidentally, a cause, long existing, of some misunderstandings. In the origination of both the Children's Home and the Cottage Hospital with its blessed work, and in their maintenance, members of St. John's have borne an honorable and the leading part. During the last quarter of a century each period of six years has shown in the main, both in the number of persons baptized and confirmed, an increase over the previous period. In the last six years since Christ Church was built, the increase has been larger than before. To this gain in the discharge of the Church's proper mission in Portsmouth, Christ Church has contributed, if less than one would desire, yet something."

1891  
Rev Charles A  
Morrill -  
Assistant

During Lent - 1891 - Mr James H. Gamble - a lay leader of this Diocese - began - with the cordial cooperation of the Bishop and the Rector - to hold service by lay-reading on Sunday mornings - the rector continuing the usual service on Sunday evenings - And the movement described above - looking toward an Assistant-minister was renewed - and progressed so successfully that during Easter-tide - the Rev. Charles A. Morrill of the Diocese of Pittsburg - then residing in Haverhill - Mass. an old college friend of the rectors - was appointed to that position at a salary of \$900 a year - accepted the duty and entered upon his work

1891  
Increased  
Services

With the efficient help of the Assistant the services were increased in number and the parochial work enlarged - A Service with sermon Sunday Morning, and Wednesday evening, was added to those already established and on Trinity Sunday the weekly celebration of the Holy Communion was begun.

Steam  
Heating

During the summer a steam apparatus was placed in the Church for more effectual heating of the edifice.

Candle-  
sticks

During the summer a pair of large altar candlesticks was presented by Miss Susan E. Christie - in memory of her father Mr John Christie late Senior Warden

Altar desk

In October a brass altar desk was presented by Mr John Newik\* in memory of his son John Thomas Newik

1892

Altar Cross

At Easter a brass altar cross was presented through Miss Harriet McE Kimball - by Rev H. G. Batterson D D of New York in memory of Rt Rev Cyrus Frederic Knight DD - sometime Bishop of Milwaukee -

Almsbason  
Candelabra  
Vesper Lights

At the same Festival - a brass almsbason and a pair of eucharistic candlesticks were presented by St Margarets Guild and a pair of seven-branched vesper lights - in memory of the late John Christie ... (by Mr. Carlisle Clark)\*\*

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\*In the Church Register at this point is a correction in another hand. The words "John Newik" are crossed out, and the name "Alfred G. Maddock" written in, but no correction is made of the name of the son. Rev. Swann thought this might be a misspelling for Newick and contacted descendants of that family, but they had no recollection of such a gift. We therefore leave it as originally written by Rev. Hovey.

\*\*An unknown hand.

Lease of  
lot

On April 30th the Parish executed a lease of the lot adjoining the land held by the Trustees of the Diocese - on its south-easterly side (being 50 feet on Madison St - and running back the depth of the Church lot) - to Mr Alexander H. Stacey - under certain conditions named in the lease - for twenty-one years - the lessee paying therefor \$15 every May 1st and October 1st every year ending Oct 1st 1913 -

Bible &  
Altar book  
Memorial of  
W. Irving  
Leighton

In October a Bible and Book of Altar Service were presented to the Parish in loving memory of Washington Irving Leighton for a long time a member of the choir and devoted to the interests of the Parish - He lost his life by railway accident at West Newton. Mass - April 18th 1893

Paintings on  
the reredos -  
by Miss  
Miller -

At Easter each of the six panels of the reredos was adorned with the figure of an angel - all looking toward the central cross - the angels - in red and blue and gold, were patterned after those of Fra Angelico - The work was done by the skill and devotion of Miss Mary E. B. Miller - in loving memory of her sister Carolina Augusta (Miller) Sanborn - who was born March 23 1843 and departed this life December 20th 1872

1894

Agitation and  
Discussion

During Advent 1893 and Epiphany and Lent 1894 - there was some agitation in the Parish as to whether or not it were better to retain, even the semi-connection with St Johns which was involved in having the same rector as the mother Parish. The two parties, holding opposite views as to the expediency of this - each prepared papers or petitions giving expression to their wishes and opinions - And the whole matter with these various papers, was referred to the Bishop of the Diocese - But, as the question was, in some measure, a reproduction of the old question of 1889 - stated at length in the Bishops Convention Address of that year (inserted here on page 13) and there said to be an "intricate problem - - involving many

unknown quantities" - the Bishop was, for some time in doubt what to advise - and the rector in doubt what course to adopt -

On March 12th however - he addressed the Wardens and Vestry as follows -

"The Rectory - Portsmouth - N H  
March 12th 1894

Resignation  
of first  
rector

"To the Wardens and Vestry of Christ Church

"Dear Brethren I am convinced that the larger part of the active members of Christ Church believe that the interests of the Parish would be better served by a competer\* separation from the mother Parish of St John's - and although, by your courtesy, that fact has never been officially announced to me, by your body, I feel that it is best that I should - as I do hereby - place in your hands my resignation of the office of rector to which you elected me eleven years ago - I would desire it to take effect at the coming Easter meeting - As the organizer of the Parish and its first rector I shall naturally feel a deep interest in its welfare, and shall always be glad to serve it in any way in my power

"May God prosper and bless it in its work! -

"Affectionately yours -

"Henry Emerson Hovey -

Acceptance of  
Resignation

To the letter of resignation came the following reply--

"Portsmouth - March 19th 1894

"Reverend and Dear Sir

"Agreeably to a vote at a meeting of the vestry of Christ Church, held on Saturday Evening the 17th inst. I beg to inform you of the acceptance by the vestry of your resignation of the office of rector of said

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\*As in original. Undoubtedly "completer" was the word intended.

Church - to take effect at the coming Easter meeting - and that the following resolution was read - accepted and adopted --

Election of  
first rector  
as Rector  
Emeritus

"That in consideration of the fact that the Rev Henry E. Hovey was the organizer of our Parish and its first rector - and of the faithful and valuable services for the past eleven years - therefore be it resolved that he be, and hereby is, elected Rector Emeritus of this Parish -

"Very respectfully

"J. H. Knox Parish Clerk -

Bishops  
definition of  
the office

Previous correspondence with the Bishop had defined the office of Rector Emeritus to be simply an honorary one of courtesy and mutual kindness to be formally recognized in the annual official report of the Parish to the Diocesan Convention - where the name of the Rector Emeritus and the office which he holds - should be mentioned after the name and office of the Rector

Lease of  
Rectory to  
Rev H E  
Hovey

In connection with the above the Wardens, being duly authorized thereto and instructed - executed a lease to Rev Henry E. Hovey - of the Rectory No. 54 State St - during the term of his active connection with St Johns Parish - at one hundred and fifty dollars a year - he to make repairs - This annual rental was fixed - partly in consideration of large expenditure already made on the building by the rector - and partly because the property, if thus occupied, would probably be free from taxes -