

# *Surprises at Every Turn*

An Architectural Tour of Old St. Andrew's



**PAUL PORWOLL**

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2604 Ashley River Road  
Charleston, South Carolina 29414

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## PREFACE

As spring comes to Charleston, the weather warms, flowers bloom, and pollen coats everything in sight, Old St. Andrew's hosts another Tea Room and Gift Shop. Tea rooms are a rite of spring for many Charleston-area churches, when they open their doors and welcome the community in fellowship to a lunch of chicken salad, shrimp paste, magnolia pie, and other delectable delights. But the title of mother of all Tea Rooms belongs to Old St. Andrew's, which began to serve travelers to the Ashley River plantations in the early 1950s shortly after the church was reopened for the first time after nearly sixty years of dormancy.

Tea Room 2019 was another success, with parishioners serving lunch to more than two thousand guests. Tea Room is the only time of the year when the church is open for regular tours, and volunteer docents were busy every day for two weeks.

It was during Tea Room that I realized that our tours shouldn't be available only to a select few, for only two weeks a year. That's why this guide has been developed, to share the church's beauty for all, at any time.

Here you'll take a virtual tour as if you were in the building listening to me talk. Because we aren't time constrained in these pages as we would be on a physical tour, we can explore many features in greater detail including those that often get overlooked. What I hope you learn is that nearly everything in the church is more than what it seems. *Surprises at Every Turn* captures the hidden stories behind this historic church's material culture. A chronology of all documented building work is also included.

An understanding of the church's architecture helps illustrate the parish's long history, one replete with growth and decline, vibrancy and dormancy, conflict and cooperation, war and peace. The historical gem you see today could have been left for dead many times during its long history. That the church has struggled and survived, even prospered, against all odds is a testament to the faith and the dogged determination of thousands of people who for more than three centuries have poured their hearts and souls into this place and refused to let it die.

As Jesus said to Andrew, "Come and see."

Paul Porwoll  
Parish Historian  
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March-April 2019

## WELCOME TO OLD ST. ANDREW'S

Step up a brick riser into the main entrance. This is the west door; Magee House (named for the church's thirteenth rector, Rev. Lynwood Magee, who oversaw a period of explosive growth in the 1950s and 60s) is directly behind you. To your left is the sacristy, where priests vest for worship and where altar supplies are kept. To the right is the stairway leading to the balcony or gallery.



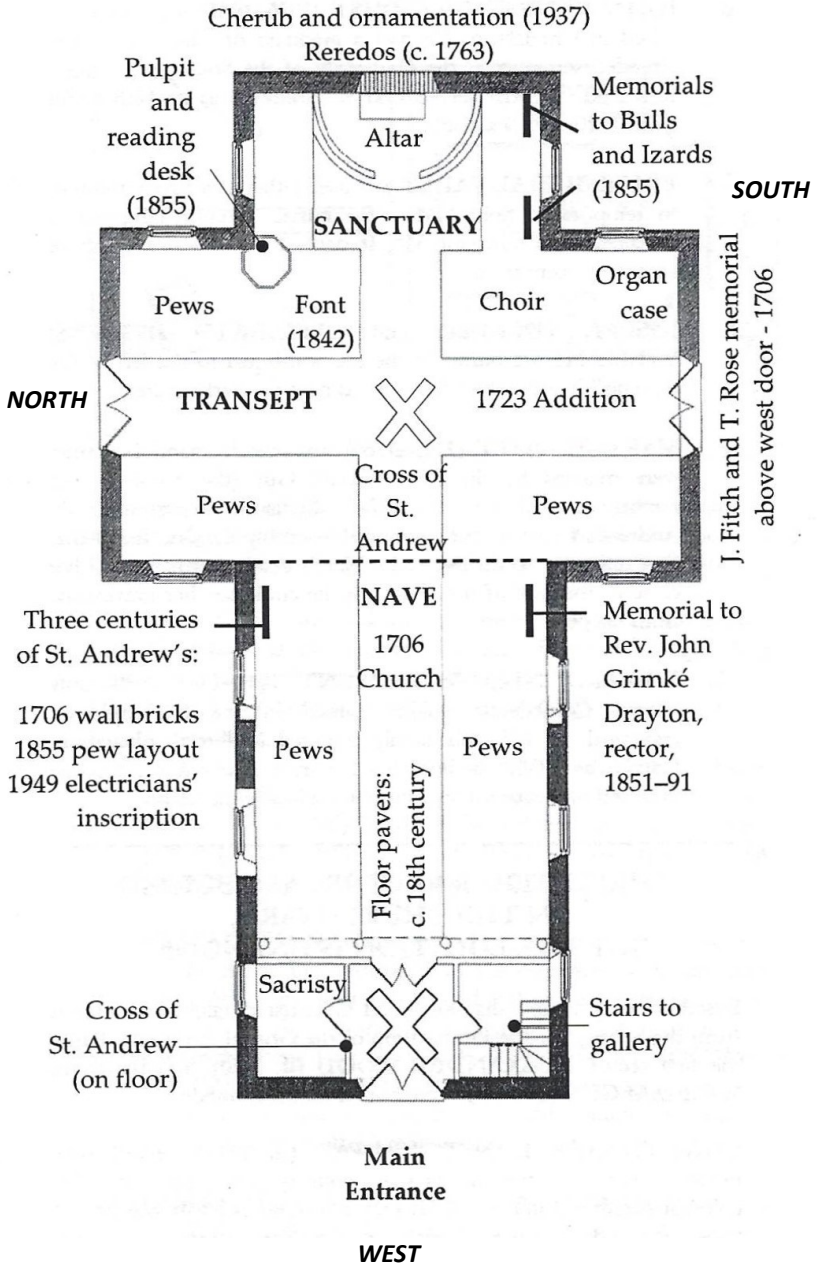
Stand under the archway of two open white doors and take in the magnificence of the interior. There is a simple elegance about the place. It is simple without being austere. It is elegant without being flashy. Everything seems to be in its proper place, in the proper proportion. There is just the right amount of dark wood to highlight the expanse of white.

As a commentator on early English churches in America described the church, St. Andrew's possesses "a quaint severity combined with great charm."

You would think that the designer got the look exactly right from the start. Hardly: the church's appearance has changed constantly. The building is anything but static, rather it's changed with the times. Therein lies its magic.

There are three distinct parts of the interior, as the floor plan on the next page illustrates. The nave, the main part of the church, dates its origin to 1706. The transept and sanctuary are the result of a 1723 expansion. Behind you and over your head is the gallery or balcony, built when the church was restored in the 1760s after almost being lost to fire.

**EAST**



## OVERVIEW

Old St. Andrew's was established and built in 1706. It was one of ten Anglican churches created by the Church Act of that year, designed to serve residents along the Ashley River in a parish called St. Andrew's. Thus the official name of the church, Saint Andrew's Parish Church, has deep roots from the beginning of the Carolina colony. It was the church specifically created to serve Anglicans in St. Andrew's Parish. Old St. Andrew's is how the church is commonly called today.

No other church building south of Virginia in continual use is older. But the church created the same year that Ben Franklin was born (both Franklin and St. Andrew's were considered old at the time of the American Revolution) is not what you see before you. It was much smaller, a forty- by twenty-five-foot brick rectangle, the size of today's nave. Three other colonial Anglican churches in South Carolina were about the same size: Christ Church in Mount Pleasant (still regularly used for worship), St. Thomas along the Cooper River (open occasionally), and St. Paul's on the Stono River (extinct).

### *Nave*

The third rector, the Reverend William Guy, was the first to describe its structure. Writing in 1728, he said that the church was built in 1706 and was "40 feet long, and 25 broad, built of brick, the roof of pine, with 5 small square windows in it, not near finished in the inside." This rectangular or longitudinal plan was a common feature of rural churches in both England and South Carolina.

A brick wall joined the ends of the walls of the nave at the east end just beyond the marble memorial to Rev. John Grimké Drayton. Just beyond that, about at the X on the floor at the crossing of the aisles (the cross of St. Andrew) was a clamp or kiln where enslaved men fired the bricks used in constructing the walls. (Slaves, both common laborers and skilled artisans, built the colonial churches we treasure today.) Allowing for the sanctuary area of altar, pulpit, and reading desk, there would have been only about four pews on either side of the aisle.

A conjectural floor plan developed by Richard Marks Restorations as part of a major restoration in 2004–5 depicts the interior layout. There were two doors of unequal size. A small door at the west end, today's main

entrance, measured three feet wide; commoners and clergy used this entry. A great door on the north or river side was six feet wide, used by the gentry. A cross-shaped aisle ran north from the great door to a possible vestry room at the south end and west from the small door to the chancel at the east end. The pulpit, clerk's desk, and minister's pew were located in the south nave. The reading desk and reader's pew were situated across the aisle in the north nave.

A white marble memorial over the south door (facing Ashley River Road) commemorates Jonathan Fitch (J. F.) and Thomas Rose (T. R.), the 1706 church building supervisors. The memorial was placed there in the nineteenth century. Fitch and Rose, along with other early South Carolina church builders, likely derived their design inspiration from architectural pattern books frequently used in England.



***The 1706 church was the current nave,  
with the outlined space the east wall***

***Marble memorial to the 1706  
church building supervisors  
on the south transept wall  
facing Ashley River Road***





## *Transept and Sanctuary*

In the early eighteenth century, settlers poured into Carolina and St. Andrew's Parish in particular. By some accounts St. Andrew's Parish was one of the wealthiest areas of British North America before the American Revolution, due to rice and then indigo by mid-century, and of course, the plantation slave system that made it all possible. Not long after the church had been built, it became too small to hold even half the people who wanted to worship there. So beginning in 1723 and lasting for more than a decade, St. Andrew's was expanded into the shape of a cross. This cruciform design seems an odd way to expand a church, but it was commonplace in colonial days. St. Andrew's was one of four, small rectangular Anglican churches in South Carolina that was expanded this way about the same time. It is the only one that remains.

Cruciform churches were uncommon in England but widely found in Barbados, home of many of the earliest Carolina settlers. Cruciform-design buildings with lower walls were found to withstand hurricane-force winds better than traditional plans.

The earliest example of an Anglican church in South Carolina that has retained its original plan and not undergone significant changes is exquisite St. James Parish Church in Goose Creek, built 1708–19. Don't miss the opportunity to attend services there on the Sunday after Easter, the only day of the year the church is open for worship.

An aerial photograph illustrates the St. Andrew's cruciform design.



*Photo courtesy of Old St. Andrew's*

There are five main features to the 1723 expansion. The altar was moved back along the east wall to its present position. Arched or compass-headed windows recessed into the walls replaced the five small square windows. A barrel-vaulted ceiling formed graceful curves at the crossing of the aisles. The exterior brick walls were covered with white stucco to mask the differences between the 1706 and 1723 handmade brick and emulate a grander stone façade. And three doors of equal size on the north, south, and west walls replaced the small and great doors of the 1706 church.



## *Balcony*

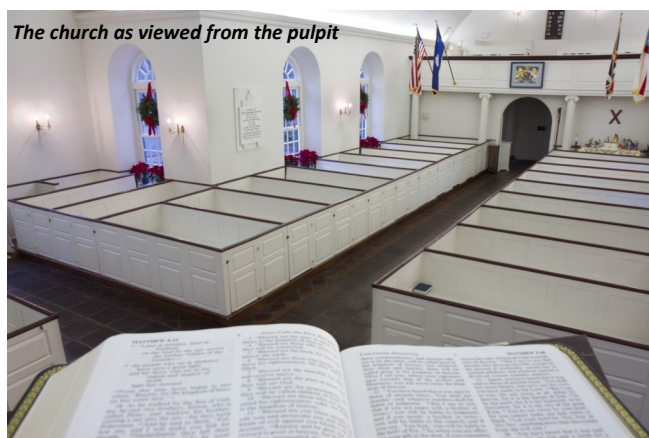
In colonial times worshippers didn't just walk into church, choose a pew, and sit wherever they wanted to. They had to buy their pew. Many outfitted their pews with rugs, cushions for resting and kneeling, and other personal effects. Parishioners held a title to their pews, just as you own a title to your car or house. While conducting research for *Against All Odds*, a history of St. Andrew's published in 2014, I discovered four pew titles dating to the 1760s and 1770s in the Charleston County deeds office. These pews were owned in perpetuity; if you're wondering, no one from these families has stepped forward in modern times to claim their pew. Pew subscriptions, as they were called, were authorized by an act of the colonial assembly on August 10, 1764, to help rebuild the church after a fire.

A balcony or gallery was built about 1754 and again after the fire. These were the cheap seats; they accommodated parishioners who could not afford to buy their pews on the floor. The balcony was used for slave seating in the nineteenth century, although slaves commonly sat in pews on the main level with white members before the Civil War. Ministry to the

enslaved was hardly confined to the church, however. From the earliest days of the province to the beginning of the Civil War, St. Andrew's Parish was 90 percent black, with roughly 3,000 enslaved blacks and 300 free whites. In the decades before the Civil War, the rectors of St. Andrew's spent much of their time ministering to the enslaved not at the church but at three plantation chapels.

The organ pipes were located in the balcony in the 1950s but were moved to their current location in 1969. The benches or slip pews also date to 1969. Whether box pews were ever part of the balcony (as they are at St. James, Goose Creek) is unknown.

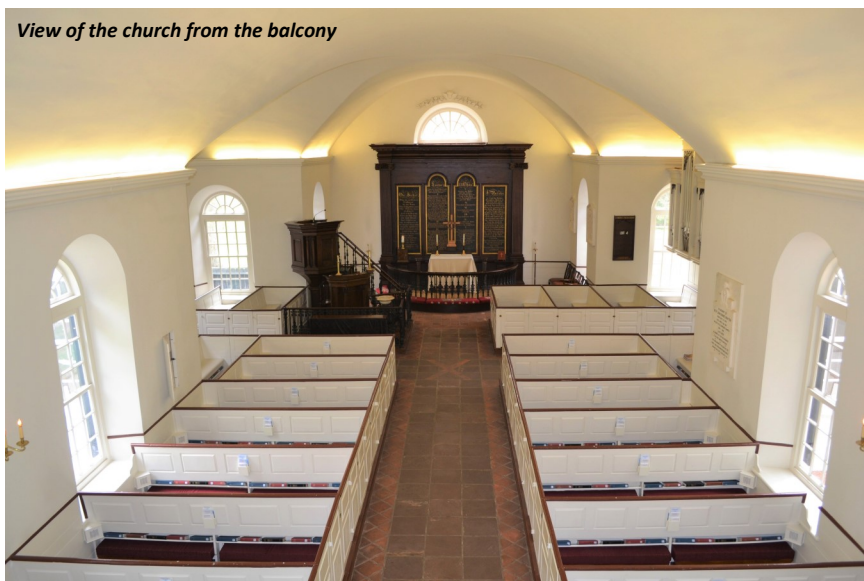
Contrary to what you might think, the balcony isn't necessarily a place for young people to socialize out of sight during the worship service. When delivering the sermon, the minister can see everything from his perch that rises ten feet above the floor at eye level. Nothing escapes his view.



*The bench or slip pews in the balcony*



*View of the church from the balcony*



## INTERIOR FEATURES

Now let's take a tour of Old St. Andrew's. We'll investigate every element, starting at the east end and working our back to the west entrance.

As you stand at the west end of the church and walk forward, you're struck by the beauty of the altar area in front of you. Located there are the magnificent altarpiece (also called the reredos) onto which are affixed four tablets displaying the tenants of the Christian faith: The Lord's Prayer, Ten Commandments, and Apostles' Creed; the semicircular window above it; and the decorative cherub and ornamental grapevines above it. Each item artfully enhances the other. Was the orchestration of this arrangement carefully planned or did it occur by happenstance?





A clue might be found by viewing the east wall from the exterior. Seeing such a small arched window at the top of this wall looks very much out of place. Such an odd configuration surely couldn't have been planned. And it wasn't. But this happenstance has produced a true thing of beauty on the inside.



### *Altarpiece (reredos)*

There was no altarpiece when the church was expanded in 1723. Rather, a large, rectangular, vertical window was situated under the semicircular chancel window at the top of the wall, following the design of the other windows set in the walls throughout the church. Using the proportions of the existing windows, the chancel window would have been about ten-and-a-half feet tall. This window allowed light to stream into the area and illuminated the altar.

When the church burned around 1762, the fire was hot enough to melt window glass. So surmised the archeologists that in the beginning stages of the 2004–5 restoration found molten glass buried deeply in the dirt beneath all the windows. When the church was repaired, the large east end window was not replaced, but the wall bricked in, covered with stucco on the exterior, and the reredos added. The addition of such an ornamentation inside a small country church speaks to the wealth of the parish in the colonial era, for few small rural churches could afford such a luxury.

The reredos measures sixteen feet wide by fourteen feet high. The surround is made of mahogany and white pine, and the tablets, yellow pine

or cypress. The lettering has been retouched only three times in the last two hundred fifty years.

We don't know who built the reredos, but it could have been the noted master craftsman William Axson. The St. Andrew's altarpiece is remarkably similar to one Axson built about the same time for St. Stephen's Parish Church in St. Stephen, South Carolina.



*The reredos of  
St. Stephen's  
Parish Church*

## ***Cherub and grapevines***

The plaster cherub and ornamentation above the reredos were installed in 1937. They were a gift of the Hanahan family of Millbrook Plantation just south of Middleton Place for having the church reopened for a family wedding during a long period of dormancy. So at about eighty years old, this is a relatively new feature of the church.

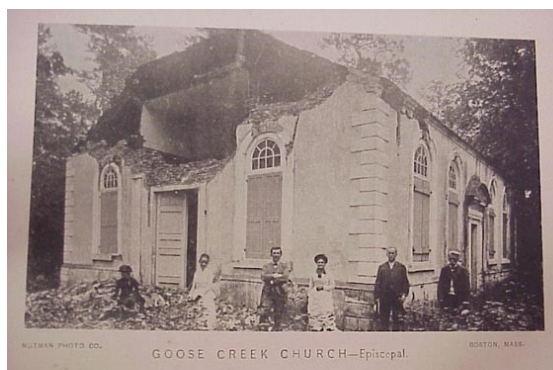
But how can this be when a reporter for the *Charleston News and Courier* described a “winged cherub and ornamental stucco” in the same location almost sixty years earlier? In March 1876 he wrote in great detail about the reopening of St. Andrew’s for the first time since the end of the Civil War, and he specifically mentioned the cherub.

The answer lies between these two dates: 1886 to be exact. That’s when the Great Earthquake decimated Charleston and the surrounding area. One of its three epicenters was located just south of Summerville, ten miles north of the church. As Reverend Drayton described it, “the earthquake wrecked the Parish Church.” During the most recent restoration, it was found that the earthquake destroyed the brick gable of the sanctuary, and replacement brick was found in all four gable ends of the church. A period postcard of St. James Parish Church in Goose Creek, closer to the Summerville epicenter, shows massive damage to the gable at its entrance.

Thus, the cherub fell off the east wall during the earthquake. Perhaps some of it was saved. The new cherub was then installed many years later.



***Effects of the  
earthquake at  
St. James,  
Goose Creek***







## ***Altar and floor***

Now let's examine the sanctuary. The wooden altar was given to the dormant St. Andrew's in 1918 by Grace Church, Charleston. You'll see it unadorned with an altar cloth as shown here only in the three days before Easter beginning with the stripping of the altar on Maunday

Thursday. The tan and red floor tiles in the altar area are likely of Dutch origin and date to the post-fire restoration of 1764.



## ***Altar cushions***

Kneeling cushions around the altar are thought to date as early as the 1706 church. Not long after the church reopened in 1948, the Altar Guild decided to replace the lumpy stuffing in the cushions. The women found to their chagrin that removing the Spanish moss inside made a

terrible mess. Just before resealing the restuffed cushions, they inserted a note with the names of everyone who had helped with the project. The current cushions were the product of the women of the St. Mary/St. Agnes Chapter, who had them made about ten years ago.



## ***Gravesite***

The stone memorial set in the floor to the right of the altar is the gravesite of Lynn Skilton. It is the only documented burial site in the church. Lynn was the first wife of the Right Reverend William J. Skilton, retired Suffragan Bishop of South Carolina and retired Assistant

Bishop of the Dominican Republic. In his younger days Bill Skilton was youth minister at Old St. Andrew's. He then graduated from The Citadel, was ordained a priest in The Episcopal Church, and spent a life in ministry. In recognition of his service and his love of Old St. Andrew's, the vestry granted Bishop Bill and Lynn the right to have their ashes interred in the church. The plain stone to the right of Lynn's is Bishop Bill's.

## ***Izard and Bull memorials***

Looking to the right, the two marble monuments on the south chancel wall are dedicated to the Izard and Bull families. These were just one of many improvements to the church spearheaded by Col. William Izard Bull of Ashley Hall plantation in 1855. The Izards were Bull's mother's side of the family; the Bull monument bears tribute to the colonel's mother and father, Rosetta Margaretta and William Stephen Bull.



***Izard memorial  
(left) and Bull  
(right)***



## ***Baptismal font***

The font at the corner of the pulpit/reading desk area to our left dates to 1842. The three cast iron pelicans that form the pedestal are a centuries-old symbol of Christian piety and atonement. The chipped marble basin is a testament to the font's hard life. It has been stored at Drayton Hall for safekeeping at various times and was returned to Old St. Andrew's in 1929. Tradition has it that a field hand brought the font back to the church by horse-drawn wagon. Baptisms at Old St. Andrew's, with baby, family, and clergy surrounding the font, are an intimate and moving rite of Christian faith held as part of Sunday worship.

## ***Pulpit and reading desk***

Behind the font are the high pulpit (where the minister delivers the sermon) and the lower reading desk (where lay people read Old and New Testament passages and the Prayers of the People). These date to Col. Bull's restoration. Bull moved them from their old location in what are now the first two pews on the left side of the nave to their current position.

If you look at the pulpit and reading desk head-on, you'd think they were one unit. Not so. They are two distinct furnishings.

Notice how narrow the stairs are leading to the top of the pulpit. Same with the reading desk. You have to squeeze through them. People must have been much smaller back then.

Also notice the three bolts that anchor the back of the pulpit to the chancel wall. Workers discovered during the 2004 restoration that termites had nearly eaten away the base of the pulpit. They repaired the damaged wood, cemented the base into place, and added the bolts for extra stability.



***Bolting the pulpit to the wall: circled (top) and detail (left)***



## ***Cast iron railing***

It is likely that Col. Bull had the cast iron railing around the pulpit and reading desk area and altar fabricated in 1855 to match the antebellum look of the font's pedestal, which had been placed in the church thirteen years earlier.



## ***Choir pews***

Across the aisle to the right of the font, reading desk, and pulpit and in front of the organ pipes are the pews reserved for the parish choir, which sings at the 11:00 a.m. Rite II Sunday worship service.

## ***Hymn boards***

Near the choir pews and on the back balcony wall are hymn boards dedicated to parishioner Calvin Pigott, who was killed in an auto accident by a drunk driver in 1962. Originally the boards were set on the walls left of the pulpit and left of the organ pipes. Removed during the 2005 restoration, they were replaced in their current positions in 2011.



## *Organ and pipes*

One of the key focal points in the church are the organ pipes in the south transept. In 1969 the Zimmer organ currently in use replaced a Moller pipe organ. That year the pipes were moved from the balcony to their current location. The Zimmer organ was thoroughly restored in 2006.

The wooden case enclosing the organ was a 2006 gift by parishioner Marion Puckhaber in memory of her daughter Veronica Puckhaber Condon. Along with the Puckhaber-Condon memorial is one dedicated to Sara Younkin. Sara was the beloved organist, choirmaster, and director of music at Old St. Andrew's for thirty-five years (1967–2002). Sara died in 2018 at the age of ninety-nine. She was buried not far from the north wall of the nave.



One of the most common questions visitors ask is, “Where does the organist actually sit?” Look behind the pulpit and you’ll see the organ’s keyboard, pedals, and bench.

The organ and parish choir are important features of the 11:00 a.m. service.





## *Piano*

The Yamaha piano situated in the left transept in front of the pulpit and reading desk is used at both the 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. services.

## *Doors*

Standing at the crossing of the aisles, you'll see two of the three doors at either end of the transept. This three-door design dates to 1723. The main entrance is at the west end facing Magee House. Used less often are the south door with its handicap ramp facing Ashley River Road and the north door facing most of the oldest gravestones. The north door has the oldest hardware and a locking bar to prevent intrusion through the most hidden of the entrances. The south door was recently updated.



*Church doors: north end (left), west end exterior (center), south end (right), and close-up of hardware and locking bar on north door (bottom)*

## ***Floor***

Now we'll turn around and face the west end. Look at the stone and brick floor. It's of colonial origin, and like so many features in the church has had an interesting life. The first documented image of the interior of the church, shown in a 1907 postcard, shows a different floor, one made of large sandstone pavers. These pavers were loosely set in the dirt, and over time became cracked and chipped. The floor was uneven, causing people to stub their toes if they weren't careful and making it difficult for caskets to be rolled into and out of the church during funerals.

In 1969 the vestry decided to fix the problem as one of many parts of a large-scale restoration. Workers were hired to set the pavers in concrete. As they removed them while preparing the floor, they were astonished to discover the brick and stone pavers buried in the dirt under the existing floor. The new materials were more durable and more beautiful than the sandstone pavers, so they installed them, mortared them into place, and laid the cross of St. Andrew's (the X) at the crossing of the aisles and the west end. Our best guess is that the brick and stones date to the restoration in the 1760s. Anything from the 1706 church or 1723 enlargement would have been severely scorched in the fire, which these are not.

The dark wooden floor under the pews was installed in 2005.





## *Ceiling and roof structure*

Now look up. The soaring barrel-vaulted ceiling dates its beginning to the 1723 expansion. Architectural historian Louis Nelson envisioned its effect on devout parishioner Dr. Edward Brailsford, whose devotional book he kept from 1710 to 1744 is the oldest surviving religious document relating to the church. “For Brailsford,” wrote Nelson, “the church in rural St. Andrew’s Parish, South Carolina, was home of the perfect, sovereign, triune God. . . . Once inside, the lofty vaulted ceiling lifted Edward’s spirit; it seemed to him to be the cope of heaven itself.”



What the ceiling hides takes us into the very bones of the church. Concealed behind it are an intricate series of roof rafters and collar ties dating to the 1760s. Each hand-hewn rafter was mated to the other. Carpenters inscribed the top of each pair with the same roman numeral (I, II, III . . .) to ensure proper fit.

In 1960 steel gusset plates were installed to twenty-six sets of rafters to strengthen them. At the end of the twentieth century as the vestry was contemplating the new millennium and the church’s three hundredth anniversary in 2006, structural engineers were hired to check out the church and give it their seal of approval. Be careful what you ask for!

The engineers climbed a ladder along the west wall in the balcony. They entered the attic through the small white door in the ceiling. What began as an exercise of prudence ended with a costly \$1.2 million restoration that



would close the church for repairs for a year and a half. Many rafters had pulled away from their footings. Many collar ties had separated from their rafters. It was not safe to be inside the church. Rector George Tompkins was heard to have said to a parishioner, “The church seemed to be held together by paint and the grace of God.”

While many parts of the church were repaired during this restoration, it was the roof rafter system that presented the biggest challenge and cost the most money. Plaster was removed from the entire ceiling. New concrete footings were poured. In a number of places, steel plates were sandwiched between high strength wood to form new rafters; these were placed alongside the eighteenth-century rafters. Steel collar ties were then added. When it was all finished, the church was once again safe for occupancy.



*Repairs to the roof rafters: top and left, during the 2004–5 restoration; right, addition of steel gusset plates in 1960; courtesy of Richard Marks Restorations and Old St. Andrew's*



## *Lighting*

The cove lighting that runs along the tops of the walls dates to 1949. The wall sconces were added in 2005.

## *Windows*

As you look out and up, you're struck by the arched compass-headed windows deeply recessed into the walls. These were commonly employed in eighteenth-century Anglican churches in North America. They were first installed during the 1723 expansion, then rebuilt about 1764, and have been maintained ever since. The only significant change to the windows was the replacement of the large east end window behind the altar with the reredos after the fire. Some old, handmade windowpanes with their curious distortions are still visible, although time, carelessness, accidents, and vandalism have taken their toll.

To fully appreciate the effect that nature and time have taken on the church, stand at the Cross of St. Andrew at the crossing of the aisles. Look toward the main entrance; the altar will be at your back. Now look carefully at the windows along the walls. What do you see?

They tilt outwards, markedly so. This is a result of two things: the 1886 earthquake and more than three centuries of the heavy roof pushing down on the brick walls. Yes, it's safe to be inside the church, thanks to the skill of twenty-first-century craftsmen who did a remarkable job stabilizing the roof.



*Colonial-style compass-headed window (top) and marked deflection when viewed at the crossing of the aisles (bottom)*

## *Drayton memorial*

Along the south wall of the nave is a marble memorial dedicated in 1950 to Rev. John Grimké Drayton, rector for forty years during the nineteenth century.

At the same time a memorial was installed opposite Drayton's, on the north wall, dedicated to another owner of Magnolia Plantation, Drayton Franklin Hastie. Hastie had sought to keep the dormant church alive until his death in 1916, after which it was turned over to the Diocese of South Carolina. The Hastie monument began falling off the wall and was removed in 2000. It was remounted on the south wall near the balcony but again proved unstable. It was then removed and stored.

## *History door*

Opposite the Drayton memorial on the north wall is our history door. Hidden behind an unobtrusive white door is one of the church's biggest surprises. The door is usually kept closed, and those unaware of it might think it's simply a discreet way to hide an electrical panel. Not so. When the door is opened, it reveals three hundred years of history at a glance.



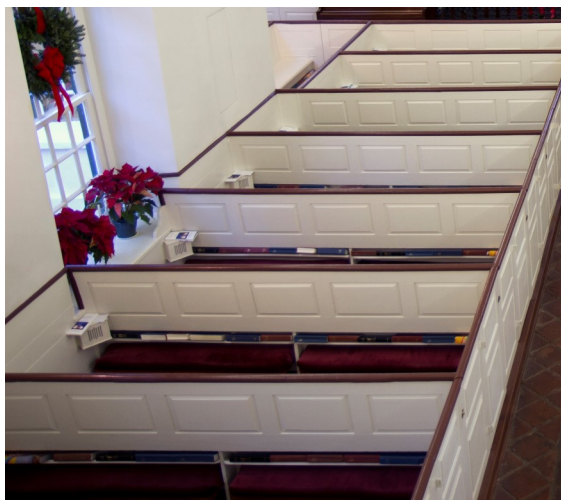
Protected behind Lucite are parts of the 1706 brick that comprise the north wall, Col. Bull's 1855 pew plan, and not to be outdone, graffiti-like inscriptions made by electricians Paul W. Morris and W. D. Caneup, who installed the first lighting in the church in 1949.

Using the north wall of the nave as his work space, Bull inscribed his pew plan in the plaster on January 2, 1855. It was first discovered during a 1948–50 restoration not long after the church was reopened after fifty-seven years of dormancy. Termites were found in the walls, and when the plaster was removed, Bull's plan was revealed. Then Morris and Caneup inscribed their names. Instead of restoring this part of the wall and making it visible, perhaps to cover over the new graffiti which the perpetrators likely thought would be lost to history, the wall was replastered and the Hastie monument installed over it.

When the Hastie monument was removed in 2000, the inscriptions were found, and thankfully preserved for our enjoyment. You can still see the faint outlines of the Hastie memorial around the history door if you look closely enough.

## ***Pews***

The pews with their latching doors dominate the interior floor space. High-backed cedar pews filled the colonial church. By the middle of the nineteenth century, these had deteriorated past the point of saving, so Col. William Izard Bull replaced them with these more fashionable lower-backed pews. The color of the pews has been on occasion brown, blue, and white. Pew numbers appeared on the doors as late as 1991. The two most common observations about the pews are how roomy they are and how little padding they provide.





### ***Pew speaker boxes***

What are those small boxes at the end of each pew? visitors often ask. A functional improvement made in the 2004-5 restoration was the installation of these small speaker boxes. Together with an enhanced sound system, the speaker boxes have helped improve the quality of our church services.

### ***Pew kneelers***

Colonial worshippers knelt on cushions they brought from home and set in their pews. Parishioners knelt on the wood floor until pew kneelers could be added sometime after the 1948 reopening. When the padding deteriorates over time, the kneelers must be reupholstered, most recently in 2017 by the St. Mary/St. Agnes Chapter using Tea Room funds.



### ***Pew information racks***

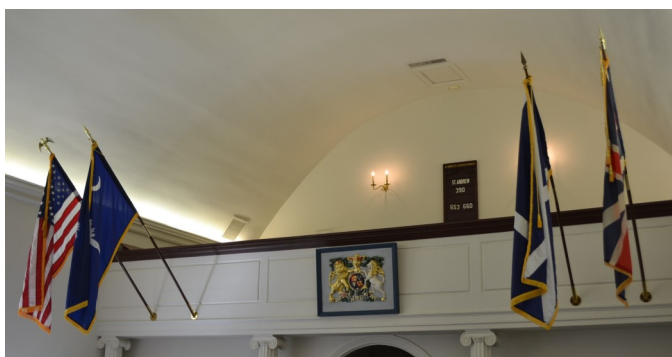
In 2017 about when the kneelers were recushioned, senior warden and woodworker Rob Beard built and installed the vertical racks in each pew that hold offering envelopes and brochures about the church and for making prayer requests. Providing this information in such an organized fashion for visitors and parishioners alike was one of the many ways Rob has contributed his time, talent, and treasure to Old St. Andrew's.



## *Coat of arms and flags*

Looking at the west end you'll see the balcony, with the coat of arms and flags affixed to its front. The coat of arms of the British royal family dates to 1723 when the church was expanded. History buff and rector George Tompkins added this feature as part of the 2005 restoration. This is the same coat of arms, although much smaller, that hangs over the stage at Dock Street Theater in Charleston.

Another Tompkins embellishment in 2005 was the addition of four flags extending from the balcony: the American flag, the flag of the state of South Carolina, the Union Jack of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the flag of The Episcopal Church. After Old St. Andrew's voted to remain with the Diocese of South Carolina and leave The Episcopal Church in 2013, the Episcopal flag was replaced with the flag of Scotland, the cross of St. Andrew.



## *Sacristy*

The small room just inside the west door opposite the staircase has had a curious history. It is thought to have originated with the restoration after the fire in the 1760s. Reverend Drayton was the first person to mention it, saying that smallpox patients had used it during the Civil War. The room was converted into the minister's office in the late 1940s. The first Gift Shop with Tea Room was held in the sacristy in 1952. It's now used as a vesting room and was updated in 2005.



## EXTERIOR FEATURES

### ***Walls***

The walls of the 1706 church and its 1723 cruciform extension were made of brick set in English bond. A white stucco overcoat was applied shortly after the cruciform expansion to hide the differences between the older and newer brick. A stucco exterior was also considered more stylish, since it emulated a grander stone façade.



***Stucco walls (left) and brick under stucco during 2004 repairs on the west wall (right), courtesy of Richard Marks Restorations and Old St. Andrew's***



### ***Roof***

The roof has undergone a number of changes during the church's long life. It was made of pine in 1706, then of cypress when the church was expanded in 1723. The first photograph taken of the church (in 1891) and postcards from the first decade of the twentieth century show a roof of wooden shake shingles. In 1927 the Colonial Dames of South Carolina funded the replacement of the wooden roof with a metal one. A metal roof (first in red, then in green since 1960) has been part of the building ever since.



## ***Shutters***

Shutters were noted as early as 1717. When a metal roof was first installed on the church in 1927, it as well as the doors, trim, and shutters were painted red. Beginning in 1960 various shades of green (including Charleston Green, nearly black) have remained the dominant exterior accent colors ever since.

## ***Quoins***

Rusticated quoins were originally added to the church when the walls were roughcast in stucco as part of the 1723 expansion. Quoins were added to the parish house to match the look of the church as part of a major refurbishment in 1977.



## ***Cross atop the west gable***

The white cross that sits atop the church's west gable is a relatively new addition to Old St. Andrew's, if you call within the last hundred years new. It was likely added in 1916 when the church was thoroughly repaired by the Diocese of South Carolina. Time has taken its toll, and the original cross, rotted beyond saving, was replaced in 2012.





## ***West gable embellishments***

Below the cross in the previous picture is a circular window. What's appeared or not appeared in this position has changed at least five times over the church's history since 1894. This information can be a handy guide to help estimate the date of an image from the church's exterior.

No embellishment is evident in an 1894 sketch by Citadel professor Col. Oliver J. Bond and a 1901 photo by Franklin Frost Sams.

Louvers set in a triangular frame were added in 1952.

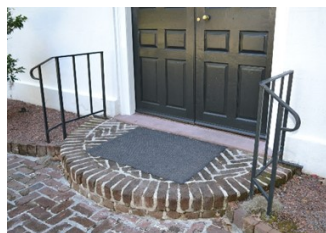
Louvers were replaced by circular windows in 1969.

Windows were replaced by louvers set in a circular frame in 1998.

Louvers were replaced by the current circular windows in 2005.

## ***Riser and rail at the west entrance***

In the mid-1950s the semicircular brick riser was added to the west entryway. The railing at each side of the riser was placed in 1990 courtesy of parishioner Charles Simons Jr.



## ***Brick walkway and prayer patios***

In 1958–59 a brick walkway was added at the west entrance of the church. One side continued west toward the parish house, and another to parking at the south end. The design included a large fan-shaped area directly in front of the west door.

In 2006 the walkway was extended to connect the doors on the west and north sides. Personalized bricks were sold to help pay for the recent restoration. This area of the path was named Tompkins Walk after the eighteenth rector, Rev. George Tompkins, and a time capsule was buried under the bricks. In 2010 the walkway was extended on the west side through the parking lot to Magee House.

Prayer patios were added on the west side and dedicated to the memory of beloved parishioners Vivian Wilson-Cohen and Augusta Nadol in 2013–14.



***Brick walkway to the prayer patios (left) and building the north patio, December 2012 (right)***

# A CHRONOLOGY OF BUILDING WORK: ESTABLISHMENT, RESTORATIONS, REPAIRS, AND ADDITIONS

## *ESTABLISHMENT*

### *1706 church*

Old St. Andrew's was built in 1706. Its floor plan measured forty feet long by twenty-five wide (1,000 square feet). The church was a simple structure, constructed with handmade brick (likely made by enslaved Africans in a kiln on-site), a pine roof, two different-sized doors (a great door on the north side and a small door on the west side), and five, small square windows. The altar faced east, as was the Anglican custom, towards the rising sun of Christ's Easter resurrection. The pulpit was on the south wall, and the reading desk opposite on the north wall.

Archeological investigations undertaken as part of the 2004-5 restoration suggest that four features might have been present in the original church or before it was expanded in 1723 but have since disappeared. A wooden chancel or rood screen might have separated the chancel from the nave. A triple-decker pulpit might have sat along the north wall of the nave or a reading desk with a pulpit across the aisle. A vestry room where ministers changed into vestments before conducting worship might have been attached to the south wall of the church. A wooden porch or stump tower might have been attached to the west wall over the small door.

### *1723 expansion*

Beginning in 1723 and lasting for a decade or more, the church was expanded into the shape of a cross. Although a seemingly odd way to enlarge a church, St. Andrew's was one of four Anglican churches in South Carolina that was expanded into cruciform shape about this time. It is the only one that remains today.

The expansion tripled the square footage of the interior, to about 3,000 square feet (excluding the balcony, which was added later). The transept comprises nearly half the floor space, the nave 40 percent, and the chancel 11 percent.

Most of the architectural features changed significantly. The walls were roughcast in white, or applied with stucco, to mask the differences in the new and old brick and emulate a grander stone façade. The two doors of unequal size were replaced by three double doors of equal size, on the north, south, and west ends. The five small, square windows were replaced by

thirteen eighteen-paned semicircular or compass-headed windows that were recessed eighteen inches into the walls. One was on the east wall behind the altar that allowed light to stream into the chancel.

Pews were made of cedar and were the high, double type you see today in the city churches of St. Michael's and St. Philip's. The pulpit and reading desk were relocated: the pulpit forward into the north transept, and the reading desk into the south transept (today the first pews nearest the sanctuary). The high barrel-vaulted ceiling that reaches its apex at the crossing of the aisles is one of the church's loveliest features.

A baptismal font was intended to be placed in the church; whether it actually was is unknown. Nothing about the floors is known.

Archeological work undertaken as part of the most recent restoration suggests that a steeple might have replaced the stump tower during the expansion. In 1728 prominent parishioner Charles Hill donated a small bell to be hung in the steeple "when that is built." We don't know if it ever was.

Construction costs mushroomed as the scope of the project expanded, from an original subscription of £500 local currency (roughly \$17,000 today) to £3,500 twelve years later (about \$98,000 today).

## *RESTORATIONS, REPAIRS, AND ADDITIONS*

### *1754*

Subscriptions were raised to buy an organ, build a gallery or balcony, and make needed repairs. The gallery which had been envisioned in 1723 but abandoned when costs continued to climb was now realized. The organ was one of only five in the colony's Anglican churches, which illustrates the parish's economic prosperity from rice and indigo by mid-century.

### *1762-65*

The church was quickly restored after a devastating fire that likely burned everything inside its walls. The main features of today's church that were a product of this restoration are the altarpiece or reredos at the east end, the balcony or gallery at the west end, the brick and stone floor of the nave, transept, and chancel, and the red and tan floor tiles in the altar area. Pews were sold to parishioners to help raise money for the work. They ranged in price from £130 to £300 local currency (about \$500-\$6,300 today).

### *1785-87*

In the aftermath of the American Revolution, parishioners described the church as "much Injured and pulled to pieces by the British Army." The state House and Senate passed legislation requiring pew holders to bear the

cost of repairs in proportion to the value of their pews. While documentary evidence of the rebuilding has not survived, we know that the church was in good shape to receive its first rector in fourteen years, when the vestry elected Rev. Thomas Mills in 1787.

### *1809*

The vestry brought suit against an Episcopal priest, Rev. Edmund Matthews, to collect a promissory note for church repairs that he failed to pay. Matthews lived in the parish and knew Reverend Mills. After the dispute had languished in the courts, a judge ruled against Matthews. By then he had left the state for a clerical posting in St. Simons Island, Georgia.

### *1830*

“The Church was nearly in ruins,” wrote Rev. Paul Trapier in an 1830 parochial report to the Diocese of South Carolina, “but through the unaided exertions of the Parishioners is now in complete repair.” Trapier had arrived at St. Andrew’s as deacon and minister in November 1829. He would become the church’s ninth rector the following year.

### *1840*

A decade after Paul Trapier’s report, Rev. Stuart Hanckel wrote the diocese about the state of the parish church in 1840: “The services of the Church were resumed later this season than usual on account of unavoidable delay in repairing the Church. These repairs, we are happy to state, have been completed; and this, one of the oldest Churches in the Diocese, is in a good state of preservation.”

### *1842*

The baptismal font with its cast iron pedestal and marble basin was added.

### *1855*

In late 1854 Rev. John Grimké Drayton performed a baptism in a parishioner’s home, the church being, as he described, in a “very dilapidated condition.” William Izard Bull, prominent parishioner, politician, planter (of Ashley Hall near St. Andrew’s), and colonel in the state militia, spearheaded one of the church’s most ambitious restoration projects.

Many of the visual features of today’s church’s interior date to Col. Bull’s work. The colonial high-backed pews were taken out and replaced by lower pews. Using the north wall of the nave as his work space, Bull inscribed his pew plan in the plaster on January 2, 1855. He added the cast iron railing around the altar, pulpit, and reading desk, likely to emulate the

style of the font's cast iron pedestal. The pulpit and reading desk were replaced and set in their current position. The lettering on the tablets of the reredos was retouched. He set two marble tablets on the south chancel wall, one dedicated to his mother's family the Izards and one to his parents, William Stephen and Rosetta Margaretta Bull. Bull likely replaced the colonial brick and stone floor with sandstone pavers that were loosely set in the dirt. He buried the earlier materials under the new pavers.

Bull recalled that "an *old painter* named West . . . *daubed* the Church with all sorts of scenes, scenery and all kinds of Cherubs, all to the horror of grandma and the other ladies." If any of this ornamentation remained, Bull surely painted over it.

Although he didn't mention it specifically, Bull likely installed a cherub and ornamental grapevines above the reredos at the east end.

## ***1876***

"Notwithstanding the thorough renewal of this old Church in 1855," Reverend Drayton reported to the diocese, "decay and ruin were again about to seal it as their own, when in God's good providence, we came once more to reclaim this heritage of our fathers." On March 26, 1876, St. Andrew's was reopened for worship after eleven years of dormancy. Reconstruction forces had seized the building (it was one of a few in the parish not burned down at the end of the Civil War) and made it off limits to Drayton.

The money for the rebuilding came from phosphate mining, an economic boon to these land-rich but cash-strapped planter-parishioners who brought the building back to life.

## ***1878***

Repairs to the church continued. Plastering and window glazing were completed, and work on the roof was almost finished. Remaining projects included restoration of the pulpit, reading desk, and chancel, with a projected finish date of the next winter.

## ***1886***

"The earthquake wrecked the Parish Church," lamented Reverend Drayton, who wrote about the destruction inflicted by the Great Earthquake. Archeological investigation undertaken in the twenty-first century concluded that the earthquake destroyed the brick gable of the sanctuary, caused or worsened the walls to tilt outward (still visible today), and damaged the roof trusses. The earthquake caused the cherub and ornamental grapevines to fall off the east gable wall. The violent movement of the earth left large cracks in the walls, some of which were undetected until only a few years ago.



## *1889*

Drayton noted that the church had been repaired but services had not been held. The tuberculosis he had battled for most of his adult life now incapacitated him. He would die two years later.

## *1912*

Vestryman Drayton Franklin Hastie of Magnolia Plantation tried valiantly to repair the now dormant church but found it difficult to get work done. Plastering and carpentry work in the interior remained unfinished despite his attempts to move the project along. He considered stringing barbed wire along the entry doors to keep out vandals and roaming cattle and installing iron doors and windows as additional safeguards. These measures were thankfully never realized.

## *1916*

No longer able to maintain the old church, the vestry turned over its control to the Diocese of South Carolina. Thorough repairs to the building, including the roof, were made within the first few months. The cross at the top of the west-end gable might have been added at this time. This work was a prelude to the church being reopened for occasional worship for the first time in at least twenty-five years.

## *1927*

Repairs were made, likely including a metal roof that replaced the one of wooden shakes, and funded by the Colonial Dames of South Carolina.

## *1936*

The Colonial Dames again helped repair the church.

## *1937*

A new plaster cherub and ornamental grapevines were installed above the reredos at the east end, a gift from the Hanahan family who had the church reopened for their daughter Maria's wedding to Thomas Heyward Carter.

## *1940*

Minor storm damage was repaired.

## *1948-50*

St. Andrew's was reopened for continual worship on Easter Day 1948, after a fifty-seven-year period of dormancy. The church was soon found to have

extensive problems, which required almost two years to repair. Old plastering was removed so that termite-damaged wood in the ceiling trusses and wall studs could be replaced. An *Evening Post* article showed the interior walls and ceiling laid bare, the plaster gone and roof timbers exposed “like a wooden cathedral,” as parishioner Charles Simons Jr. remembered.

Damaged pews were repaired, spaces between the stone pavers on the floor were filled in (but not mortared), and window sills and shutters were refurbished. The reredos was cleaned. The roof and exterior trim were painted. An oil heater was installed in the north transept by the door, with a flue extending from the building above the door.

Marble memorial tablets dedicated to Magnolia’s Rev. John Grimké Drayton and Drayton Franklin Hastie were placed on the walls of the nave opposite each other.

Electricity was added for the first time, with tubular bulbs placed in metal troughs that run unobtrusively along the top of the walls. On December 6, 1949, electricians Paul W. Morris and W. D. Caneup inscribed their names in the plaster on the north wall of the nave, immediately above Col. William Izard Bull’s pew plan that had been sketched almost a century earlier.

Finding Bull’s pew plan was a significant historical discovery. Instead of preserving it for viewing, church leaders placed the Hastie memorial over it. The plan would not be revealed for another fifty-five years, when the church underwent another major restoration.

## ***1952***

An electric Wurlitzer organ purchased the prior year was relocated to the pew on the right side of the chancel facing the choir. Louvers set in a triangular frame were installed at the gable ends of the church to provide ventilation into the attic.

## ***1954***

The wood floors under the pews were repaired to treat termite damage.

## ***1956***

The reredos received much-needed attention. The tablets and casing that surround them appeared to be tilting forward, prompting fears that the structure might fall off the wall. The tablets were removed, the casing repaired, and a cement foundation was poured to support the structure, which was bolted onto creosote-coated timbers that were installed behind it. The gold lettering was not cleaned or retouched.

## *Mid-1950s*

A semicircular brick riser was added to the west entryway.

## *1958*

A Moller pipe organ replaced the Wurlitzer organ. The nine ranks of pipes were placed in the gallery, and the console in a pew behind the pulpit.

## *1959*

The roof was repaired after damage by Hurricane Gracie. Begun the prior year, a brick walkway and fan-shaped entry area were added at the west end.

## *1960*

Steel gusset plates were bolted onto thirteen sets of roof rafters on the north side of the nave and thirteen sets on the south side. The exterior walls were cleaned, restuccoed, and sealed. The red roof shutters, doors, and trim were repainted green.

## *1962*

Hymn boards were placed on the north and south chancel walls dedicated to parishioner Calvin Pigott, killed in an auto accident by a drunk driver.

## *1967-68*

The cast iron railing around the pulpit and reading desk was removed.

## *1969*

The church was thoroughly restored. The exterior walls were sandblasted, patched, and stuccoed. The trim and doors were painted Charleston Green (nearly black) and the roof dark green. Nine-paned circular windows replaced the louvered vents over the south and west doors.

The sandstone paver floor was replaced by the eighteenth-century brick and stone floor that was found in the dirt underneath. A cross of St. Andrew was added at the crossing of the aisles and the west entrance. The new floor was mortared in place.

The pews, gallery, and inside of the doors were painted light blue. Pew numbers were added in gold at the top panel of each door.

A Zimmer pipe organ replaced the Moller organ. The pipes were moved from the balcony to the south transept. Slip pews were placed in the gallery.

## *1971*

The church was air conditioned for the first time.

### *1973*

The roof was repaired.

### *1977*

The heating system was replaced and air conditioning upgraded.

### *1989*

The box pew in the chancel under the Izard and Bull memorials was removed. Chairs were added for clergy and acolytes. The other box pew behind the pulpit may have been removed at the same time.

### *1991*

New heating and air conditioning systems were installed. Compressors were installed in the attic, ventilation grilles were cut into the ceiling, ductwork from the old heating system was removed from the balcony, and the flue was removed from the north wall. Pews were repainted white-grey with brown rails; they were not renumbered. The cast iron railing was reinstalled around the pulpit and reading desk.

### *1998*

Louvered vents in circular frames replaced the circular windows over the south and west doors.

### *2000*

The Hastie memorial was removed from the north wall of the nave after it appeared to be falling off the wall, revealing Col. William Izard Bull's pew plan. The memorial tablet was remounted on the south wall near the balcony but again proved unstable. It was then removed and stored.

### *2004-5*

The Great Restoration, the product of architect Glenn Keyes and preservationist Richard Marks Restorations, took eighteen months and \$1.2 million to complete. Nearly every material feature of the church was affected. When it was over, Old St. Andrew's was in better physical condition than at any time in its history.

Archeological work was conducted inside and outside the church, suggesting for the first time a number of fascinating possibilities (burial sites, chancel screen, attached vestry, triple-decker pulpit, stump tower, and bell tower). The location of a kiln which would have fired bricks for the 1706 building was found at the crossing of the aisles. The fire in the 1760s was well documented.

Exterior work included a new French drain system around the perimeter of the church, circular windows at the south and west gable ends, and extensive repair of the wooden window frames and cracks in the brick and stucco.

The interior was the focus of much of the work. Plaster was removed from the ceiling and a new valley rafter system installed to augment the failing 1760s timbers, a considerable construction feat. A new heating and air conditioning system was installed, with the compressors outside the northeast area of the church and ductwork under the floors. The ventilation grilles in the ceiling were removed and plastered over. Subflooring and yellow pine floors under the pews were installed. Pews were repaired. A new sound system was added, as were speaker boxes at the end of each pew. The entire interior was repainted.

The base of the pulpit, which was found to have had severe termite damage, was repaired, cemented into place, and bolted to the chancel wall. The sacristy was updated, new cabinets were installed in the stairway hall, and new chairs and benches installed in the chancel. Wall sconces added illumination.

The Bull pew plan was cleaned, preserved, and made available for viewing behind an unobtrusive door on the north wall of the nave. The reredos was painstakingly cleaned and relettered. Added to the outside of the balcony were the royal coat of arms of George I, King of England when the church was expanded in 1723, and four flags (United States, South Carolina, Union Jack of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and The Episcopal Church, or TEC).

A number of enhancements were considered but not implemented: installing three chandeliers, removing the cove lighting at the top of the walls and adding plaster cornice, relocating the organ to the balcony, constructing a new altar to face the congregation, and providing a new door at the back of the altar rail for improved access to the sanctuary. The two hymn boards on the transept walls left of the pulpit and left of the organ pipes were taken down and not remounted.

## *2006*

The Zimmer organ was thoroughly refurbished and a new case built to house the pipes in the south transept. The brick walkway was extended to connect the west and north doors. A time capsule was placed under the bricks.

## *2010*

The brick walkway at the west end was extended through the gravel parking lot to connect the church to Magee House.



## *2011*

The hymn boards were reinstalled in their current positions, on the south transept wall to the left of the organ pipes above the choir pews and on the west wall in the balcony (along with a clock).

## *2012*

The cross atop the west-end gable was replaced.

## *2013*

The prayer patio at the northwest end of the church was built and dedicated to the memory of Vivian Wilson-Cohen. The flag of Scotland (cross of St. Andrew) replaced that of The Episcopal Church, following the church's decision to remain with the Diocese of South Carolina and leave TEC.

## *2014*

The prayer patio at the southwest end was built and dedicated to the memory of Augusta Nadol. Windows were reglazed and trim repainted. Doors were repaired and repainted. Composite shutters replaced the wooden ones.

## *2015*

The ashes of Lynda (Lynn) Padgett Skilton were interred in the chancel floor. The metal roof was repainted.

## *2017*

Newly-padded kneelers and information racks were installed in the pews.

## REFERENCES

For more information about the building history of Old St. Andrew's, see my books *Against All Odds: History of Saint Andrew's Parish Church, Charleston, 1706–2013* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow, 2014) and *Yesterday and Today: Four Centuries of Change at Old St. Andrew's* (Charleston: Saint Andrew's Parish Church, 2018, PDF e-book available on [oldstandrews.org](http://oldstandrews.org)).

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