

OUR HISTORIC CHURCH

Building the Church...

All Saints Parish was incorporated in 1869 and the first rector, Rev. J. Rice Taylor, traveled as far as the East coast to raise funds to build the church. The lot where All Saints now stands was purchased in 1868 for \$400. Saugatuck was a center of lumber mills and plans moved ahead to build a church using these resources. Gordon W. Lloyd, an Englishman and architect living in Detroit, who was familiar with the Anglican traditions, was contracted to design a Carpenter's Gothic, or Gothic Revival, style church. The original structure consisted of a small narthex/vestibule, nave, sanctuary, organ chamber and bell tower at a cost of \$5,000. Native yellow pine board and batten siding, 2-inches thick, make up the exterior finish. The extreme slope of the roof and the eave trim indicate that Lloyd was influenced by the Bavarian tradition. The first service was held in an unfurnished sanctuary on January 25, 1873. The women of the Parish dedicated themselves to raising the funds to furnish the church, and records show that this was completed in 1875.

The Nave...

The most dynamic architectural element is the wood truss system which supports the roof. These magnificent trusses spring from pedestals located approximately eight feet above floor level. The pedestals engage the wall and disappear through to the exterior where each is terminated by a dual-level wood buttress in the gothic style. The trusses supporting the soaring roof are a combination of 4" by 6" solid timbers and lower sections made up of three layers of laminated wood for rigidity. The trusses also have numerous cut-outs of different and varying shapes, giving them a light, airy appearance. The quality of workmanship is notable because only hand tools were used in the entire construction process. There are three tie rods that extend between the trusses across the sanctuary. These must be "turned—tightened or loosened—by hand two times a year to resist any expansion/contraction of the trusses. Originally the ceiling was plaster, but due to rain damage, large patches were falling and posed a danger to worshippers. The ceiling was replaced with beaded board in 1922. With the exception of the plaster ceiling, the interior has basically remained the same as when the building was completed.

The Pews...

In 1875 as a result of dinners, "entertainments," and bazaars given by the women's Guild, the church was furnished with pews, kneelers, carpeting, and organ. Simple pews were installed, but with a top flourish representing the Trinity. Numbers can be seen on the aisle end of each pew. This was a common characteristic of pew construction from 1840 to the 1930s: churches often rented space to enrich the annual budget. However, All Saints never adopted this practice, being committed to an "open" parish. In the tradition of Episcopalian worship, kneelers were installed in all the pews except the front row. Pew cushions were added in 1985 to enhance the comfort of these historic pews.

The Chancel...

The chancel area begins with the choir pews and the location of the organ and piano. The original altar, pulpit and lectern were replaced in the 1950s, the work of Fred Groth a local woodworker. The original high altar was placed in the chapel. In the 1960s the high altar was pulled away from the wall so that the Rector would face the congregation when celebrating the Eucharist. The chancel rail separates the altar from the sanctuary and is held by ornamental wrought iron standards installed and dedicated in June 1880. The chancel rail provides the area for parishioners to receive the Eucharist. In 1930 a memorial gift of kneeler cushions enhanced this area. Some sixty years later,

in 1991, Fran Seymour and Arthur Frederick led a needlepoint project of 18 parishioners and community members to replace the cushions with lovingly created symbols of the Christian faithful. The West Michigan Diocesan logo on the Bishop's chair to the left of the altar was designed by Fr. Hohl in the 1960s. In addition, cushions for the servers, the chancel chairs, and the offering basins were all enhanced with the loving efforts of accomplished needlepointers.

The Pipe Organ...

A reed organ, commonly referred to as a "parlor" or "pump" organ, was installed in the church in 1875, funded through the efforts of the church women. At the time, the reed organ was popular in small churches because it was affordable and supported the singing of hymns; however, it was limited in volume and tone. As the music program at All Saints grew, parish members raised money to purchase an Everett Ogotron electric organ in 1940. It had the advantage of being manufactured close by in South Haven. The expanded musical possibilities were enjoyed until 1964 when parish membership grew and special giving reached \$7500 to purchase a Wicks pipe organ. For the first year the pipes were situated on the pulpit side of the chancel; more funds were raised to expand the memorial chapel area to accommodate the pipes—which was the original intent of that space. Our organists have a long tenure: Mary McKamy faithfully led the music program for 35 years. We are now faced with updating the mechanical switching system with solid state so that we can continue to enjoy the talent and skill of Norm Larsen, who has lovingly played our pipe organ and directed the music program for 20 years.

The Bell Tower and Chimes...

The sound of the original church bell was not appreciated by the neighbors in the early days. In fact, the story goes that one dissatisfied soul cut the bell rope in an attempt to stop the weekly call to worship. In 1942 a church member donated new Deagan chimes that could be played from the Ogotron and add to its beautiful tone and versatility. A year later a group of local businessmen donated the funds to purchase an amplifying system so the chimes could replace the ringing of the bell. However, the church archives reveal a letter to the local editor protesting the "broadcasting" of the bells in the neighborhood. The original bell is still hanging in the tower and is used each Sunday at 10 am to summon worshippers. The chimes and amplification system are still in place.

The Memorial Chapel...

The original architectural plan designated the space to the right of the altar as the "organ room." Since 1875 it has been utilized as a church library, space for the church choir, a kindergarten classroom, and a war memorial chapel. In 1965 it was expanded to accommodate the pipe cabinet. Not only did this provide more room for the "housing" and improve the resonance of the pipes, but it also provided a place for the Tabernacle for the Reserve Sacrament on the altar. The chapel continues to be a quiet place for prayer and meditation. The walnut cross on the chapel altar was carved by an early parish member in 1897 for use on the high altar. The Eternity Light burns here constantly. Also located in this area is a 14th century Greek icon, a gift from George Coutoumanos; it had been given to him when he left his home church in Greece.

The Baptismal Font...

This original font made of soft stone, which is smooth and warm to the touch, was a gift from the Church School class in 1879. It was originally located in the front of the church near the pulpit, but was moved to its current location in the back in the 1920s. The font stands centered in front of the entrance doors and the center aisle, symbolizing the sacrament of baptism as the traditional entrance into the Church.

The Windows...

Fr. Taylor traveled to Belgium to order the stained glass windows for All Saints' and they were assembled in the East, then shipped to Saugatuck for installation. All windows, except those in the chancel, arrived December 1879 and were installed by February 1880; the chancel windows were installed in April. Not all community members were happy about the windows. A letter writer accused the people of All Saints of being "depraved idolators" for installing painted glass windows.

Historical Designation

All Saints Episcopal Church is significant as a particularly pleasing and well preserved example of the board-and-batten, English-parish-church-type, Gothic Revival Church Genre of the nineteenth century. The structure is also important as a work of Midwest architect Gordon W. Lloyd, who specialized in church architecture.

All Saints was listed in the Michigan State Register of Historic Sites on April 24, 1981 and in the National Register of Historic Placed Inventory on December 27, 1984.