

The Founding of St. Stephen's

The prehistory of the parish can be traced back to 1891 and the pioneering efforts of Dr. and Mrs. D. Preston Wysong. When they moved from Manhasset to Port Washington in 1891, they regretted leaving behind them old Christ Church and finding no Episcopal Church here. They especially missed Sunday School for their four small boys. Mrs. Wysong decided to start a home class for the boys at their Carlton Avenue home. A few boys and girls who did not attend any Sunday School were invited to join in the Sunday afternoon class. The children loved to sing hymns, then there was a little prayer and a Bible story told.

This continued for some time with no thought or plan for future development until the Rev. Charles L. Newbold, a brother of Mrs. Wysong, became interested in the class. He administered baptism to a number of children and adults who were drawn in through the children. Some of the mothers and a few women with whom Dr. Wysong came in contact in his daily practice showed a desire to be connected with the Episcopal Church. These women met regularly in each others' homes and eventually formed "The Women's Guild." They proved themselves a small but mighty band of workers with their needles, making articles for little Fairs and taking orders for aprons and sun bonnets. As both the Sunday School and the Guild expanded, it was arranged to hold their sessions elsewhere, so in 1892 "The Boys Club Room" on Main Street was rented. In 1893 the Baptist Church Congregation most cordially offered their church for Sunday afternoons for worship, a kindness which should never be forgotten. The service was conducted by The Rev. Charles Newbold.

In 1895 two lots at the corner of Jackson and Covert Streets were purchased for \$650.00, a chapel was erected, and on August 9th, 1896, the first service was held in the "Christ Church Mission Chapel." The building cost \$1,000, of which \$500 was paid at once, and the balance on the mortgage. The Women's Guild took over the payment of interest on the mortgage until it was entirely cleared.

Not long after this, the first organ was donated as a memorial to Mr. Stephen DuPuy of Philadelphia, by his sister. He had been born on

St. Stephen's Day, was a lifelong member of St. Stephen's Church of Philadelphia, and had been accidentally killed. His sister, hearing of the Port Washington Mission and its needs, had her brother's personal instrument sent here. Because of this generous gift, Mr. Newbold asked the congregation to remain after service one Sunday. He read a letter from Miss DePuy telling of the comfort the thought of the chapel was to her in her sorrow, and how happy she was that she was able to help by giving the organ. Mr. Newbold then asked for a vote as to whether the "Christ Church Chapel" should not hereafter be known as "St. Stephen's Chapel." Everyone present voted in the affirmative. Miss DePuy continued making loving memorial gifts to the chapel.

As the number of the congregation grew, they were able to call several young men from the N.Y. Seminary to serve and conduct services.

In 1905 the present site was purchased and the church was chartered. The Rev. William E. Nies was called that June. Mr. Nies was the first rector of the newly organized parish, for the stipend of \$1,100 a year. The chapel was moved to the new site on Carlton Ave. (where the parish hall is now) and Christmas Day services were held in it.