

## The Canal and the Chapel:

### Both Works of Art

As a part of his agenda to develop both Delphi and Carroll County at large, canal contractor Reed Case constructed a privately funded side connector to the foot of Main Street in 1842. This was accented by two sizeable industries, one a pork packing establishment which in time generated thousands of slaughtered hogs and placed Delphi in a league with Madison, Indiana as a pork slaughtering center of the state of Indiana. Another unique industry to be situated along this side-connector of the Wabash and Erie Canal was the Spears, Case, and eventually Dugan grain terminal which generated thousands of tons of shipped grain and produced corn and which was eventually purchased in the eighteen-eighties by Clويد Kerlin's heirs as a well-known grain elevator.

Samuel Roosevelt Johnson was born November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1802, a son of the Reverend John Barent Johnson and his wife Elizabeth Lupton Johnson (1777-1803) of Albany, New York. Orphaned within a year of his birth, Samuel was raised by his half-uncle Peter Roosevelt (1763-1833). Johnson graduated from Columbia University in 1820 at age eighteen. He was called to ministry in the Episcopal Church, and studied at General Theological Seminary in New York, and completed his courses there in 1823. He later made his way to Lafayette, Indiana, where he served as minister for twelve years, establishing and overseeing the construction of the first Episcopal church there (St. John's). He was a well-known Episcopal missionary. Johnson later consecrated an Episcopal church in Delphi on the 21<sup>st</sup> of May, with occasional services being conducted by Rev. Mr. Johnson and a Benjamin Halstead, who performed the first baptismal services on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March in 1844. Several notables of the Delphi mercantile scene were charter members including John Burr, wife Susan, Mrs. Mary Daubeny, Newton H. Gist and wife Amelia A, Caroline Robinson, Jane Howlett Wilson, Sarah Stewart, John Phelps and wife Rhoda, tailor Christian Stuzaker, Sarah Garrett, Sarah Ann Bladen, and Zerua Amelia Green were added to the flock under the guidance of Rev. Johnson of Lafayette, and Rev. Anson Clark, of Logansport during 1844 and 45. James P. Dugan, partner James Spears, Christian Stuzaker, John Burr, and John

Phelps were the first Vestrymen of the Church. Construction was started in 1846 and funding was provided by \$600 of Rector Johnson's assets and \$100 of the first members own collections, according to Catherine Schermerhorn Brackenridge in an historical vignette of the church in the Logansport Pharos-Tribune.

In 1846, according to Sarah Smith Pratt's *The Old Crop*(p. 69), "Parson Johnson had given the ground for this church and it had been built near the canal landing to welcome the new-comer, the Parson said. But the Wabash Railway ended Canal travel and the town grew the other way"

The bell was a work of the Meneely foundry in New York State and was transported to Delphi on the Wabash and Erie Canal. Accompaniment for worship was provided by the pipe organ—"the first one in town" according to Sarah Smith Pratt.

In 1901 the skills of local architect Clay McClure were pressed into service to replace the aging pioneer structure which had served the flock so well from the canal era through the entirety of the nineteenth century. The Arts and Crafts edifice is just as unique as the former sanctuary was ancient with an exterior composed of contrasting architectural forms including shake shingles and a stucco base. The interior is distinguished by an exposed beam ceiling, commemorative windows with accompanying brass plaques, and a rose window which is a rendering of the Hoffman Ascension funded by Catherine Schermerhorn Brackenridge in honor of her father Bernard Schermerhorn on the north and a lancet window on the south.

In addition to singularly serving the St. Mary's congregation, there was a period of time the developing flock of St. Matthew's Lutheran shared the facility prior to constructing their own worship facility. Following its use as a worship center, Sally Ashton operated a unique gift shop entitled "The Church Mouse".

A more recent spiritual use of the sanctuary was of the Community Church of God which recently met there.

The beautiful epitome of Delphi spiritual life is currently owned by Delphi Properties, LLC.

The Carroll County Artists Guild welcomes visitors to this architectural work of art which contains other noteworthy smaller works for the public consumption.

References for this article were: Samuel Roosevelt Johnson, biography accompanying a portrait of same(ca. 1825) Anonymous, water color on ivory.

Sarah Smith Pratt-The Old Crop, 1928.

Sundry references from the Carroll County Newspaper Archives

History of Carroll County by Thomas Helm, 1882. P. 224-5.