

THE PRE-REVOLUTIONARY CLERGY OF ST. PAUL'S, KENT 1694-1777

The following are brief sketches about the six men known to have served St. Paul's during its first century when it was part of The Church of England.

For clergy of this period, in general, little is often known beyond what is recorded in registers and vestry books. When it comes to the first cleric to lead St. Paul's, however, we know a great deal, indeed. We might wish otherwise.

Lawrence Vanderbush (1694-96)

To set the stage, the Colonies were considered, for ecclesiastical purposes, an extension of the Diocese of London. That there was no bishop in America was due to opposition from the colonial governments. In England, bishops exercised civil authority and sat in the House of Lords. While many colonies (those of New England, Pennsylvania) were ruled by non-Anglicans, even those where Anglicans were established (New York, Virginia, the Carolinas) were not keen to share their political monopoly.

Also, at this time, France was in religious turmoil after Louis XIV's 1681 decision to begin ending toleration for the Huguenots – French Protestants. Thousands fled to Holland, England, and America. In a politico-ecumenical gesture (it would annoy the Roman Catholic *Roi Soleil*), the Church of England ordained some clergy for these refugee congregations, thus granting them legal “Establishment” status and differentiating them from English Dissenters (Congregationalists, Baptists, Presbyterians, etc.).

Into this mix comes a gentleman whose name has been rendered variously as Laurent duBois, Laurentius Van den Bosch, and Lawrence Vanderbush, among other variations, spelling being somewhat free-form in those days.

He appears to have graduated from the University of Leyden in the Netherlands in 1679 and was ordained by the Bishop of London on August 1st, 1682 to serve the Huguenots in Charleston, South Carolina. He only stayed there two years, though, complaining to the Bishop that his income was insufficient, and migrated north to Boston, Massachusetts, ostensibly to organize Huguenots, there.

His activities in that city attracted unfavourable attention in the courts and is described in a contemporary quote from the prominent Puritan leader, Increase Mather: *“a Debauched Priest has appeared amongst them; particularly one Vardenbosch, who, besides the good work of Baptizing a noted Whore or two of his acquaintance, made private Marriages, without any previous publication of Banns (which is a nuisance to all human Society).”*

By 1687, he had given up on Boston and arrived in New York, affiliating with the Huguenot congregation led by the Revd. Pierre Daille. Falling out with his co-religionist, he gathered some followers on Staten Island, but another move came the next year when he relocated up the Hudson to the Dutch Reformed congregation in Esopus (Kingston) whose pastor had died.

Matters went from bad to worse. On August 30th, 1690, the Kingston congregation wrote to the Classis (Reformed Church authorities) in Amsterdam that: *“to our very great grief, we must say that he has, by his bad behavior, caused more wickedness than edification. It would be too tedious to go into details.... There is a great breach in our church, and only God knows how it is to be healed.”*

The situation was of such gravity that, not waiting for the response from Holland, the local clergy took matters into their own hands and wrote the Classis on September 14th: “*Laurentius Van den Bosch, who was called from Staten Island to the Esopus, we found it necessary to suspend from the ministry for drunkenness and incivility; but he still continues to preach and to drink.*”

Under censure, and unlikely to secure another appointment with the Reformed, or anybody else in New York, our veritable Vicar of Bray “turned the cat in pan” (to use a phrase of the day) again and, by October of 1692, had made his entrance into Maryland.

In June of that year, the Church of England had been officially established in the Province and the thirty newly constituted parishes needed clergy ordained by English bishops. These were not in immediate supply, so, his credentials were timely. North Sassafras (St. Stephen’s, Earleville) and South Sassafras (Shrewsbury) received his initial ministrations.

On July 24th, 1693, vestry members Thomas Smith and Michael Miller were sent to St. Mary’s City (the capital at the time) to “*enquire of the Governor regarding a clergyman for the parish.*” The vestry provided 450 lbs. of tobacco (the currency of the Province) for their expenses.

They arrived at a time of upheaval. The newly appointed Royal Governor, Lionel Copley, was gravely ill and died September 12th. The Governorship was then contested for several months among various notables and the business of government suffered. One can only wonder who Messrs. Smith and Miller saw and what they were told, but, on Sept. 15th, 1694, it is recorded that the vestry engaged Mr. Lawrence Vanderbush for 8,000 lbs. of tobacco a year.

History seems to have drawn a veil of discretion at this point and we can only speculate. As it was, there was little time remaining. The vestry minutes of February 19th, 1696, mention the vestry as being the administrators of the estate of Mr. Vanderbush whose goods “*are to be exposed to sale.*” The date of his death and place of burial are not known, though it might be said, in view of the fact that creditors (especially Mr. Joce, the tavern-keeper) continued to make claims to the vestry until 1702, that “his works did follow him.”

Stephen Bordley (1697-1709)

Upon the vacancy, the congregation, following contemporary practice, would have been served by a Lay Reader/Parish Clerk leading Morning and Evening Prayer and reading from “The Book of Homilies”, a collection of authorized sermons. Fortunately, the chalice-shaped hole in spiritual life was soon to be filled by a devoted and worthy presbyter.

Stephen Bordley, born in 1674, was the son of the Revd. Stephen Bordley, a graduate of Cambridge and Vicar of St. Hilda's, South Shields. In 1689, the family moved to Newton Butts when Stephen senior became Vicar of St. Mary's. He was named as the Willesden Prebendary (member of the Chapter) of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, in 1691, which office he held until his death in 1695.

The younger Stephen followed in his father's footsteps entering Christ's College, Cambridge, in 1690, as a “sizar” or student receiving meals and lodging in exchange for menial tasks – a form of scholarship often provided to sons of clergy. He received his degree in 1695 and was ordained deacon by the Bishop of London on September 22nd, 1695, at St. Botolph's, Aldersgate, where he served his curacy, and priest on September 10th, 1696, at St. Paul's, Covent Garden.

Evidently, he had indicated his intention to serve in America as he appears in the register of clergy ordained for overseas service. He duly reported to Francis Nicholson, who had prevailed in the contests of 1693-94 to become Royal Governor and had moved the capital to Annapolis. In the absence of bishops, the Governors licensed the clergy and Governor Nicholson provided the following Letter of Institution:

The Bearer hereof is Mr. Stephen Bordley, who is sent by the Right Hon'ble and Right Rev'd Father in God, Henry Lord Bishop of London, in order to officiate as a clergyman of the Church of England in this his Majesty's Province of Maryland; I do therefore, in his Majesty's name appoint the same Mr. Stephen Bordley to officiate as a clergyman of the Church of England in the Parish of St. Paul's in Kent county. Given under my hand and Seal at the Port of Annapolis, the 23d day of June, in the 9th year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord William the third, by the grace of God, of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, King, defender of the Faith, &c., Anno Domini, 1697.

Mr. Bordley at once set to his duties. He must have gained a good reputation throughout the district for on the 6th of April, 1702, the vestry heard a petition from Shrewsbury Parish requesting that he preach for them every Third Sunday. The arrangement continued for some time as, on January 9th, 1706, he asked the vestry if he could continue to minister at Shrewsbury, but now on the First Sundays. That was renewed on September 21st, 1708.

Certainly, he gained a good reputation in the home of Colonel John Hynson (1642-1705), one of his wealthiest parishioners, for, on October 14th, 1702, he married the Colonel's seventeen-year old daughter, Ann (1685-1740).

Stephen and Ann's first two children, Margaret, born July, 1701, and Ann, born October, 1703, died as infants. Their next child was a son, Thomas (1704-1752), followed by a daughter, Mary (1708-1729) and another son, Stephen (1709-1776).

This Stephen married Priscilla Murphy in 1731. After her death, he married Susan Harris and they had four children. One of their descendants was the Baltimore architect Brydon Bordley Hyde who, in the 1950's, designed the current Parish Hall and Rectory for St. Paul's.

In 1709, Stephen Bordley died and Ann became Executor of her late husband's estate. The Testamentary Proceedings of October 6, 1709 state: "*Ann Bordley Admx of Stephen Bordley clark, her adm' on bond in common form, with Nathaniel Hynson (her brother) and Thomas Bordley (his brother), her sureties in £300 sterling.*"

In an indication of how deeply woven contemporary life was with the institution of slavery, the vestry minutes record "*it is ordered that Mrs. Bordley doth keep the Mallattae (i.e. Mulatto) Girl till another doth come on such time as the Vestry thinks fit to dispose of her other ways.*"

Alexander Williamson (1711-1740)

The next Rector was the Revd. Alexander Williamson, a native of Aberdeen, Scotland. He was a graduate of Kings' College, Aberdeen, and was ordained by the Bishop of London as deacon on September 16th, 1710, and as priest on September 24th in the chapel of Fulham Palace, the official residence of the Bishop.

His twin brother, James, was ordained at Fulham as deacon (on the 11th) and priest (on the 18th) in January, 1712, and also went to Maryland, in his case, South Sassafras (Shrewsbury).

The speed of their ordinations, both deacon and priest within a week when the norm was to serve at least a year in a curacy before priesting - as in Stephen Bordley's case - is due to another one of those footnotes to history. The Williamson's were not, technically, members of the Church of England.

These were difficult days for Anglicans in Scotland. The Church of Scotland had deposed its bishops and become Presbyterian in 1689 when the bishops refused to accept William and Mary as monarchs while James II (VII in Scotland) still lived. The Scots who wished to keep episcopacy and use the Prayer Book were divided. Some went "underground" with clergy ordained by the deposed bishops and their successors (Non-Jurors), while others formed "Qualified Chapel" congregations recognized by the Scottish government and served by English-ordained clergy - a situation legally analogous in Scotland to that of the Huguenots in England.

Service in America may have been a convenient way for the Williamson brothers to fulfill their vocations while avoiding the tensions at home. Certainly, as they received glowing references to their character and learning from the Church of Scotland Presbytery of Forres, they had no problem with the Royal Succession.

As this will loom large later in this paper, the text of the oath required of the clergy is presented here, in full:

I, utterly testify and declare in my conscience, That the King's Highness is the only Supream Governour of this Realm, and of all other his Highnesses Dominions and Countries, as well in all Spiritual or Ecclesiastical things or causes, as Temporal: And that no foreign Prince, Person, Prelate, State, or Potentate hath or ought to have any jurisdiction, power, superiority, pre-eminence or authority Ecclesiastical or Spiritual within this Realm. And therefore I do utterly denounce and forsake all foreign jurisdictions, powers,

superiorities and authorities; and do promise, That from henceforth I shall bear faith and true allegiance to the King's Highness, His Heirs and Successors, and to my power shall assist and defend all jurisdictions, priviledges, pre-eminences and authorities granted or belonging to the King's Highness, His Heirs and Successors, or united and annexed to the Imperial Crown of this Realm. So help me God."

On May 10th, 1711, the St. Paul's vestry minutes record that Alexander Williamson *"presented his credentials and was received as the Minister of St. Paul's vice Rev. Stephen Bordley d."*

But, here is another curious situation. He was ordained in September of 1710, but, on February 27th, 1711, it is recorded that *"Mr. Alexander Williamson and Uxr. Adrx. of the goods and chattels which were of the Rev. Mr. Stephen Bordley, late of Kent County, deed., charge themselves with all and singular the goods, chatties and credits of the said deceased as per Invtv of sum of £309:2:5, etc."* The Reverend and Mrs. Williamson *"make oath yet ye above is a just and true acct of her adm in common before me by virtue of a spiel com to me for that end directed.—Thos. Smyth, D. Com'y. Conet. Kent."*

In other words, within a space of a few months, he had been ordained, emigrated to America, and married his predecessor's widow – all before presenting his credentials!

How did he know who she was or, indeed, that she was even there? Could there have been correspondence beforehand and matters pre-arranged? Was it love at first sight? Or, simply, a marriage of convenience? Alas, such research is beyond the scope of this paper.

Together, they had a son Alexander (1712-1760), twins Sarah and James (1715) who died, and another son John (1717-1785). With her three children by Stephen Bordley, it must have been a lively household for Ann.

Mr. Williamson arrived at a time of great excitement in the parish. The original church had become so dilapidated and hard to maintain that a new building had been commissioned. On the 27th of August, 1711, it is recorded that he, together with “*Mr. Wm. Scott, Capt. Edw'd Scott, Mr. Wm. Harris, Capt. Jas. Harris, Mr. Wm. Frisby, Sr., contracted with Mr. Jas. Harris, as undertaker, to build a church for the use of this Parish of St. Paul's, in Kent County, 40 feet long in the clear and 30 feet wide in the clear;*”

This structure, with some modifications, is the one still standing today – the oldest continuously used Anglican church in Maryland.

Given the terse nature of the vestry minutes, which mostly concerned expenses and income, and the fact that most of the minutes from this period have not survived, it is hard to get a sense of Mr. Williamson’s ministry. As it happens there is a contemporary description of him in a collection of documents held by the Diocese of Maryland as “*a Whig & a devout Christian, but an indifferent preacher.*”

On June 16th, 1731, when the Revd. Jacob Henderson of Queen Anne’s Parish (St. Barnabas’, Leeland), acting as Commissary of the Bishop of London, held an official visitation for the Maryland clergy at White Marsh Church, Hambleton, (today, in ruins), Williamson is listed among those present as being “*of St. Paul’s parish, Kent County.*” The description of “*Rector*”, used for the other clergy, is omitted.

This might be merely an oversight (clerical?), or it could indicate that he had stepped back from active ministry while remaining in the parish—retiring in place. Alas, the lack of records leave us with a mystery.

It is possible that the uncertainty we have about the extent of Mr. Williamson’s tenure and activities may have also been felt in London and Annapolis as no attempt was made to appoint a successor until after his death on April 30th, 1740.

James Sterling (1740-1763)

It is hard to know where to begin with James Sterling. Perhaps, the best place is at the beginning.

He was born in Dowra, Cavan, Ireland, in the year 1701, the son of James Sterling, a captain in the Earl of Donegal's Regiment of Foot (later, the 35th; today, the Princess of Wales' Royal Regiment). Due to wounds suffered in the siege of Cadiz, the captain had been invalided out in 1702 and the younger James' childhood was spent in an economically distressed household.

Fortunately, in 1715, the captain's petition for relief was granted and he received a pension and windfall of back pay. This changed the family circumstances and our James was able to enter Trinity College, Dublin, from where he received his degree in 1720.

Sterling had a talent for literary production and composed, among other pieces, a tragedy entitled "*The Rival Generals*" which was performed at the Theatre Royal in Dublin. It was not a critical triumph, but, giving us an insight into his character, the piece was lavishly dedicated to William Conolly, the politician who had promoted his father's petition.

The theatre held more than professional interest for our young scholar. He married Nancy Liddell, a successful and admired actress for whom he wrote many "epilogues" with which it was the custom for leading ladies to address the audience. In 1731, however, apparently in poor health, she gave her last performance in a play entitled "*Love and Ambition*" and, shortly after, died.

We now come to a defining moment in Sterling's course. Hitherto, he had shown only passion for the arts, but, divine vocation is a tricky business.

Who is to second-guess the motives which led him to seek Holy Orders? He received them in 1733 from the Archbishop of Dublin (Church of Ireland) and took service as chaplain with the King's Royal Regiment (later, Royal Scots; today, Royal Regiment of Scotland) then stationed in Ireland.

One might sense the pageantry of military and church as fulfilling a dramatic flair. It seems, though, that he continued to write for the stage as his "*The Parricide*" was performed in February, 1736.

Now enters a distant relation of Sterling's, Robert Auchmuty, a lawyer and Admiralty Judge (he would later assist John Adams in the Boston Massacre trial) then living in Massachusetts. He invited cousin James to Boston and, on June 15th, 1736, Sterling wrote the Bishop of London about the vacancy at the King's Chapel in that city. The Bishop had another candidate in mind, but, an interest in America was whetted and, in September, 1737, Sterling received permission to transfer to the Church of England and serve in the Province of Maryland.

On November 16th, Governor Samuel Ogle licensed him to the Anne Arundel County parish of All Hallows which he retained until July 18th, 1739 when he was inducted to the parish of St. Anne's, Annapolis. For most men, and certainly one with Sterling's appetite for drama and influential connections, this would seem a plum appointment. Whatever caused him, then, to, after barely a year (August 26th, 1740), resign the capital living and accept the worthy, but, distinctly rural parish of St. Paul's, Kent?

As with so much, we have no definite idea, though it might be speculated, in view of subsequent events, that the opportunity to acquire that which many immigrants to these shores have longed for – namely, land – took precedence over urban delights.

For the next twenty-three years, James Sterling tended his flock with no complaints on either side. He never sought another parish and no animadversion was laid before either Governor or Bishop.

On September 19th, 1743, he married Rebecca Holt, the daughter of Nathaniel Hynson and his first wife, Hannah. She was the widow of the Rev. Arthur Holt, late of St. Luke's Parish (Church Hill) and the niece of Ann Hynson Bordley Williamson!

A daughter, also named Rebecca, was born. Sadly, her mother died and Sterling, for his third wife, married Mary Smith (September 7th, 1749) who outlived him and later married (August 7th, 1766) one Benjamin Binney.

Mary and James had no children of their own and she raised Rebecca who married (1764) William Carmichael of Round Top, Queen Anne's County. Carmichael had a distinguished career as a diplomat and is credited with recruiting Lafayette to the American cause in 1776.

Each of these marriages, and his own purchases, brought Sterling considerable lands – estates known as Rousby's Recovery, Huddles Right, and Rushmore.

And, he continued to write. Several poems were published in England including one promoting the expedition of Arthur Dobbs to discover the Northwest Passage. He also corresponded with the poet Alexander Pope.

Between October, 1751, and August, 1752, Sterling made a voyage to England which was to have great consequence. He proposed to the Lords of the Treasury that a post be created of Customs Collector for the Chester & Patapsco and, at the same time, applied to the Commissioners of Customs that he fill the office!

The ingenuity of the man is almost beyond belief. Supporting his proposal and application were the rising Irish politician Robert Nugent, the Viscount Clare (who may have known Sterling at college), and Sir George Lyttleton, a Lord of the Treasury and noted patron of poets - Alexander Pope was among his friends. The Irish and literary connections served our parson well.

His tenure, though, of this lucrative post was accompanied by no small controversy. Governor Horatio Sharpe was furious that such a post had been created without his advice, and, that the post having been made, he should not have been able to fill it with a candidate of his choosing.

In February, 1754, a petition from the merchants and masters in the Maryland trade was presented to the Treasury praying that Sterling's appointment be vacated and the district abolished. The Treasury passed it on to the Commissioners who promptly shelved it. After all, the creation of a new tax district covering the growing town of Baltimore was not undesirable.

His civic difficulties notwithstanding, Sterling was held in high regard by his clerical colleagues and was chosen to preach the sermon before a special session of the Assembly (December 13th, 1754) called to vote men and money for what is now called the French and Indian War. The sermon was printed in Maryland and England and circulated as a call to arms.

He also published many poems in the "*American Magazine*" edited by the Provost of the College of Philadelphia (today, the University of Pennsylvania), the Revd. Dr. William Smith, of whom we will hear more.

Time and tide wait for no man, however, and one of Governor Sharpe's letters (July 18th, 1760) describes Sterling as being "*pretty far advanced in Years & hath been lately much afflicted with the Stone.*" Doubtless, this was what carried him off on November 10th, 1763.

He was eulogized in the "*Maryland Gazette*" by an anonymous friend who described him as "*a Great and Good Man, a most valuable Member of Society; and in spite of his Failings (for these no doubt he had) I am not afraid to add, that he was an Honour and Ornament to the sacred Cloth he wore, as well as to the Country he liv'd in.....; and in particular much esteem'd by his Parishioners, which alone is no small Test of his Merit.*"

Would we all could receive such an epitaph.

Samuel Sloan (1766-1767)

With the death of James Sterling, one era of Colonial history ends and a new one begins. Hitherto, the Church of England clergy serving in America had been mostly born and educated in Britain. From the mid-1700's on, though, we see, from the ordination registers in London, that an increasing number of clergy were both born and educated in America – no longer missionaries to a distant frontier, but locally established, serving their home communities.

Samuel Sloan (born 1740) was one of these. A native of Philadelphia and graduate of the College of New Jersey (today, Princeton) in 1761. He was ordained deacon and priest on the 21st and 22nd, respectively of December, 1765, in the Chapel Royal of St. James', Palace. The absence of a curacy in England indicates the extent to which American candidates were now regarded as exempt from the norms of English parochial life.

Indeed, it seems that his service at St. Paul's was not that of Rector, but, of Curate to the parish of North Elk (St. Mary Anne's, North East), then presided over by the Revd. John Hamilton. Given the distance between parishes, though, Sloan must have operated almost independently.

Sloan began at St. Paul's on January 2nd, 1766, and left to be inducted as Rector of Worcester Parish (today, St. Paul's, Berlin) on December 5th, 1767.

He moved to Coventry Parish (today, St. Paul's, Marion) on November 20th, 1769. With the upheavals caused by the Revolution, he resigned the position of Rector on August 5th, 1776. Although American, and supportive of Independence, he, like many other Anglican clergy, did not feel he could break his oath to the King (see above) for whom the State Prayers were part of the Sunday liturgy.

The minutes of that vestry meeting note that he received a certificate confirming his voluntary resignation and stating that he had "*conducted himself in all things to the entire satisfaction of the People.*" At the November 4th vestry meeting, it is further recorded that nearly 30 pounds sterling was raised for him.

He remained resident in the parish performing the Occasional Offices (baptisms, weddings, funerals), which did not require the use of State Prayers, for his former flock, and devoted his attentions to a school he founded and which provided him with income.

On August 21st, 1780, he married Elizabeth Moore and had a daughter, Sarah, born in 1781.

Sloan withdrew from active ministry when the Revd. Samuel Tingley became Rector of Coventry Parish in 1786. He died in 1807.

Robert Reade (1767-1777)

The final member of the clergy to serve St. Paul's during this period was the Revd. Robert Reade - like Sloan, an American. Born in Gloucester County, Virginia (April 4th, 1734) and educated at William and Mary, he was ordained both deacon and priest on February 19th, 1758, at Fulham Palace by the Bishop of Rochester acting on behalf of the Bishop of London.

His initial assignment (April 10th, 1758) was to Petsworth Parish, Virginia, (today, merged with Ware Parish) where his father, John, was Rector. From there, he went to Coventry Parish, Maryland, as Curate in 1762.

Induction as Rector of St. Paul's came December 5th, 1767.

At some point, he married Martha Short, the daughter of William and Mary Short of Surry County, Virginia. There do not appear to have been any children and the date of her death is not known.

Again, the absence of vestry records leaves us with little information on his ministry, but, we do have a description of him from the journals of Francis Asbury, a pioneer of the new Methodist Movement. On December 11th, 1772, he writes of a visit to Kent County where, *“one Mr. Read, a church minister, came to me and desired to know who I was, and whether I was licensed. I told him who I was. He spoke great, swelling words, and told me he had authority over the people, and was charged with the care of their souls. He also told me that I could not, and should not preach; and if I did, he would proceed against me according to law.”*

Mr. Reade's *“great, swelling words”* failed to deter Asbury or stem the rising tide of Methodism.

These were changing times, in many ways. Hitherto, the Anglican clergy in Maryland had been supported by taxes levied on the whole community, regardless of religious affiliation. This had always been a source of contention and, in 1773, the General Assembly reduced the tax (and the clergy income) by half. Mr. Reade responded by advertising in the January 5th, 1774 issue of the *“Maryland Gazette”* that he had *“therefore opened a grammar school at his house in Kent county, about five miles from Rock-Hall, where gentlemen may have their sons boarded, and taught the latin and greek tongues, and other parts of literature in the best manner, at thirty pounds per annum, and the greatest care taken of them.”*

Despite this personal discomfiture, Reade, unlike Sloan, was unequivocal in his support for the Revolution. However, in a prescient act of what would explode into Civil War within a century, he was, nevertheless, obliged to resign the parish because he could not do something which, from his perspective, was disloyal to his native land – Virginia.

As enacted by the General Assembly in 1777, the *“Oath of Fidelity and Support”* required all persons holding any office of profit or trust to swear allegiance to Maryland no later than March 1st, 1778. The text ran as follows:

“I do sware I do not hold myself bound to yield any Allegiance or obedience to the King Of Great Britain his heirs, or successors and that I will be true and faithful to the State of Maryland and will to the utmost of my power, support maintain and defend the Freedom and independence thereof and the Government as now established against all open enemies and secret and traterous Conspiraces and will use my utmost to disclose and make known to the Governor or some one of the Judges or Justices thereof all Tresasons or Treaterous Conspiraces, Attempts or Combinations against this State or the Government thereof which may come to my Knowledge. So Help me God.”

We must remember that, at this time, there was no guarantee that the former colonies would form a cohesive nation. For a born and bred Virginian, swearing allegiance to another state might place him on the wrong side if the states divided once British rule was removed.

Accordingly, Reade packed his bags and returned to Virginia, becoming Rector of Kingston Parish, the neighbour to Petworth. There, he died in 1787.

The Rest of the Story

Bereft of a pastor for reasons which people of the time may have understood better than we can imagine, the parish was in a difficult way. A large number of Anglican clergy had either retired to private life, like Samuel Sloan, or left the country for England and Canada. There really was nobody available to fill Mr. Reade's place. Half the parishes in Maryland were vacant.

Thus, the parish returned to the regular ministrations of Lay Readers and the occasional visits of the man we saw twenty years ago publishing the poems of James Sterling - the Revd. Dr. William Smith.

Dr. Smith (born Sept. 7th, 1727) was, like Alexander Williamson, a "Qualified Chapel" Anglican from Aberdeen, Scotland. A distinguished scholar who would receive doctorates from Aberdeen, Oxford and Dublin, he was invited to become Provost of the College of Philadelphia (today, the University of Pennsylvania) by its founder, Benjamin Franklin. Ordination was conferred as deacon by the Bishop of Lincoln and as priest by the Bishop of Carlisle in December (the 21st and 23rd, respectively) of 1753 at Fulham Palace.

In 1758, Dr. Smith married Rebecca Moore of Chester, Pennsylvania, a matrilineal grand-daughter of the Scottish Earl of Wemyss. Between 1759 and 1776, they had eight children.

When the Revolution came, even though Dr. Smith supported Independence, his status in the highly charged political atmosphere of Philadelphia was untenable (e.g. most of the College's trustees were Loyalists) and he felt it best to move to Maryland in 1779 where he became Rector of Emmanuel, Chestertown. While there, he helped establish (1782) Washington College - having obtained the good General's financial patronage and permission to use his name - and became its first President.

Dr. Smith realized that Independence would necessitate a complete change in how the Anglican parishes functioned if any were to survive. In 1780, he called a meeting of Maryland churchmen and proposed the name "Protestant Episcopal" to describe the structure he envisioned - having bishops, but separate from civil authority, with clergy chosen by vestries. Clergy and laymen in other states then met and discussions circulated.

In 1783, he added to his duties by becoming the Rector of St. Paul's for two years and was succeeded in this role by his successor as President of Washington College, the Revd. Colin Ferguson.

As it happens, Ferguson, a native of Kent County, had been recruited to Washington College by Dr. Smith and was the first priest ordained by the Rt. Revd. Samuel Seabury, the first Bishop of the newly organizing Protestant Episcopal Church, on August 7th, 1785, in Christ Church, Middletown, Connecticut. **So, the very first Episcopalian priest was the Rector of St. Paul's, Kent!**

The Treaty of Paris, recognizing American Independence, was signed September 3rd, 1783 and the ratified versions were exchanged on May 12th, 1784.

This brings us to the end of our story of the men who provided ordained ministry to St. Paul's when it was part of The Church of England. They were of many nations – Franco-Dutch, English, Scottish, Irish, American – and reflected an amazing breadth of ecclesiastical history.

These brief sketches hardly do them, or their families, justice as the interesting and complex individuals they doubtless were, but, one may hope that you now know them as more than mere names on a list and that the thousands of people who did know them in person would recognize them in these pages.