

Rear view of St. James Church, 1840s

— HISTORY OF THE ARCHITECTURE —

**1744:** Held first recorded Anglican services, Center Square courthouse.

**1753:** Completed limestone house of worship.

**1762:** Added frame steeple to house of worship.

**1820:** Built first portion of new red brick house of worship, incorporating 1762 steeple into new design.

**1844-1845:** Extended structure by one bay to the east.

**1869-1871:** Built apsidal chancel on east end of church.

**1880:** Completed ten years of restoration on exterior; replaced 1762 steeple with Romanesque Revival tower.

**1904:** Completed parish house on North Duke St.

**1961:** Attached memorial chapel and cloister to north side of Romanesque Revival house of worship



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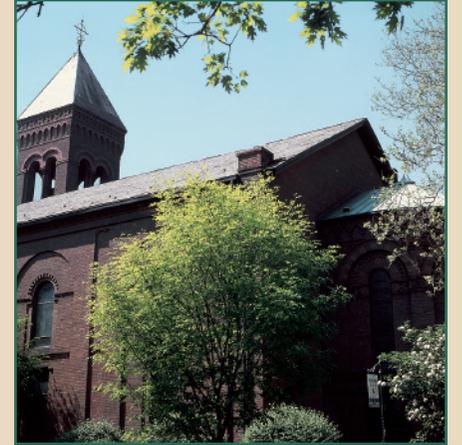
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St. James Church, 1844

## STORY OF THE PEOPLE AND NEIGHBORHOOD

In the early 1700s as the American Indian village at Hickorytown was being transformed into Lancaster Town, it was home to many more people of German ancestry than English. German-speaking congregations, including Lutheran, Moravian, and Reformed, immediately built houses of worship.

As members of the governing class, the English-speaking congregations—Church of England and Presbyterian—appeared to have easier access to the Center Square courthouse for religious services. They waited longer before building houses of worship. Such was the case when the Rev. Richard Locke, a traveling missionary, happened on Lancaster Town "quite by accident." Word spread quickly of his arrival, and members of the Church of England convinced him to stay and hold regular worship services for them. On October 3, 1744, St. James parish was officially organized during a meeting at the courthouse.

The first house of worship, a stone structure, was not completed until 1753. It served alongside the neighboring English Presbyterian Church as the center of English religious life in Lancaster. People like Jasper and Sarah Burd Yeates and Edward and Mary Shippen supported both congregations, paying regular pew rents and giving money to various building projects.

Worshippers at St. James were as different from each other as George Ross, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and Dinah McIntire, an enslaved woman who worked for Lancaster innkeeper, Col. Matthias Slough. McIntire was born into slavery ca. 1700-1710. Col. Slough, a member of the parish, purchased her around 1760 and brought her to his White Swan Inn on Center Square.

When she was 90-plus years old in 1800, McIntire secured her freedom. She bought a home at the corner of West Vine St. and Strawberry St. Her view toward South Queen St. is still sometimes called "Dinah's Hill" and was a well-remembered sledding spot in the 19th century. She died in 1819, well over 100 years old, and lies buried in the St. James church yard.

When the Rev. Thomas Barton served the congregation from 1759 until 1778, St. James parish was home to both loyal subjects of King George and a significant cross-section of American patriots. Members of the vestry, including Ross, Yeates, and Shippen, urged the Rev. Barton to stop reading prayers for the royal family. When he could not in good conscience do this, the stone church was boarded up. The Rev. Barton continued his ministry under house arrest, eventually persuading his fellow townspeople to give him and his second wife safe passage to New York. The church was closed to worshippers from June 1776 until December 1783.



Rev. Thomas Barton

In the 19th century, the rectors at St. James welcomed people like James Buchanan, Harriet Lane, and Dr. Thomas Burrowes, the great champion of free public schools. A friend of the abolitionist U.S. Congressman, Thaddeus Stevens, Burrowes wrote all of the important school bills that passed the Pennsylvania State legislature between 1836 and 1857. With the help of Stevens, who was serving in the State house at the time, the bills became law, opening the doors of education to all people, rich and poor.

James Buchanan, the 15th American president, supported various congregations during his years in Lancaster. He rented pew #21 at St. James for his niece Harriet Lane. Buchanan eventually became a communicant member of First Presbyterian Church. As for Lane, she remained a supporter of St. James throughout her life.



Harriet Lane Johnston

In 1857 she moved with Buchanan to the White House where she served as hostess for the bachelor president until the end of his term in 1861. While vacationing in Bedford Springs, Pennsylvania, she met Henry Elliot Johnston. They

were married in 1866. After both of their early teenage sons died of rheumatic fever, the Johnstons founded the Harriet Lane Home for Invalid Children in Baltimore. Today, it is the pediatrics center of the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. Upon Lane's death, her art collection was given to the nation, resulting in the establishment of the National Gallery of Art.

The architecture of St. James Church clearly shows a community in transition, beginning as a small Church of England mission outpost and evolving into the main house of worship for some of the leaders of Lancaster City in the late 18th and 19th centuries. Elegant renovations accomplished between 1869 and 1880 by the Philadelphia architect, Charles M. Burns, turned a somewhat nondescript structure into a handsome Romanesque Revival church.

The adjacent church yard, with its ancient markers bearing witness to people who lived and died as members of St. James parish, has been kept open to the street. Its flowering trees and shrubs, its arches, benches, and walkways, provide respite to many a weary visitor. At the dawn of the 21st century, St. James Episcopal Church strives to be an inclusive city parish, steeped in the liturgical and musical heritage of the Anglican tradition.

**Earliest Known Record:  
1744 church record**

**Current House of Worship:  
Romanesque Revival, completed 1880**