

St. James Chapel Collection

A Guide to the Collection in Garrett Park Town Archives

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TITLE OF COLLECTION

St. James Chapel

REFERENCE NUMBER(S)

2020.0006

DATES OF CREATION

1896–1953

HISTORICAL/ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

On June 9, 1891, a meeting was held in the Garrett Park home of M.V. Bailey to discuss the prospect of building a Protestant Episcopal (P.E.) chapel to serve the community. This was presumably the start of the St. James P.E. Church Committee, which hosted fundraising events around Garrett Park and the District of Columbia, according to newspaper accounts:

“The dramatic entertainment given here last night for the benefit of the building fund of St. James’ Protestant Episcopal Church at Garrett Park was largely attended and much enjoyed.”¹

“A ‘Handkerchief Tea’ will be given at the home of Mr. H.P Springer on Tuesday evening, for the benefit of St. James’ P.E. Church, at Garrett Park.”²

On October 13, 1896, Garrett Park resident P.H. Dorsett hosted a meeting of a different committee, the Garrett Park Chapel Committee, “to consider the practicality and advisability of purchasing a lot and building a chapel or Sunday School room ...”³ Less than a month later, four members of the Committee, Messrs. Dorsett, Galloway, Browne, and Talcott purchased land (Lot 4, Section 50) from Lyon, Conklin and Co. of Baltimore for the sum of \$75. Plans for constructing a “Union Chapel,” estimated to cost \$700, began in earnest. The focus of this newly formed committee was to a build a chapel that would be available to all denominations in Garrett Park.

On December 23, 1896, members of the Garrett Park Chapel Committee and St. James P.E. Church Committee signed an agreement that called for the St. James P.E. Committee to transfer funds it raised to the Garrett Park Chapel Committee. It also called for putting the completed chapel in the hands of a Board of Managers who would manage the chapel. It was further agreed that the chapel would be transferred to the Vestry of the Protestant Episcopal Church after 10 years (or earlier, if it was “found impracticable to carry on the work as at present planned”). The Garrett Park Chapel Committee received \$566.09 from the St. James Committee; the remainder of funds to build the chapel came from subscriptions by town residents and other donations.

¹ *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), November 18, 1892 accessed at LOC Chronicling America.

² *Evening Times* (Washington, DC), October 7, 1895 accessed at LOC Chronicling America.

³ 1896 Meeting Ledger, pg. 3, St. James Chapel Collection (2020.0006), Garrett Park Town Archives.

The S. Dana Lincoln Company donated stone for the chapel's foundation, and Rockville builder, T.C. Grooms built the chapel. The first service was held on July 18, 1897.⁴

In 1953, the Potomac Conference of Seventh Day Adventists purchased the chapel and later sold it to the Town of Garrett Park in 1968. The chapel was renamed Town Hall and became a full-time venue for hosting town meetings and gatherings as well as special events on a rental basis.

EXTENT

1 cubic foot: 2 letter-size boxes, 1 flat object box

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The St. James Chapel Collection includes records of the Garrett Park Chapel Committee, the Board of Managers, the Chapel Guild (also known as the Ladies Guild), and the Sunday School, with some records dating back to 1896. Highlights of the collection include a ledger containing meeting minutes and original correspondence from the 1890s, which chronicles decisions and agreements to build the chapel, and a financial ledger, which contains details about resident subscriptions and donations that helped fund the chapel. The collection also includes 20 years (1932–1953) of meeting minutes from the Chapel Guild, which was established to help “maintain and beautify the Chapel building and grounds,”⁵ as well as correspondence and records books from the Sunday School.

This collection is organized into four series: (I) History, (II) Board of Managers, (III) Chapel Guild, and (IV) Sunday School. Materials within each series are arranged chronologically by date, from earliest to latest.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

Series I: History, 1897; 1968; n.d. (.25 cubic feet)

This series includes a handful of materials documenting the history of the chapel, including a photocopy of an 1897 news article, an undated photograph of a chapel minister (Reverend David Barr), and undated research prepared by prior town staff or volunteers. It also includes documentation of the 1968 town vote to acquire the chapel to serve as a Town Hall.

Series II: Board of Managers, 1891–1952 (*non-inclusive*) (.25 cubic feet)

This series includes meeting minutes, originals and copies of correspondence, and accounting records of the Chapel's Board of Managers. Some materials are loose and contained in folders; other materials are contained in bound ledgers.

⁴ *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), July 19, 1897, p. 3 accessed via LOC Chronicling America.

⁵ Constitution of the Chapel Guild, n.d., St. James Chapel Collection, Garrett Park Town Archives.

**Series III: Chapel Guild, 1932–1953
(.25 cubic feet)**

This series includes historical information, correspondence, and meeting minutes (loose and in notebooks) of the Chapel Guild, which was made up of 20–25 Garrett Park women, including the wives of several of the men who served on the Board of Managers. This Series includes three sub-series: History, Correspondence, and Minutes.

**Series IV: Sunday School, 1935–1950
(.25 cubic feet)**

This series includes correspondence and Record Books of the chapel's Sunday School. The Record Books contain information about the number of students attending school sessions, names of instructors, dues collected, and topics covered during sessions. This series also includes collectible Little's Cross and Crown Sunday School Attendance pins, which based on the Record Books were likely used prior to the 1940s.

LANGUAGE

English

CONDITIONS GOVERNING ACCESS

This collection is open for research.

USING THIS COLLECTION

Materials in this collection are available in hardcopy. In addition, most of the materials, with the exception of the Sunday School Record Books, have been digitized. The two ledger books are available on the Archives website. To request use of this collection, please contact the Town Archivist to arrange a visit.

The preferred citation for materials from this collection is:

Garrett Park Town Archives, Garrett Park, MD. "St. James Chapel Collection."
Box number and Box name. Folder title. Date (if applicable).

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PROVENANCE

Found in collection; obtained from various sources, including town residents and the Town Office.

PROCESSING PROCEDURES

General processing procedures included discarding unnecessary binders, metal clips and paperclips, and duplicate copies of documents as well as arranging and organizing documents.

We performed preservation copying of newspaper clippings whenever feasible. Records in folders were arranged, unless otherwise indicated, in forward chronological order, with undated records appearing at the end of the folder. The bulk of materials were scanned as TIFF or JPEG formats, with PDF access copies.

Conservation note: In 1997, the Town of Garrett Park engaged the services of a rare book conservator to repair damage to the 1896–1935 Chapel ledger book.

RELATED COLLECTIONS

- Town Record Collection: Town Hall (2019.0005)

ARCHIVES STAFF & FINDING AID AUTHOR

Town Archivist Claire McDonald, MLIS, processed this collection and prepared the finding aid.

BOX INVENTORY

Box 1

Series I: History

News Article (copy) and Photograph, 1897; n.d.
Acquisition Vote, 1968
Research Notes, n.d.

Series II: Board of Managers

Correspondence, 1891–1952 (non-inclusive)
Financial Information (2 Folders), 1897–1949 (non-inclusive)

Series III: Chapel Guild

Sub-Series 1: History

Constitution, n.d.
Booster Roll, n.d.

Sub-Series 2: Correspondence

Business Correspondence, 1937–1949
Donations and Thank Yous, 1942–1953

Sub-Series 3: Minutes

1932–1937 Minutes
1937–1939 Minutes
1941–1942 Minutes
1942–1946 Minutes
1946–1953 Minutes

Series IV: Sunday School

Correspondence, 1947–1950
Record Books (2 Folders), 1935–1949 (non-inclusive)

Box 2

(Series II: Board of Managers, cont.)

Meeting Minutes Ledger Book, 1896–1935; 1958
Account Ledger Book, 1897–1934

Box 3

(Series IV: Sunday School, cont.)

Little's Crown and Cross Sunday School Attendance Pins, n.d.