

**The
First Fifty Years
1951 - 2001**

**CELEBRATION
OF
ST. MARK'S**

**The
Congregation**

**St. Mark's Episcopal Church
Chenango Bridge, New York**

CELEBRATION OF ST. MARK'S

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Dedication

**We dedicate this booklet to those who were,
to those who are,
and to those who are yet to come to St. Mark's.**

**To those who were:
For sharing their time, talent and treasure to make St. Mark's
dream come true.**

**To those who are:
For the joy of sharing a holy meal together; for study, work
and play in a caring atmosphere.**

**To those who are yet to come:
May they find God alive and well and happy in this place.
And may the ripple of His Gift reach to infinity.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SOURCES

Helen Albert and Louis Wilson,
Church Historians, Three
Scrap books,(1951-1970).
John Bensley, "Thirty Years at St.
Marks" (1981).
Marion Shoop, a handwritten history,
(1998).
St. Mark's church records.
St. Mark's newsletters.
St. Mark's bulletins.
St. Mark's Minutes of Vestry
Meetings.
St. Mark's Telephone Directories.

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Photo Albums of the Chautauqua
Festivals
Picture Boards in Church Lounge
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The Guild of St. Mark's

NOTE FROM EDITOR

This has been a two year group effort of research, meetings, editing and proofreading. The loving cooperation of all who gave their time and enthusiastic support have made this possible.

The Vestry and Wardens are the mainstay of every church. We found that we could not make a complete list of every Vestry member and Warden, since records were not kept for every year. An incomplete list of Vestry members and Wardens will be part of an update, next year. We also hope to add a page for each new year to continue the CELEBRATION OF ST. MARK'S

Ann Dohanich, Church Historian

May, 2001

St. Mark's History

St. Mark's Episcopal Church
Chenango Bridge, New York

Lord, you have been our refuge
from one generation to another.
Psalm 90:1

The 1950s

Do not fear for I have redeemed you – I have called you by name; you are mine.

Isaiah 43:1

1951 St. Mark's Beginnings

<p>Saint Mark's Mission</p> <p>Episcopal</p> <p>Chenango Bridge</p> <p>New York</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">9:00 - MORNING PRAYER AND SERMON</p> <p>HYMN OPENING SENTENCES CONFESSION COLLECT FOR 19TH TRINITY LORD'S PRAYER PSALM VERSES - PAGE 7-8 PSALM PRAYER BOOK PAGE LESSON CANTICLE CREED</p> <p>PRAYER VERSES COLLECT FOR DAY (AND SEASON)</p> <p>GENERAL THANKSGIVING ST. CHRYSOSTOM PAGE 20</p> <p>HYMN SERMON</p> <p>OFFERING PRESENTATION - DOXOLOGY CLOSING PRAYERS HYMN</p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * * * *</p> <p style="text-align: center;">GOD BUILDS NO CHURCHES; BY HIS PLAN THAT LABOR HAS BEEN LEFT TO MAN. THE HUMBLEST CHURCH DEMANDS THIS PRICE OF PRAYER AND TOIL AND SACRIFICE.</p>
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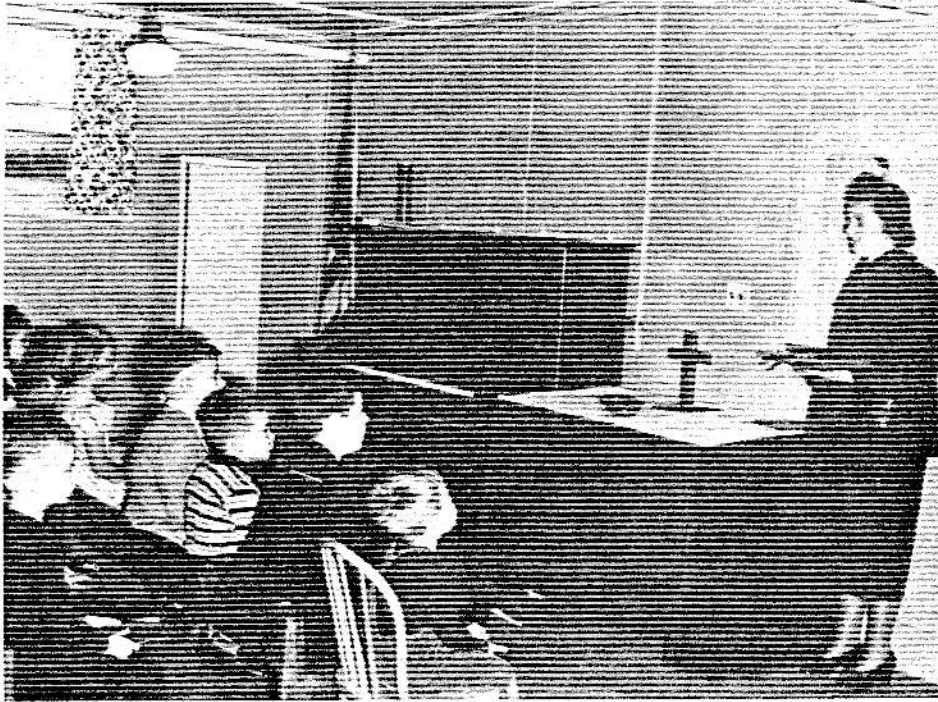
Vol. 1 No. 1

OUR FIRST BULLETIN

St. Mark's began as a mission church of All Saints Episcopal Church of Johnson City. The initiative to start the mission was taken after a survey of local Episcopalians was taken and after Mr. and Mrs. Walter Rose offered their home as the site for services. The first service of St. Mark's was held on May 27, 1951 at the home of Walter and Betty Rose at 509 River Road. The Rev. Clayton Melling of All Saints Episcopal Church in Johnson City conducted the service. The congregation consisted of 9 adults and 4 children. The service was held in the Rose family's game room. Mrs. Roy Jones conducted the Sunday school in the family's kitchen. Henry English and Peg Prentice are the remaining members of our congregation who attended these first services.

The inscription on the service bulletin reads, "God Builds no Churches; By His Plan that labor has been left to man. The humblest Church demands this price of prayer and toil and sacrifice." As it turned out, the Episcopalians of Chenango Bridge were more than willing to pay this price!

1951 The Community Center



Sunday School for our Mission, held at the Community Center

After 3 weeks the game room at the Roses' home was bursting at the seams and Mr. Roy Jones, who became one of the first lay readers, succeeded in acquiring the use of the Civic Center for services. The first altar was constructed of two donated card tables. The women of the congregation made a covering for the tables that extended to the floor and on all sides. A gilded wooden cross was salvaged from the sorter room at All Saints Church in Johnson City. The remarkable part is that all this equipment, portable organ, altar and coverings had to be dismantled after every prayer service, taken to someone's home and brought back the next Sunday. Prayer books and collection plates were brought by the lay readers from All Saints every Sunday. Mr. Blinn Spohn acted as lay reader. Through the summer attendance averaged 15 adults. The Sunday school, for 8 to 12 children, was often held outdoors. With winter coming, holding Sunday school outdoors was not possible and trying to heat the building on the weekend was expensive, so using the Civic Center became impractical. Don and Dot Johnson and Jane and Barrie Sweet joined the congregation while services were being held at the Civic Center.

Problems with getting started:

(Letter from Rev. Clayton Melling to Olive Weatherby in 1976)

I also remember how our first effort to become a Diocesan mission enveloped us in disaster...We were totally unprepared for a Diocesan bureaucracy that had 11 committees for stopping a mission and no committee for starting one.

1951 Services at the Methodist Church



Episcopalians Worship in the Community Church

In September of 1951, The Rev. Melling and Blinn Spohn contacted The Rev. Reeves Havens of the Chenango Bridge Methodist Church to see if St. Mark's could use their church for an hour each Sunday from 9 to 10 AM. The congregation of the Methodist Church agreed to let us use their church for \$5.00 a Sunday. In its first eight months, St. Mark's Mission had an attendance of 20 adults and 59 children. Blinn Spohn was named the Director of Mission. St. Mark's Mission held its first church dinner and charged \$.25 for each meal!

Services continued to be held here until our own church building was completed in 1955. The family of Orrin and Elsie Ingraham, the family of Clyde and Jessie Gruver, the family of Bill and Ruth Pierce and the family of Les and Ruth Wilmarth all began attending St. Mark's services while they were being held at the Methodist Church .

1952 We plan our own church.



Picture of our vacant lot taken from the schoolyard across the road.

In January 1952, a parish meeting was held and the mission members elected an executive committee and decided to call our mission, "St. Mark's Episcopal Church". They voted to apply for admission into the Diocese of Central New York as an organized mission. A budget of \$2,200 was planned with half this amount going towards a building fund. St. Mark's had a pledged membership of 25 families. Gifts for the new mission started to come in. The mission received a Communion Chalice and altar cloths from St. John the Evangelist Church of Hingham, Mass.; a large family Bible from Mrs. Roy Jones; a wooden prayer stand from Robert Eccleston and the promise of an old organ from Grace Church of Whitney Point. The success of St. Mark's was due to those people who chose to give their time, talent and energy to spread Christ's Kingdom. The rectors of the churches in Binghamton and Johnson City and the lay readers from All Saints Church contributed greatly. However, the chief credit goes to the members of St. Mark's themselves, who wanted a church of their own and were willing to sacrifice and work to that end.

In June of 1952, St. Mark's purchased one acre of land from the O'Neil sisters for \$3,500. The money was raised and an application for a loan from the Diocese was applied for. In May of 1952, the Diocese admitted us as a full mission.

1952 We plan our own church.

Laurence Doubleday donated his services as architect to draw up plans for the church and to compile the specifications.

(Ann Doubleday Dohanich)

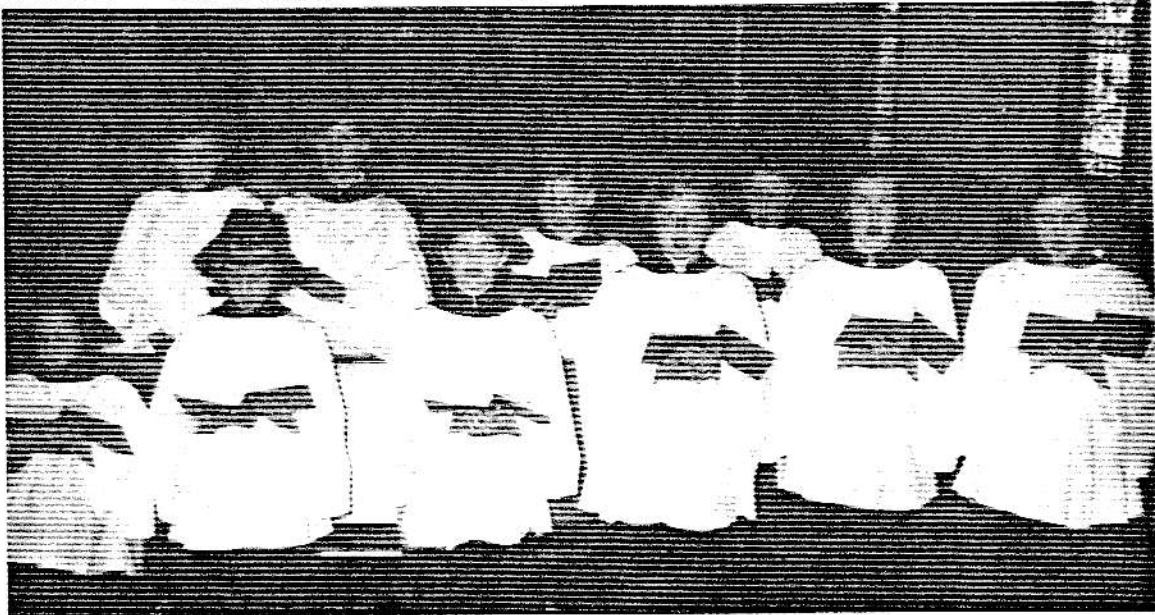
My Dad, Laurence Doubleday, wasn't a member of St. Mark's, or any other church, for that matter. A friend of the family, Dorothy Ramage, talked him into doing the work. I remember seeing the plans for the church on a drawing board, which was set up next to the coal bin in the cellar. When Dad was preparing to submit the plans to Bishop Higley, Dorothy went over them and said, "Larry, you've misspelled altar as alter!" I think he was planning to become a member, but he died before the building was completed.

Bids on erecting the church building were received. The lowest bid was \$78,000, which was \$33,000 more than the \$45,000 loan from the Diocese. The contractor agreed to erect the building for the available money if we could fulfill the sub-contract work. So the parishioners themselves agreed to use their talents and time to design and install the plumbing, the heating, the wiring and to do the painting.

A Women's Auxiliary was started on April 16, 1952. This Auxiliary later became the Episcopal Church Women (ECW).

The first baptism in St. Mark's Mission was for Virginia Carleton Harrison. The Rev. Clayton Melling baptized her at the Chenango Bridge Methodist Church on July 31, 1952.

1953 Continued Growth



Our Junior Choir at the Methodist Church

Bottom Row: Joyce Johnson, Brenda Ingraham, Sally Grabow, Libby Gruver, Susan Weatherby, MaryLou Zanker

Top Row: Sandra Roberts, Judy Dickinson, Richard Cook, Philip Rocks

In September, Jessie Gruver started a Senior Choir and a Junior Choir. Charles Goss accompanied them.

Memories of Jessie Gruver and the Choir:

(Dot Johnson)

Our daughter, Joyce Johnson, was very short. When the Junior Choir stood up to sing, someone said, "Why doesn't that girl stand up with the rest?" Jessie Gruver replied, "Why, that's Joyce Johnson, she's standing up as tall as she can!"

(Elsie Ingraham)

When Jessie Gruver directed the Angel Choir, I used to play piano for them. Jessie was a very loving and thoughtful person and always brought treats for the children. They really did a magnificent job for her. I also remember the lovely teas she gave for the children's mothers. These were really beautiful and everyone seemed to enjoy them.

Some of our first Sunday school teachers were Hilda Rocks, Lois Bramley, Janet McChesny, Mrs. Ray Bramley and Mrs. Sidney Zanker.

The first Memorial Fund was started when Roy Fox donated \$600.00 in the memory of his brother Eric.

A Fellowship Committee was formed; John Bensley was President.

1953 (Continued)

Our membership had grown to 44 families with 82 communicants and with more than 60 children.

The first confirmation of St. Mark's Mission was held at Chenango Bridge Methodist Church, officiated by Bishop Malcolm Peabody on April 26, 1953. Those receiving confirmation were Elizabeth Gruver, Susan Weatherby, Nancy Harrison, Patricia Mowry, Brenton Ingraham, Mrs. Margaret Humphrey, Sandra Roberts, Mrs. Eva Roberts, Mrs. Blanche Mack and Mrs. Eva Cook.

1954 Father George Detor, Our First Priest and We Start Building Our Church



Ground Breaking Ceremony on August 14, 1954.

George Detor, Deacon in Charge and Blinn Spohn, with members of the congregation watching.

In July, 1954, George Detor was named Deacon in Charge of St. Mark's Mission.

Memories of George Detor:

(Orrin Ingraham)

I was on the Executive Committee that hired George Detor and later Pete Speer.

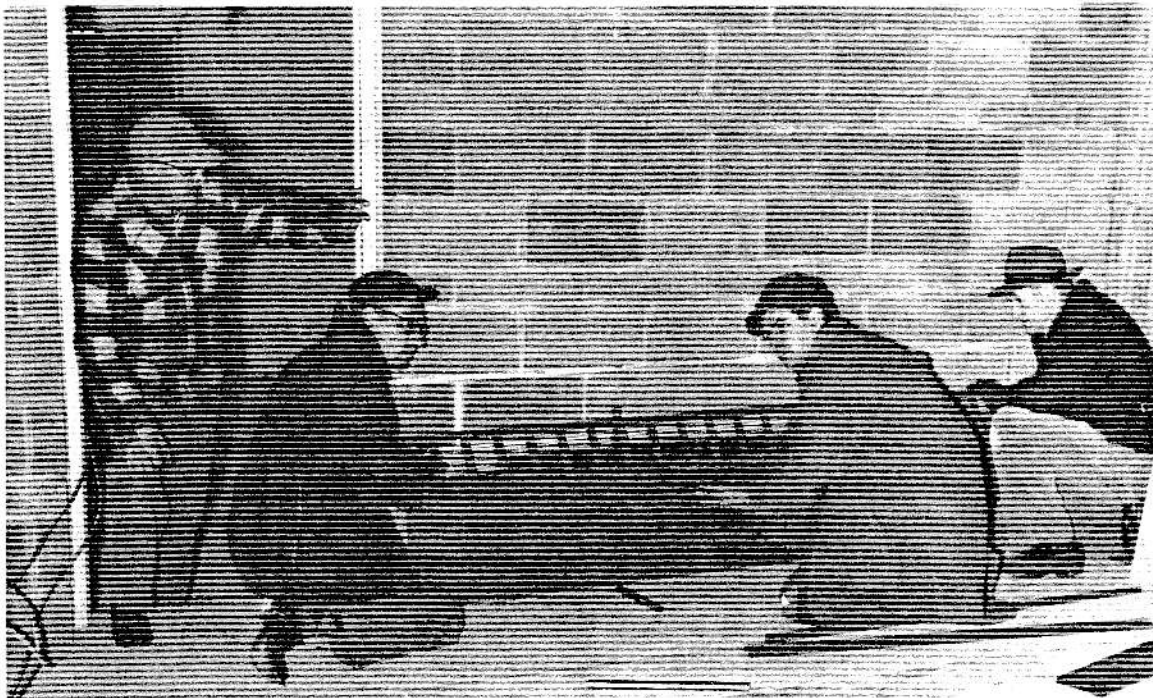
(Brenton Ingraham)

I was George Detor's first acolyte while we were still at the Methodist Church. Clyde Gruver Jr. was his first crucifer.

(Evelyn Smith)

George Detor baptized my three sons, Wesley, David and James Smith at the same time.

1954 We build our church.



Men of St. Mark's at work on the Church.

Sidney Zanker, Dwight Bensley, Earl Fox, Orrin Ingraham

Memories of George Detor:

(Jane Sweet)

Though I was attending St. Mark's with my husband, I had been brought up a Methodist. When Father Detor gave communion, I received. The next Monday morning, there was a knock on the door. It was Father Detor. He explained to me very seriously that he had doubts about serving an unconfirmed adult who was from another denomination. (See Note) The next time communion was served I received communion. The next Monday morning he came to the house again. This went on for awhile. Finally one Monday morning, he said that he had thought about this most of the night, and that Church Law stated that a confirmed Episcopalian or one, who was intending to be confirmed, could receive. Since he believed that I was intending to be confirmed, he could continue serving me communion.

Note:

In the 1950's the Episcopal Church welcomed only confirmed Episcopalians to receive communion. We now welcome all baptized people.

1954 We build our church.

Very soon after the ground breaking ceremony was held on August 14, 1954, the parishioners of St. Mark's got to work on their own church! Through a cold winter, the men of the congregation came after a full day's work and often stayed until 11 PM or midnight. Their wives brought their dinners to the construction site.

Clyde Gruver put in the heating and the plumbing. Sidney Zanker built the altar rail (which is still in use) and the original altar. Sidney Zanker also hand fashioned the large cross over the altar and installed it. He suggested that the cross on the outside of the main doors match the large interior cross. Other men who worked on the church by giving their time and energy were John Bensley, Charles Goss, Ken Powell, Walter Rose, William Harrison, Don Stanton, Ken Weatherby and Don Johnson.

(Don Johnson)

I helped to wire the undercroft. We worked on it at night. I was a serviceman for Sears and after a day's work I'd come to the church and we'd work until 11 or 12 at night. Ken Weatherby always loved to joke. Well, he was on a ladder, pulling and cutting wires and didn't know the electric current was still on. He was hollering. We thought he was just kidding, so we didn't go to help him. Fortunately, he finally got off the ladder and broke the circuit!

(Libby Gruver Ingraham)

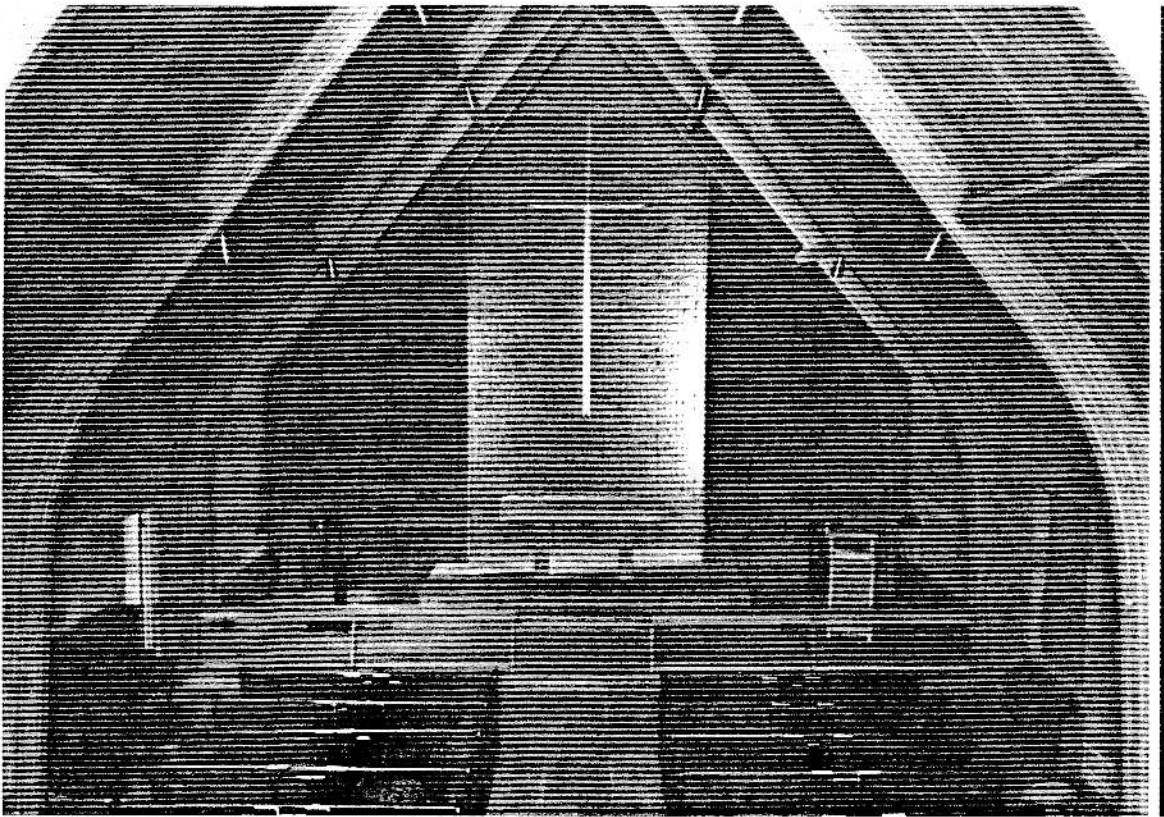
My father, Clyde Gruver, and I scrubbed the aisle on our hands and knees after the grout dried between the stones.

(Grant Zanker)

The original pews were donated, and everyone came in and worked sanding them and varnishing them. (These are not the current pews.) My dad, my wife Addie and I cleaned the church as volunteers for a couple of years.

In May 1954, Blinn Spohn, Les and Ruth Wilmarth were the first representatives to the Diocesan Convention.

1955 and 1956 Our New Church



Interior View of Newly Completed Church As It Looked in 1955

The cornerstone of the church was laid by Bishop Higley on January 29, 1955.

On March 4, 1955, the Church was Dedicated. Clyde Gruver Sr. had the honor of opening the door for Bishop Higley.

Father Detor held the first baptism in the newly completed church on April 9, 1955. Those baptized were Priscilla Ward, Jerrold Ward, Patience Ward, James Ward, Margaret Vilecco, Mary Vilecco, Terrie Chamberlain, Thomas Chamberlain and Darlene Thornton.

This was followed soon after on April 17, 1955 by a confirmation that was officiated by Bishop Malcolm Peabody and Father Detor. Those receiving confirmation were Judy Quinn, Janice Quinn, Cleo Smith, Robert Rose, Nancy Pascucci, Clyde Gruver Jr., Phillip Rocks, Priscilla Ward, James Ward, Jane Sweet, Helene Perry, Walter Perry, Viola Johnson, Donald Johnson, Stephen Jones, Clifford Gammons, Sally Grabow, Della Pepernik and John Pepernik.

1955 and 1956 Our New Church

On June 25, 1955, George Detor was ordained and became the first Priest in Charge of St. Mark's Mission.

Ruth Pierce wrote and directed our first Christmas Pageant, which was presented in December of 1955.

1956

The first wedding at St. Mark's was that of James Lawton, age 17 and Sandra Richards, age 15. Father Detor married them on July 23, 1956.

In September, the Rev. George Detor accepted a call to New Paltz, New York, and resigned as Priest in Charge. Blinn Spohn, the Lay Reader from All Saints Church, who had given so much of his time and energy, continued to serve St. Mark's until another priest could be found.

1957 The Rev. Charles R. Speer becomes our Priest



Father Speer, his wife, Jean and their children, John, Elizabeth and Robert are greeted by Dot Johnson and Peg Steele.

On April 27, 1957 The Reverend Charles R. Speer was appointed as missionary at St. Mark's. Father Speer stayed with us as our priest until his retirement in 1983.

(Letter from Bishop Peabody to the Rev. Speer.)

The members of the mission committee are intelligent, devoted people and the congregation is eager to find a creative, imaginative pastor.

Early Memories of Father Speer, who was often called Pete (a childhood nickname):

(Orrin Ingraham)

I was on the Executive Committee that interviewed and hired the Rev. Charles R. Speer.

1957 The Rev. Charles R. Speer becomes our Priest.

(Dave Rosenthal)

I was helping my friend Jack Collins clean the church and met Pete Speer. Soon after, we started going to church here. Pete asked me to be the first head usher. Women didn't usher at that time and it was very hard to get the men to volunteer, like pulling teeth. Petie Radicchi has a great ushering system now.

(Jane Sweet)

Note: This was the 1950s and women and girls all wore hats and gloves to church.

The Altar Guild wore hats and gloves to do all the work on the altar, even when this work was dusting or running the vacuum cleaner. One day a guild member who had been assigned some of this cleaning, came without her hat on. Another member went to Father Speer to complain. He called the ladies of the Altar Guild together and said, "At one time Canon Law stated that only virgins could serve on the altar. Now, ladies, what should we do about that?"

(Esther Finn)

Arnold and I joined the church at this time. All our children, Mary, Nancy and Arnold Jr. were baptized by Father Speer and all but Arnold were confirmed here too.

Early Memories of keeping up the church:

(Orrin Ingraham)

Our parking lot was just tall grass and when you shut the car door, the grass got stuck in the door. So, I 'volunteered' my son Brenton to mow the parking lot every Saturday.

(Brenton Ingraham)

I got to mow the grass and clean the church.

Father Speer was appointed as Priest in Charge by August.

Initially there was no rectory; the Speer family lived temporarily in an apartment that had been converted from a chicken house on Patch Road.

Olive Weatherby was the first Church Secretary.

The Women's Auxiliary held their first church bazaar. From the proceeds of \$325.76, they purchased kitchen utensils, trays, stands, card tables, a phone for the kitchen, brass collection plates and drapes for the office. After all this there was enough left over to give the Rev. Speer \$100.00 for his discretionary fund!

1958 A Rectory is leased and we rebuild an organ



Our rectory

(Loren Guy)

To provide housing for the Speers, in August 1958, the Diocese arranged for Patrick J. McTigue, to purchase the property at 5 Lolita Street for \$24,000. The Diocese then leased the property from Mr. McTigue for the monthly rental of \$124.00 plus taxes and insurance. The Diocese was obligated to buy the property within the next five years. In 1963 the Diocesan Foundation, approved a loan of \$24,000 to St. Mark's, by that time an incorporated church, and St. Mark's purchased the residence.

John Greiger of Port Crane donated an unassembled electric pipe organ. Leiper Reed, Les Wilmarth and Don Johnson did the work of assembling the organ.

(Jean Speer)

Bishop Peabody didn't want us to buy an organ. So when the organ was assembled, we were afraid the Bishop might say something.

(Les Wilmarth)

The organ was completely torn down when it came. It had to be rebuilt from the bottom up with all new wiring. I worked for IBM, so soldering and wiring were natural jobs for me and I did most of the work at home. Each key had at least two wires. Will Rhode gave me the wire for free; I still have some of it.

1959 Population Explosion



The First Senior High School class for St. Mark's Sunday school
Standing: Jessie Walters, teacher Front row: Susan Weatherby, Edith Argumbau, Margaret Spak, Nancy Harrison, Patty Ward, Penny Ward. Back row: Rusty Stanton, ?, Clyde Gruver Jr., James Ward, ?

(Don Johnson)

When Mr. Speer came we put in the pipe organ. Leiper Reed handled much of the electronic work. We built boxes to house the solenoids that opened the air valves. Charlie Goss, the organist, and I kept the organ in tune. Charlie would play a note and then tell me which pipe and box to adjust.

Jessie Walters, pictured above, was a much beloved member of the congregation and the senior high school teacher for Sunday school. She was Jessie Gruver's mother and the grandmother of Libby and Clyde Gruver Jr.

1959 (continued)

Memories of Jessie Walters:

(Harry Shoop)

Jessie Walters was known as Grandma Walters to the whole congregation. At Christmas time it was a tradition for her to tell the Christmas story according to Luke, she was a good storyteller and the children loved it.

By January of 1959, there were 112 Families. Enrollment in the Sunday school for 1959 was 213 pupils who were taught by 20 teachers. The baby boom had hit Chenango Bridge, which was a growing suburban community.

Every free space in the church was used for Sunday School including the kitchen, the boiler room, the nursery and the bride's room (where the front stairs are now).

(Ruth Pierce)

We had a population explosion in the Sunday school with kids coming out of our ears. Sunday school was held in the undercroft, with curtains hung on overhead clotheslines, to separate the classrooms. The noise level was awful. Also it was very easy for one kid, as a prank, to stick out his foot under the curtain partition and to trip up another kid in the next class.

By February of 1959, St. Mark's had become a self-supporting church.

St. Mark's tradition has it that Esther and Milt Sabol were the first couple to be married at St. Mark's. Actually when Father Speer married them on August 29, 1959, they were the fourth couple to be married. Their daughter Laura continued the family tradition and asked Father Speer, who had since retired, to come back to St. Mark's to perform her marriage to Scott Spanfelner on September 22, 1990.