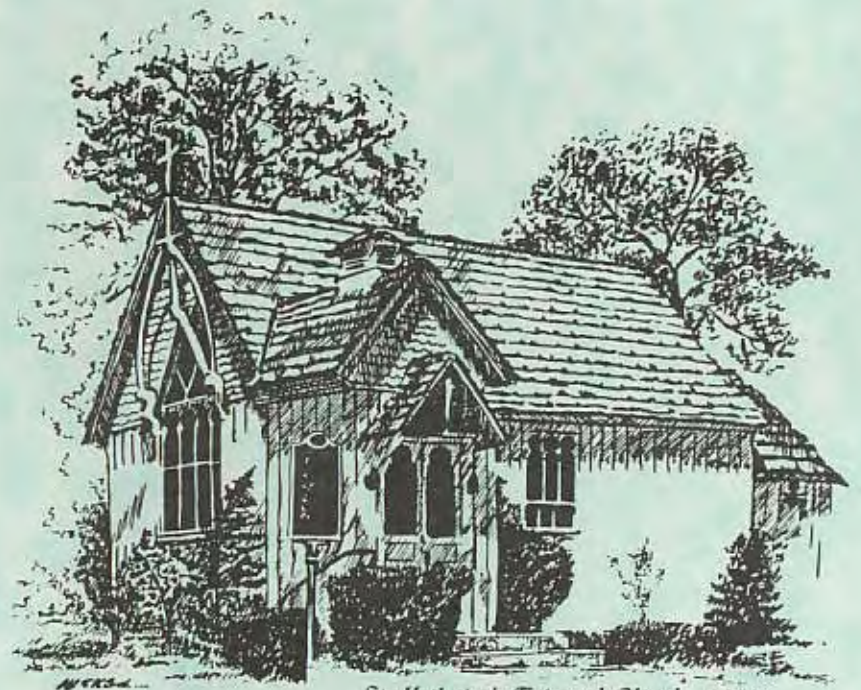


*The Centennial Year of St. Katherine's Chapel*

*The History of St. Katherine's  
1887 — 1987*



*St. Katherine's Episcopal Chapel - 1887  
Williamston, Michigan*

## *ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS*

This book traces the history of St. Katherine's first one hundred years. The information regarding the earliest years and the first Sunday School was obtained from a history written by Wenonah McGhee in the 1960's, when she was able to consult some who had been active in those years. Some information about the Forster and Mullett families, and Harris Forster's letters and surveying observations, was taken from archives in the Bentley Library, Ann Arbor. Most of the rest of the information was obtained from Frances Coryell, St. Katherine's historian, and the collection of photos and documents she has preserved in a series of albums.

Patricia L. Hogg

April, 1987

# THE HISTORY OF ST. KATHERINE'S CHURCH

## PREFACE

The story of St. Katherine's is really two stories.

The first story is that of John Harris Forster, the adventurous surveyor/miner/farmer who figured in much of Michigan's early history, and his no less adventurous wife, Martha Mullett Forster. Their devotion to the Episcopal faith and to the memory of the little girl they lost was expressed in building a beautiful little chapel on their "Spring Brook Farm" near Williamston.

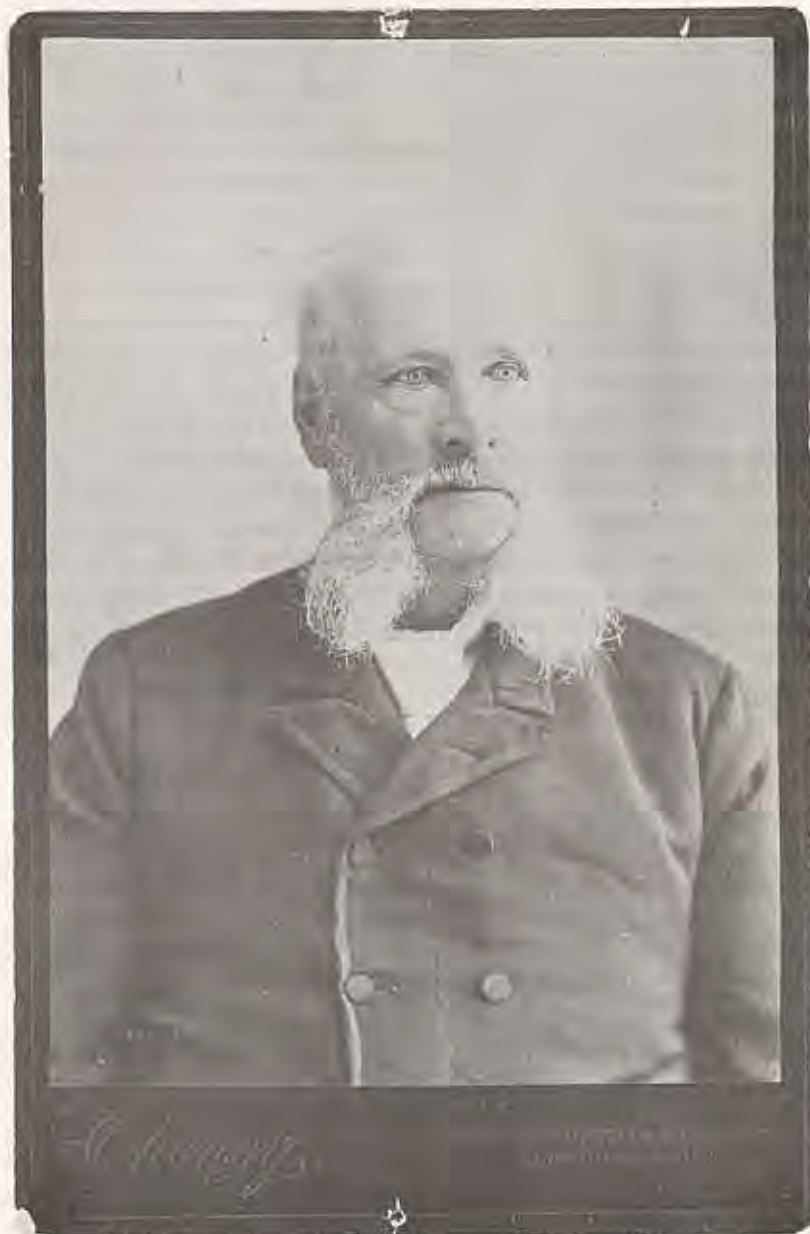
The second story is that of St. Katherine's Church — the small chapel served by lay readers and attended by neighboring farm families; the mission of St. Paul's Church that grew, under it's first full-time priest, to be a parish; the congregation that, having outgrown the chapel, built a large new church and parish hall.

The chapel was built on a show-case farm. One hundred years later, the fine farm, the great house and barns, are gone. But Harris and Martha Forster's greatest legacy, the vision and devotion that led them to build St. Katherine's Chapel, lives on in the spirit of the people who call St. Katherine's their church family and their church home.

## THE FORSTERS AND THE MULLETT

The decade in which John Harris Forster and Martha Mullett were born began with the death of King George III. James Monroe was the President of the United States, followed by John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson. Keats, Shelley, and Sir Walter Scott were literary lights from England. In America, James Fenimore Cooper romanticized frontiersmen and Indians in his novels. Beethoven and Mendelssohn were composing great music in Europe.

Forster, called "Harris" by friends and family, was born May 27, 1822, in Erie, Pennsylvania. He was named after an uncle, Robert Harris, who was also his godfather. His grandfather, Thomas Forster, who had been personally commissioned a



John Forster

Colonel by General George Washington, founded the city of Erie after the Revolutionary War.

Young Harris Forster attended Fredonia Academy, Chataqua, County, New York State, and continued his studies at Temple Hill Academy, Livingston County, New York State. His education was paid for by his uncle, whom he repaid by lifelong gratitude. The long descriptive letters Harris wrote to him from the age of 15, and through much of his years of experiences on the frontier, still survive in the collection of Forster papers in the Bentley Library in Ann Arbor. He graduated from formal studies in 1840, when he was 18 years old. Foreshadowing his life's main occupation, he began working at once as a "rod man" on a team surveying for the New York and Erie Railroad in New York State. The company failed in a few months, and Harris began teaching school and "reading Blackstone" (Law books) with an idea of becoming a lawyer. Two years of this life was enough. In 1843, he went west, sailing from Dunkirk, New York State, on Lake Erie, to Chicago, on a small schooner. The next year he tried farming on the Fox River, near Green Bay, Wisconsin, but the "chills and ague," or malaria, overcame him, and to some extent affected him the rest of his life. Perhaps his farming venture was not a total failure. The forward-looking labor-saving ideas he later brought about on his "Spring Brook Farm" may have occurred to him that year.

He returned to Dunkirk, and in 1844, he joined the Lake Survey under Captain Williams, the Superintendent of topographical engineers. His first survey was of the upper part of the lower peninsula of Michigan, from Rogers City around to Traverse City. In 1844, he also ran a base line on the south shore of the Straits of Mackinac. While doing this, and sounding the depths of the Straits, he located old cannon balls on the sandy bottom which had been used against Fort Mackinac, in the war of 1812.

In 1845, he did the topographical survey of the Green Bay area (Wisconsin), but the survey was not completed due to a lack of funds. Harris Forster returned to Dunkirk, and resumed his law studies and school teaching. However, by 1846, copper had been discovered in Michigan's upper Peninsula, and he succumbed to "copper fever" along with other adventurers. He

spent two years there as surveyor, geologist, explorer, and mine superintendent. When he left the Lake Superior area, he was only 26 years old.

In 1848, he rejoined the Lake survey under Lt. Gunison, and surveyed the west end of Lake Erie. In January, 1849, he accepted an appointment as Second Engineer on the Mexican boundary line survey. It took him six months to get to San Diego, California, the starting point of the survey, and he had many adventures along the way. He was one of the first white men to cross the Mojave Desert and live to tell about it. In July, 1849, the Mexican Commission joined with the United States Commission and work began. Forster surveyed the marine league south of the Bay of San Diego, and set the first stake as the starting point of the survey. He surveyed as far as the juncture of the Gila and Colorado Rivers. After many severe hardships he returned to San Diego. In the next year, 1850, the Commission collapsed because of a lack of funds.

Forster stayed in California for five years, working as a gold miner, farmer, and cattle raiser. He also dabbled in politics, was a postmaster, and Justice of the Peace, Judge of Courts of Sessions, and later, Probate Judge. Presumably, his sporadic reading of Blackstone was of some value in his judicial occupations.

The Forster collection in the Bentley Library contains all his surveying notes and journals of this time. A cursory inspection reveals that he was a talented and witty writer, as well as a gifted observer, of the people and surroundings of any place where he happened to be. A small sketchbook which he sent to his uncle, is as interesting as his letters. The untutored style of his small drawings, the meticulous details and careful observation of old Spanish missions, Digger Indians, Spanish maidens, settlements in the far West, and gold prospectors, are charming. One sketch shows the camp on the Mexican border, and a surveyor, perhaps himself.

As a young surveyor in Michigan, Forster's partner and friend had been an older man, John Mullett. John Mullett had, in his brood of eleven children, two daughters, named Katherine and Martha, and a son named John. Martha was five years younger than Harris Forster. Probably they wrote to each other, those

years young Forster had hunted his fortune and adventures in the far West. At any rate, Forster later admitted that his interest in Martha brought him back to Michigan in 1855. That same year, they were married. He was thirty-three years old and she was twenty-eight.

Before they were married, the elder Mullett had retired with his family, to a large farm on the Meridian Road and Grand River Road, four miles west of Williamston. Martha obtained a large tract of land on the northeast across the road. This land later became Spring Brook Farm. There was a toll booth at this point, and a Post Office named Red Bridge, at the bridge over the Red Cedar River. Mr. Mullett was the postmaster. A large and stately home was built on the Mullett property, and many farm buildings. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the homestead was the elaborate formal garden south of the house, traces of which are still visible in the woods. Later the house was taken down, and the wood used to build the Visger house, which stands on the site, and a large house west of it.

When Harris Forster came back to Michigan, he rejoined the Lake Survey, which was under the command of Captain Meade. Captain Meade would one day be a General in the Civil War, the man whose armies would turn back the high tide of the Confederacy at Gettysburg. Forster spent three months on Beaver Island doing special surveys. After his marriage to Martha in October, she went with him on his next assignment, leading the surveys of the Saginaw River Valley and Lake Huron. There, he again was laid low by "ague." "Our impressions of the Saginaw region were, it must be confessed, not favorable. We would form a different estimate now," he wrote 40 years later.

In the spring of 1857, Forster left the Lake Survey — "the spirit of change still possessing me" — and reported for duty with River and Harbor Improvements. He had charge of improvements in the St. Mary's River, Lake George, and Neebish Rapids, near the Sault. In 1859, he resigned, to return to the copper mines where he had pioneered 13 years before. He served as engineer for several mining firms in opening the mouth of the Portage River for navigation, in building a breakwater, and improving the river. While there, Harris and Martha's only child was born. They named her Katherine Bell Forster, and called her "Kittie."

In 1860, Forster was appointed Superintendent of the Pewabic and Franklin Mines in Houghton County. He managed the mines for five years, making them a profitable operation, an accomplishment of which he was modestly proud. Devout Episcopalians, the Forsters were instrumental in establishing Trinity Church there, in the only place they had lived long enough to "settle down." Forster was elected State Senator for the entire Upper Peninsula for the term 1864-1865. He found he did not enjoy politics enough to try for a second term. He also resigned from his duties as Superintendent of the Pewabic and Franklin Mines in 1865. He and Martha were brokenhearted at the loss of their little Kittie, who died of the measles February 29, 1864. "Aged Six Years, Three Months, Ten Days" they had carved on one side of the obelisk-shaped monument in St. Katherine's churchyard many years later, as if each day of her short life must be counted.

A little later, he returned to the Upper Peninsula and the mines, as agent for the Sheldon and Columbian Copper Company and for the Douglas Mine.

In 1868, the Forsters went to Nevada, where he surveyed and explored silver mines for New York State interests. They spent the winter in the mountains in Nevada, and returned home by way of San Francisco — and Panama.

Michigan called him home, to undertake one last major project. Governor Baldwin commissioned him chief engineer of the Portage Lake and Lake Superior Canal, then under construction in the Upper Peninsula he knew so well. Later, Governor Bagley appointed him to complete the canal. He stayed with the project for the six years required for its completion.

In 1874, when John Harris Forster retired from public service, he was only 52 years old, but his health was broken from the privations and hard work of his career. He had found the ideal spot to enjoy the remainder of his life and try out his new-fangled farming notions — Martha's farm. It was a large and beautiful tract, and they named it "Spring Brook Farm" from the pretty spring-fed brook that crossed it and entered the Red Cedar River. Their wandering days were over. And, he said, he had

"accumulated a sufficiency of the 'dust' to make myself and family comfortable for life."

The Forsters, with plenty of "dust" to finance improvements, soon developed a model farm. A newspaper article of the time describes the large, elegant, "Italianate" house "on the summit of a hill crowned with trees," surrounded by well-kept grounds. It "conveys the impression that it is the abode of wealth, culture, and refinement." The farm itself was about 300 acres, a very large farm to work in that day. The reporter was in raptures describing "the largest herd of thoroughbred Jersey cattle to be found in Michigan," and the labor-saving and hygienic arrangements in the feed and milking barns, and in the dairy itself where windmill-pumped water flowed over the milk cans to cool the milk. All these arrangements had been designed, and most of them built, by Forster. He also raised "exceedingly fine Poland-China Swine" and pure Shropshire sheep. He was the first farmer in the area to enclose chickens in chicken houses, locally thought a ridiculous idea. Chickens were supposed to run loose and forage for themselves!

Spring Brook Farm did well, and Harris apparently enjoyed farming as much as he had prospecting and surveying. He wrote many articles about his farming methods, which were printed in



The Forster Home

Grange magazines. He also had time to work with his journals and wrote many articles about his travels, and surveying and mining adventures for "The Mining Gazette" in Houghton, and for other publications. On their beautiful homestead, with Martha's family near, the Forsters had everything they needed to be happy. Still they remembered the little girl they had lost' so long ago.

At that time, the nearest Episcopal Church was St. Paul's, in Lansing. Harris, who had been a Lay Reader at Trinity Church in Houghton, often read the services with Episcopalian neighbors who met in each other's homes. In 1887, he designed and erected a small chapel on Meridian Road, for his own family and neighbors to worship in. It was named St. Katherine's in memory of Kittie, who had died twenty-three years before. A small family graveyard was established next to the Chapel. The Chapel was dedicated to Almighty God by Bishop Harris in the spring of 1888, and Forster served as Lay Reader as long as he was able.

The last public office Mr. Forster filled was as President of the Michigan State Historical Society, a fitting post for a man who had been involved in so much of Michigan's history.

He died June 15, 1894, "beloved of all who knew him." He was buried in the family plot by the Chapel. He was seventy-two years old. In the fall of the same year, on October 11, Martha Mullett Forster died also, and was buried beside him. She was sixty-seven years old.

## THE EARLIEST YEARS AT ST. KATHERINE'S CHAPEL

When J. Harris Forster and Martha Mullett Forster established Spring Brook Farm at Meridian and Grand River Roads, they found it difficult, as did their neighbors of the Episcopal faith to attend services in the nearest Episcopal church, — St. Paul's in Lansing. Neighbors often held Sunday services in each others' homes, and as a Lay Reader, Mr. Forster was probably often called upon to lead the services. In 1887, Forster and his brother-in-law and near neighbor, John Mullett, erected a simple but beautiful small wooden chapel at Spring Brook Farm, on



St. Katherine's Chapel



Interior - St. Katherine's Chapel

Meridian Road. In memory of the Forster's only child, Kittie, who had died at the age of six years, they named it St. Katherine's. On April 3, 1888, Bishop Samuel Harris consecrated the chapel, and it was taken under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Michigan. Even before the chapel was consecrated, several baptisms were held there.

Early records are sketchy, but apparently services were held each Sunday from Easter to Christmas, and occasional services in the winter months. Mr. Forster served as Lay Reader; once a month the Rector of St. Paul's would come to officiate at Holy Communion. A Sunday School was begun — classes seem to have been held in the morning, and Church services in the afternoon. For this reason, the Service was usually Evening Prayer. Besides building the Chapel, and its furnishings, and serving as Lay Reader, Mr. Forster donated the Prayer Books, the reed organ, the heating stove, and the wood for the stove. The Rector from St. Paul's was given the offering for the Sunday he officiated each month, and if it was not "enough" (the amount of the expected stipend is not recorded), Mr. Forster made up the difference from his own pocket. As 20¢ - 30¢ per week was the average collection for several years, he must have been called upon quite often. He also paid for Sunday School materials, and collected a library of suitable books for young people. Although it is not often noted, probably visiting clergy and the Bishop stayed in his fine home if circumstances prevented a return to Lansing. Although a Sunday School was probably organized soon after services were begun in the Chapel, the first surviving Sunday School Record Book begins January 8, 1893. Classes were held all year that year, ending with special Christmas Exercises on the afternoon of December 24. It records that Mr. Forster conducted services on April 2, which was Easter. Perhaps he was not conducting the services every Sunday that year. It was not many months before his death, and he may have been too frail.

Martha Forster's family, the Mulletts, were very active in the small congregation. Her brother, John Mullett, had three children, Katherine, Martha, and John Harris Forster Mullett. JHF Mullett became a doctor in Williamston. Mullett Street is named after him. Katherine married Clay Call in the Chapel. Miss Martha Mullett never married and she was the last owner of Spring Brook Farm. The Katherine Hall who is buried in the family cemetery was Martha Mullet Forster's sister.

The younger Mulletts were always on the roster of Sunday School teachers, or serving in other offices of the Sunday School. In 1893, the average Sunday School attendance was 21, and the average collection, 30¢. The Social Committee organized a Sunday School picnic at Pine Lake (Lake Lansing) and a Hard Times Social, (which netted \$1.60 in proceeds).

In 1894, the year Harris and Martha Forster died (he in June and she in October), Sunday School began regular sessions on April 1, with an enrollment of 31. Average attendance was 18, and average collection of 21¢. A special Missionary Offering netted \$6.46. Activities that year included another picnic at Pine Lake, a Social, and three delegates, including Miss Martha Mullett, attended a Sunday School Convention at Okemos.

After the death of the Forsters, attendance and weekly offering appear to decline over the next several years, and the period when Sunday School was in session, each year, to shorten. In 1899, classes were held from April through September, and many Sundays there was the note, "no school." The average attendance was 15, and the average collection 14¢. Perhaps the Sunday School disbanded for awhile from lack of support and interest, as there are no further written records until April 13, 1913, fourteen years later. The average attendance was 17, and the average collection was 21¢ during the 1913 session. The last surviving records of the early Sunday School were dated October 1916.

Other records from St. Paul's confirm the active interest and assistance to St. Katherine's that St. Paul's has manifested since the earliest days. Baptisms, confirmations and marriages in the Chapel are recorded in St. Paul's Parish Record books. Purportedly, there was also an early Parish Record Book at St. Katherine's, but it has been lost. Besides bringing Holy Communion to St. Katherine's people once a month, occasionally St. Paul's provided Lay Readers. Around 1900, the Rev. J.A. Schaad was Rector of St. Paul's, and he and his wife spent one summer living in the Forster house. Mrs. Schaad had been ill the winter before, and it was thought a summer in the country would be good for her health. Mr. James Crosbie from St. Paul's was a frequent Lay Reader from 1905 to 1915. He worked at the State Journal at the time. Later he attended seminary and was ordained to the priesthood.

A member of St. Paul's, Mr. George Harcourt, served St. Katherine's as Lay Reader, faithfully, summer and winter, for 11 years. His first Sunday was April 30, 1911. He noted that the Bible class was unusual, in that there were more boys than girls — a condition which persisted at St. Katherine's for many decades! Mr. Harcourt came out, when he could by horse and buggy, but usually he traveled from Lansing to Haslett on the Grand Trunk train, and someone from St. Katherine's would meet him there and take him to the Chapel. On his return, he would have to wait until 10 p.m. for the train back to Lansing. Sometimes he would get someone to drive him to East Lansing and he would walk out to the Chapel! Apparently he did not have a horse and buggy of his own. Services were at 3 p.m., and twelve was considered a "good crowd." The Rector of St. Paul's, Henry Jerome Simpson, came out every third Sunday for Holy Communion.

Perhaps because of the great difficulties in serving St. Katherine's from Lansing, and considering the meager attendance at services, Mr. Virgil Boyer, the Rector of St. Paul's from 1918-1926, was not in sympathy with the Mission, feeling that people should come in to St. Paul's for services, although he apparently continued to celebrate Holy Communion at St. Katherine's on occasion.

In 1926, the Rev. Mr. Idle, who had formerly been Rector of Grace Church in Holland, Michigan, and was a Communicant at St. Paul's, met Miss Martha Mullett, and she persuaded him to conduct services at St. Katherine's. Fifteen or twenty people was considered a good congregation, and the collection, which usually amounted to \$3.00 or \$3.50, was his only remuneration. He drove out in his automobile from Lansing, every Sunday, with his son and granddaughter. While this arrangement was better than trains to Haslett and horse and buggy travel, it was not without adventure, and he carried cans of gas and water in the car, and patched many a tire by the roadside. He had to arrive early enough to build a fire and heat the chapel before services in the winter. He continued to serve until 1929.

After 1929, the Chapel was closed for several years. The big house was also closed and gained the reputation of being haunted among the young people of the area. It appears that nobody worked the farm, and that, at one point, a mortgage was





St. Katherine's Guild

foreclosed on the property. Details of ownership transactions and how Martha Mullett came to own the property later, are difficult to understand. At any rate, the Forsters' fine house and splendid barns, and lovely little chapel deteriorated badly. An interesting point to make here, is that a Women's Guild had been organized very early, and that even in the years when the Chapel was closed, the Guild remained an active neighborhood women's organization.

Around 1937, a young minister of another denomination, looking for a building in which to organize his own congregation, saw the Chapel, and asked Mr. C.W. Brickman, the Rector of St. Paul's, for permission to use it. This revived interest at St. Paul's in their former mission, and Mr. Hilton, Curate at St. Paul's, and two acolytes, came out and cleaned and repaired the Chapel, replacing broken window panes. Mr. Hilton began conducting services. He was paying a Roman Catholic woman in the neighborhood to clean the Chapel and take care of the altar in 1941. At that time, a family named McCormick began living at the Forster House, and Mrs. McCormick and her mother Mrs. Webster, became the nucleus for the first St. Katherine's Altar Guild. Mrs. Webster made a supply of altar linens. Mr. McCormick

used to ring the dinner bell at the back porch of the house to signal time for Chapel services.

The fifteen years from 1940 to 1955 was a time of renewed interest at St. Paul's in the St. Katherine's mission. Besides Mr. Hilton, the Rev. Mr. Brickman conducted services occasionally, and after him, the Rev. George Selway and then Dr. Norman Kinzie. Frazer MacDougall was a faithful Lay Reader from Christmas 1943, to his sudden death exactly 5 years later, on Christmas Eve, 1948. If he had not taken on the responsibility, services at the Chapel would have been discontinued. His wife, Lillian, son of Frank ("Chats") and Frank's wife Nathalie, were always among the few faithful who attended the Sunday afternoon services. They included the McCormicks, living in the Forster House, Percy Ellis and Mr. and Mrs. Harry Wilson, and Mr. Beaumont, a retired Episcopal priest living at the Ingham County Home (now the Ingham County Medical Care Facility). Mr. Beaumont used to walk out to the Chapel, and the MacDougalls would drive him back after the services, taking the Altar flowers to the residents of the Home. This began St. Katherine's ministry to the Home, which has continued.

In the Fall of 1945, the tradition of Harvest Sunday was begun at St. Katherine's. Percy Ellis decorated the Chapel with grain ears, colored leaves, and bunches of ripe grapes. He continued to decorate the Chapel in the following years, until he went back to live in England.



Chapel decorated by Percy Ellis - 1957

## A GROWING MISSION BECOMES A CHURCH

In 1943, the Diocese deeded the Chapel, the land it was on, and the family cemetery, to St. Paul's. A few years later, discussions began as to the advisability of building a parish hall as a focus for the small congregation at St. Katherine's. Notes from a meeting with Reverend Selway, at Sally Neumann's home, in April 1949, sound discouraged. Very few people attended. The lowest bid to erect the building was \$11,000, and total building fund pledges from St. Katherine's people were disappointingly small. However, Mr. Selway and St. Paul's Vestry felt it was a move of such importance that St. Paul's deferred its own building program to help St. Katherine's build the hall.

Miss Martha Mullett deeded additional land for the parish hall and "a park," and the new hall was finished and dedicated May 21, 1950. With its large windows, warm walls of knotty pine, kitchen, and fireplace (dedicated to the memory of Frazer MacDougall), the small but growing congregation had an inviting place for social gatherings, and for religious education classes.

About the time the Parish hall was built, Dr. Norman Kinzie, an ordained priest who was also a Professor of Humanities at Michigan State University, served as Vicar of St. Katherine's from 1950-1955. He was very well liked, and many still remember his pronounced English accent, his wit, and the dispatch with which he read the Services.

Two memorials during that period were the East Rose Window, given in memory of one of St. Katherine's most dedicated churchmen, Arthur Hopkins, and the fine Hammond organ, given by Percy Ellis in memory of his mother, Frances.

In June 1955, St. Katherine's was ready for a big step. Derwent Albert Suthers became St. Katherine's first full-time Vicar. He and his young wife Hannah and baby settled into a tiny house on Newman Road, the "Vicarage." The library in the Forster House was set up as his study. On Christmas Eve, 1955, he was ordained in the Chapel, the first ordination in St. Katherine's history.

St. Katherine's immediately began a period of tremendous growth. In the year 1955, 30 new families were added to the rolls. A bi-weekly paper, "Tidings of St. Katherine's," was sent to over 100 families. Forty children were enrolled in the Church school. A second service, at 9:15, was added to the 11:00 service, to accommodate the growing attendance. Church School classes were conducted during the 9:15 service, and after church, the congregation rushed to Miss Mullett's parlor in the Forster House, for coffee and a rousing discussion of the Vicar's always interesting and often provocative sermons. Two weeks after Derwent Suthers arrived, Janice Pfeifer was asked to "fill in" as temporary organist. Her "temporary" job lasted for seventeen years.

Committees were formed to assist the Vicar, in areas of Christian Education, social groups, outreach, and stewardship. "New old traditions" were begun, one of them the observance of Rogation Day in the spring. The congregation and Vicar processed around the boundaries of the church property, and parishioners brought garden seeds to be blessed. The bounty which resulted was recognized in the Fall on Harvest Sunday, when the Chapel was again decorated by master gardener and



Rogation Sunday - May, 1957



Harvest Sunday - 1945 - Decorated by Percy Ellis

artist, Percy Ellis. Parishioners also brought symbols of their work which were presented with the offering on Harvest Sunday.

In the summer, the first Bible School was held, with 48 neighboring children. Several families became interested and joined St. Katherine's through their children's contact with the summer Bible Schools.

St. Katherine's Guild changed its name to the Women's Auxilliary of St. Katherine's. (In 1959, the name was changed again to Episcopal Church Women, familiarly known as ECW.) The Harvest Bridge Party and Country Kitchen in the fall were the forerunners of ECW luncheons and bazaars of later years. In 1955, nobody had ever heard of a garage sale, and the Auxilliary's spring Rummage Sale was the only one in the area. Long lines of women waited for the parish hall doors to open on Rummage Sale days, and competition was brisk for attractively-priced "slightly used" clothing and household articles. With the proceeds, needed furnishings were bought for the Parish Hall. Some of the older women, who preferred to meet in the afternoon, formed the Martha Mullett Guild.

By the end of 1956, there were 70 families on The Church rolls and average Sunday attendance was 80. A "Young Marrieds" club and a men's club combined benefits with social occasions. On one such occasion the old Forster barns and chicken houses were torn down.

In November 1957, an era came to an end with the death of Miss Martha Mullett, at the age of 85. She was buried in the family plot by the Chapel. She willed the remaining Forster property and the house to St. Katherine's.

In 1959, the growing congregation began to plan for a new church building. Three Sunday services, at 8:00, 9:00, and 11:00, were necessary to accommodate the weekly attendance. Seven Church School classes and a nursery had overflowed the Parish Hall accommodations, and some classes were held in the Forster House. A small concrete block building was constructed for a temporary study for Mr. Suthers. On June 11, 1960, the furnishings of the old house were sold at auction, and later the fine great house that had been the pride of Harris and Martha Forster and a landmark in the area was razed. With the

heightened appreciation of historic buildings of the present era, it is probable the new church would have been situated in another spot, and the house preserved and used for parish purposes.

When Church School classes began in the fall, it was not possible to accommodate all of them in the Parish Hall. Bob and Rena Smythe, who lived within walking distance north on Meridian Road, opened their beautiful home for classes, and for the coffee hour and discussion following the church services and this situation continued until the new church was built and ready for occupancy.

In November 1961, St. Katherine's elected its first vestry in one of the final steps to becoming a self-governing parish, after 74 years as a mission of St. Paul's, Lansing. The first Parish meeting of the new St. Katherine's Episcopal Church was held Dec. 3, 1961. Derwent Suthers, the Vicar, was instituted as St. Katherine's first Rector.

### THE NEW CHURCH, AND DERWENT SUTHERS LEAVES

St. Katherine's began the year of 1962 by appointing a "Parish Council" which was to augment the work of the Rector and the Vestry. It was not only a stewardship committee but sought ways to coordinate and promote the aims of the Rector, to develop Christian Education and study groups, to provide assistance and encouragement to members or friends in adversity, to organize a youth group, and to promote family social gatherings. The Parish Council based their priorities on surveys of the congregation.

On February 14, 1962, St. Katherine's officially became a self-supporting parish.

On May 8, there was a ground breaking ceremony for the new church building. Ninety-year-old Charles Hart, who remembered the Chapel being built, turned the first shovelful of earth on the site. Soon after, the site was surveyed, stakes set, and the basement was excavated. Through the summer, the building



Ground Breaking - May 8, 1962



grew, from the office and Sunday School rooms in the basement, to the arches and brick work of the sanctuary. A month from the day of the groundbreaking, the cornerstone was laid with appropriate ceremony. Among other significant items, a poem was included, written in honor of the occasion by Percy Ellis.

Through the summer, work on the church continued, and a new well was drilled. The sanctuary interior began to take shape, and finally the pews were installed, and the free-standing altar. Built into the altar was a small slab of stone of Greek origin with the relic of a saint embedded in it, an ancient tradition. (The stone, a gift, bore no clues as to which saint.) Over the altar, a beautifully crafted cross of wood and bronze was suspended, and the artist who made it gave, as a gift, a matching processional cross.

September 23, St. Katherine's Church was finished, and dedicated by Bishop Emrich, in a ceremony.



Chapel and Forster House - 1949

Ye who come after  
What says our signature?  
Those marks men make  
unto the only way  
Of life which shall endure  
Beyond the break  
Of an immortal day.

Were our endeavors vain?  
Nay! thus ye build  
A better scene than yore —  
Not to our work disdain  
But being willed  
Thereby to grace the more.

We too reaped of the past,  
And substance sowed —  
Laboring here - as you  
And all, until the last  
Have then bestowed  
Their fruit - in season due.

Thus for whose works would praise  
Their Risen Lord,  
Shall such so-ever be  
Till He one day will raise,  
From ash restored,  
Templed Eternity.

J. Percy Ellis

(A copy of which is in the church cornerstone.) 1962

Even with seating for 240 in the new Church, the membership of 346 persons (1961 figure) strained its capacity, and two services were scheduled, Holy Communion at 8:00, and family service and Sunday School classes at 10:00. However, adjustments were made. Besides attendance in Sunday School, children preparing for confirmation were required to attend two years of classes, meeting on one weekday after school. Mothers took turns preparing and serving supper to the class, in the Parish Hall. Boys were expected to serve as acolytes. A roster of high school young people listed 32, most of them regular in attendance, and most of them boys.

With all attention and funds focused on the new big Church, the Chapel was closed and seldom used, especially after the organ was moved to the Church. There was some attention paid to the Chapel and its history in April, 1963, as that was its Diamond Jubilee.

July 2, 1963, St. Katherine's had another "first" as Wenonah McGhee was "set apart" as a Deaconess following intensive theological studies and work at Trinity Church, Detroit. Two other parishioners who dedicated their lives to full-time Christian service were William Hamm, and Tom Wilson (son of Harry and Win Wilson), who, with their families, left to attend seminary. They were later ordained as Episcopal priests.



Wenonah McGhee



Tea in the Dining Room of the Forster House  
Martha Mullett, Tom Wilson, Derwent Suthers

Through 1964, work continued on the Church, its furnishings, and the grounds. Large classes of children and adults were confirmed. New families seemed to show up every Sunday.

Early in 1965, Derwent Suthers announced his decision to go into the mission field in Brazil. In his ten years at St. Katherine's, he felt he had accomplished the work he had set out to do.

### JOHN ALBRECHT, A NEW PARISH HALL, CHARLES MOYA

September 12, 1965, was the first Sunday at St. Katherine's for the new Rector, John Albrecht. He had served several years as an assistant minister of Christ Church, Cranbrook. He and his wife "Mimi" and their five children made their home in East Lansing.

National recognition by the American Building Survey of the Chapel as a historic building came in the fall of 1965. Photographs, measurements, drawings and historical material relating to the Chapel were collected by Harley J. McKee, and

filed in the archives of the Library of Congress. The Chapel was one of three structures in the area so recognized. The other two were the Olds Mansion (which was razed soon thereafter) and the State Capitol building.



The Church before addition of Parish Hall

The Chapel had seldom been used after the new church was built. Mr. Albrecht (who had a degree in history) appreciated its historic significance, and began using it for the 8 A.M. service on the first Sunday of the month, and plans were made to restore it.

Deteriorated wood was replaced, and the exterior was painted. A new roof of shake shingles was put on. A small cupola was built to house the old Forster dinner bell. Six stained glass windows were replaced. New carpeting was laid. The old oil lamps from the Forster house were electrified and installed. As interest increased in using the Chapel, the Victor Hogg family donated a reed organ which had been in Mrs. Hogg's childhood church so services and weddings could have music.



St. Katherine's congregation continued to grow. Even with classrooms in the Church basement, and full use of the Parish Hall, the many children in Sunday School crowded the facilities.

In October of 1967, the Vestry voted to build a Parish Hall adjoining the new church. The groundbreaking ceremony was held in December, and the dedication ceremonies on May 5, 1968.

In the summer of 1969, John Albrecht accepted the position of Rector of St. John's, Royal Oak.

#### THE REVEREND CHARLES MOYA

The Reverend Charles Moya was called to succeed the Reverend John Albrecht. Charles Moya had been on the Bishop's Staff of South America. Prior to this he and his wife Arliss had served as missionaries in Brazil for nine years, where they had built a new school, church, and clinic.

The Moyas and their four children made their home in Okemos.

July 8, 1970 brought more historic recognition of the Chapel. A State Historic marker was erected by the Chapel, and dedicated by Bishop Crowley. The United State Department of the Interior, National Park Service, sent notification that the Chapel had been placed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Dedication of the Flag Pole

Charles Moya was instrumental in creating an annual Ecumenical Ash Wednesday Service at St. Katherine's, involving Okemos Community Church, Faith Lutheran Church, and Okemos United Presbyterian Church.

Charles Hart and his family gave a flagpole and flag which was installed in front of the Church. In March 1972, there was a Parish party honoring Mr. Hart on his 100th birthday.

The 1950 Parish Hall was converted into a comfortable cottage in 1970, and was used as a Sexton's residence for several years. Faithful parishioners Bob and Rena Smythe lived there and served as our Sextons for some time.

St. Katherine's women contributed greatly to the welfare of the Church. Included in their activities were a thrift shop,



Holy Eucharist on the Lawn - Rev. Charles Moya

luncheons, wedding receptions, and the annual bazaars, summer Bar-B-Que, and Heritage Days.

Girls were first allowed to serve as acolytes in 1969. In 1976, St. Katherine's first women lay readers were licensed.

The John and Elizabeth Whiteley Foundation provided St. Katherine's, over the years, with many grants for capital improvements. Possibly the most appreciated gift was the fine state-of-the-art Allen Computer Organ.

During the Reverend Charles Moya's residency, many changes took place in the Episcopal Church.

STEPHEN PRESSEY; IAN SCHLOTTERBECK

In 1977, the Reverend Stephen Pressey was called to succeed Charles Moya. The Sexton's quarters became the Sunflower Cottage, and the home of Stephen and Connie Pressey.

Connie Pressey became the church secretary, and also the choir director/organist.



Under the Reverend Pressey's direction, a St. Katherine's Liturgy was written and used for a time, while the congregation was becoming accustomed to the new 1979 Book of Common Prayer.

Heritage Day, October 19, 1980, was a long planned-for special event. Derwent Suthers came back, as guest speaker. An effort was made to invite all former parishioners. Many responded, for a day of special programs and a dinner. Important memorials were dedicated. St. Katherine's most talented needlewomen, under the direction of Betty Lundy, had spent months creating beautiful needlepoint altar rail kneelers covered with Christian symbols. The Columbarium was dedicated. It fulfilled the desire of many who loved St. Katherine's and had wished that they and their loved ones could rest some day in the peaceful little churchyard by the Chapel.

To better utilize St. Katherine's physical plant, an agreement was made with the Red Cedar Bible Church to share the use of our facilities. To this date, our working arrangement continues to be very cooperative.

In November, 1981, St. Katherine's hosted another ordination, that of the Reverend Anne Garrison. She continued at St. Katherine's as Father Pressey's assistant for many months.

In 1984, the Broad Shoulders for a Day program was initiated by Elma Lundahl, to enable the Parish to pay off the remaining mortgage by the Centennial Year, 1987. The payments amounted to a figure of \$35 per day. Many parishioners took the opportunity to express gratitude or to memorialize events and loved ones by carrying St. Katherine's mortgage for a day. This program worked well, as the final mortgage payment was made April 1, 1987.

The historic Chapel's popularity for weddings increased among non-church couples. There have been as many of three weddings a day in the Chapel.

In 1985, Stephen Pressey resigned to pursue other interests. As interim priest, Father William MacDonald served ably, assisted by Charles ("Chick") Chandler, and the Lay Readers. During this period, Betty Francis reorganized the

Sunday School. A loyal choir continued under the direction of organist Thom Tenny, who moved into the Sexton's house. Chick Chandler, after many years of study, was ordained a Deacon June 26, 1986, and continues to serve St. Katherine's in his new capacity.

In 1985, the St. Katherine's Endowment Fund was established, primarily to handle two large bequests. Some of the smaller memorial funds were incorporated in the Fund, with permission of the givers. Those wishing to make gifts to St. Katherine's are encouraged to contribute to the Endowment Fund. Assets are invested by a Board of Trustees, and the income earned from the Fund is reported periodically to the Vestry, who may requisition it for specific projects, or for outreach and promoting the work of the Church.

In 1986, Father Ian Schlotterbeck was called to be the Rector of St. Katherine's. He and his wife Pat and son Ray came in May, and established the Rectory in Williamston. Father Ian's personality, deep spiritual convictions, energy and efficiency, generated spontaneous enthusiasm in parishioners. St. Katherine's looked forward to a triumphal year of Centennial celebrations, and an exciting future, but this was not to be.

On the very eve of St. Katherine's most joyous Centennial observances, Fr. Ian was stricken, and died suddenly, March 31, 1987 — a very sad day in St. Katherine's history.

We can only hope and believe that his spirit and his ministry which were with us for such a short time, are with us still, as we begin our second hundred years.

### ST KATHERINE'S ORGANISTS

- 1893-1898 Alta Foote (Martha Mullett substitute)  
1899 Martha Mullett  
1911-1912 Mrs. Kane (Mrs. Watson substitute)  
1913 Alta Lamphear  
1914-1916 Marguerite Foote  
1917 Mrs. Charlotte Pfeifler  
1918 Marguerite Foote  
1941-1945 Mrs. Nell McCormick (Andy DeVries substitute)  
Mr. Slagg conducted services at Saint Katherine's  
and also played the organ.  
1948 Mrs. Geneva Belknap  
Julia Harvey  
1950 Mrs. Harry Buston  
Miss Betty Bovee  
4 or 5 years Mrs. Lillian Howes  
1953 Mary Kirkpatrick  
1955 Janice Pfeifer (Janice came to St. Katherine's two  
weeks after Derwent Suther's became Rector and  
was the organist for 17 years.) (Andy DeVries  
substitute) Andy also played for Wed. night prayer  
services.  
1972 Mrs. Carolyn Karn  
1975 Pete Porciello  
1977 Janice Mescho  
1978 Christopher Schroeder  
Eileen Hopper  
1981 Connie Pressey  
1985 Thomas Tenny