

1885 Time Capsule

On Tuesday, July 10th this year, a stone mason tediously removed the 1885 cornerstone at the church building's base on the 31st and O Street corner to excavate the original time capsule hidden behind it. Taking care to not further erode the face of the stone and its engraving, he found and extracted the small, heavy metal box then immediately reset the cornerstone, improving the brick and mortar border. The decision not to replace the box in that space had been made in advance in order to provide time to share the contents with the parish in the fall and to prevent further disturbing the delicate stone. The Bicentennial Education Committee has been focused on not only sharing the old time capsule, but also preparing new items to add to represent the year of the Bicentennial so that all can be blessed and buried together in January 2019.

In September, a small group including staff and clergy opened the box to preview and discovered its contents were far more numerous and interesting than had been anticipated as there was no written record of what had been stored inside. Very quickly it became obvious these treasures deserved their own exhibit for the parish. On top were photographs from 1985 when it had been opened to celebrate the Centennial of this current building. Those photos of a celebratory reception were water damaged, but a note from Glenn Metzdorf was also enclosed recording that event along with programs from a choral evensong, morning prayer and Eucharist and Confirmation marking the celebration that year. Fortunately, the oldest items below were tightly packed and in remarkably good condition. Another couple of meetings soon followed with Glenn guiding gloved Bicentennial committee members, lead by Anne Gambal, as each item was unfolded, examined and recorded.

On Sunday, October 14, the same Sunday the adult forum was treated to a history of the American Episcopal church by Virginia Seminary professor Robert Prichard, the chapel converted to a gallery as it had been a year earlier at the opening Bicentennial Founders Festival when the history of Christ Church was told through items from the vault alongside current research. This time, to the amazement of the many, three full tables of documents, photographs, newspapers and currency were revealed alongside their original container which measured only 11.5 x 7 x 6 inches.

Most of the oldest items date to 1867 including an elegantly scripted list of the choir members from the date they vacated the old church, Sunday, May 26, 1867. Also from that year a report stating the number of communicants: 209; baptisms: 18; marriages: 9; funerals: 8, and contributions to charities: \$2,228.00. One Indian Head penny dates to 1860; postage and Confederate money include an 1864 \$2 bill, and an 1864 \$100 bill. A few coins from the church's founding date of 1817 were also wrapped carefully in paper, inside an envelope. Of value are two small original M.B. Brady and Company photographs of the building in 1867, one exterior and one interior. Enlarged prints of these were exhibited last year. Newspapers from 1867 and 1885 garnered a lot of attention with politics of the day on the front page, and notable among them were editions of *The Churchman* and *The Southern Churchman*.

When the Sunday School children visited the exhibit they were drawn to two fragments of the Washington Monument, one from the cornerstone dated 1848 and one from the capstone dated 1884 which reminds us that the third building, our current church building was erected right after the Washington Monument was complet-



ed. One curious very large document that was not on display that day appears to be a commission by US President Andrew Johnson and Secretary of the Navy Gideon Wells appointing David Farragut to Navy Admiral on July 25, 1866. Perhaps one of our esteemed Navy parishioners will shed some light on this and why it belongs at Christ Church. A complete list of the 34 items along with photographs of each has been recorded and will be on the website for detailed review very soon.

On November 4th, All Saints Sunday, the Sunday School and youth gathered in the auditorium for a group photograph to accompany their contributions to the new time capsule. They shared their answers to questions like what are your favorite hymns, foods, outside of church activities, and “I wonder if you will still...” when it’s likely opened again in 50 years, e.g. “drive gas cars, watch NetFlix or dress up for Halloween.” The new time capsule contents will also include significant items from our Bicentennial celebration and it will be secured in a specially-redesigned cabinet in Keith Hall in January after the final celebration on Epiphany.

