

Memorial Chapel of St. Mary the Virgin

1891



Date of Construction: April 11, 1891 - August 16, 1892

The Memorial Chapel of St. Mary the Virgin stands between Third Street and Fourth Street just south of the main business district of Charlotte, North Carolina. The small brick church is surrounded by large water oaks planted by Rowlandson Myers ¹ and is the oldest remaining building of Thompson Orphanage and Training Institution. The orphanage was founded in 1887 and is the third oldest orphanage in North Carolina.

In his annual report to the Diocesan Convention of 1889, the superintendent of Thompson Orphanage and Training Institution, the Rev. Edwin A. Osborne, stated:

"A chapel is also very much needed. At present we hold services in the school room, but it is difficult to impress children with proper ideas of reverence and devotion under such circumstances.

If we had a chapel that would cost about one thousand dollars we could build up a small congregation around the orphanage, and the benefit to the children would be incalculable." ²

In his autobiography, Osborne states that William Preston Bynum gave the \$2500.00 that it cost to build the chapel, Osborne said,

"I procured the plan and selected the location, choosing the site on account of its accessibility to the public and remoteness from the other buildings." ³

The Memorial Chapel of St. Mary of the Virgin Was built between April 11, 1891 and August 16, 1892. The minutes of the Board of Managers of the Thompson Orphanage and Training Institution for August 16, 1892 state that in this, their first meeting after the erection of the chapel, the managers passed a resolution thanking William P. Bynum for donating the money with which to build it. The meeting before that was on April 11, 1891. ⁴

At the convention of 1892 Osborne states in his report to the Diocesan Convention:

"Our chapel has been completed. It is a substantial brick structure and was Given by the Hon. William P. Bynum, as a memorial to his wife and daughter, The late Mrs. Eliza Bynum and Miss Mary Shipp Bynum." ⁵

On May 1, 1895 at a morning meeting of the Board of Managers, the name of the chapel was officially selected and a formal request of consecration given to Bishop J. B. Cheshire. ⁶

The following report of the consecration was made to the diocese:

"On the feast of St. Philip and St. James, May 1st, the Memorial Chapel of St. Mary the Virgin was consecrated by the Rt. Rev. Joseph Blount Cheshire, Jr., D. D. The request for consecration was read by the Rev Wm. R. Biltmore, D. D. The sentence of consecration by the Rev. C. L. Hoffmann, and the consecration sermon was preached by the Rev. R. S. Barrett, D. D., of Washington, DC. A large congregation witnessed the impressive ceremonies of consecration and the confirmation of six girls and five boys, inmates of the Institution." ⁷

The brick structure is in excellent condition both internally and externally. The interior walls have recently been rubbed down and painted. The chapel was opened for service in 1968, but has since been boarded up.

There is evidence that the bricks for the chapel were made from clay at the site and fired there. Paul Haigler of Hendrick Brick Company said that the black marks on the bricks used in the chapel were due to the drying process used at that time. He also pointed out that there were an inordinate number of bricks in the building, since the foundations were very thick and that the bricks were oversized.

Notes

¹ Mrs. Harold Dwelle, sister of Rowlandson Myers.

² *Journal of Proceedings*, Diocese of North Carolina, 1889.

³ E.A Osborne's autobiography. Xeroxed copy in files of Thompson Children's Home - no page numbers.

⁴ Minutes of Board of Managers - August 16, 1892. To be found in an unmarked ledger book in files at Thompson Home - no page number.

⁵ *Seventy-sixth Annual Convention*, Diocese of North Carolina, 1892. p. 34.

⁶ Minutes of Board of Managers - May 1, 1895.

⁷ *Journal of Proceedings*, Diocese of North Carolina, 1895. p. 33-4.