

Holding On to a Historic Landmark

Prince George's Chapel, Dagsboro

This October, the Friends of Prince George's Chapel commemorate their 25th year of dedicated service to the operation and maintenance of Dagsboro's historic treasure. A Harvest Celebration, featuring Joy Slavin's Harp Ensemble, will be held at the chapel on Sunday, October 15, 2017 at 3:00 p.m. The program is free and open to the public

Prince George's Chapel, on Vines' Creek Road, has survived over 260 years despite ravages of time, weather, and neglect. It has likely undergone more restorations than any other small, 18th century church in Delaware. The chapel began in 1755 as an Anglican (Church of England) chapel-of-ease, serving the outlying areas of Worcester Parish, Maryland. The mother church of Worcester Parish was St. Martin's Church, located on Rte. 113, near Showell, Maryland.

As much of Sussex County territory was once claimed and administered by the Colony of Maryland, Maryland residents were taxed to support the Church of England. In 1755, the vestry of Worcester Parish petitioned the legislature for funds to build a small chapel in Blackfoot Town (Dagsboro's original name) near Pepper's Creek. The assembly appropriated 45,000 pounds of tobacco for the parish to purchase 2 acres of land and build the chapel. The land was purchased from Walter Evans in July 1755. The vestry commissioned James Johnson to oversee the construction of the chapel. In April of 1757, the vestry met at the new chapel and laid out the pews. Families drew lots and were obliged to build their own pews. On June 20, 1757, the completed chapel was received by the vestry, dedicated, and named "Prince George's Chappell" for England's prince, who later became King George III.

In 1763, the vestry acquired additional land and an addition, consisting of transepts and small chancel, was built of the east end. It is believed that General John Dagworthy, for whom the town was later named, financed the addition. Local legend claims that Dagworthy was buried under the cancel upon his death in 1784.

Once the boundary dispute between the Penn (Delaware) and Calvert (Maryland) proprietaries was settled, lines were redrawn and Prince George's Chapel became a part of the Delaware scene and lost its tax support from Maryland. After the Revolution, all Anglican churches became part of the Episcopal Church, established in 1785 in America.