



ST. MICHAEL'S, DETAIL OF WROUGHT IRON SUPPORT FOR CHANDELIER
Courtesy of Samuel Chamberlain.

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St. Michael's Church, Marblehead, Massachusetts, 1714

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PART II

IN the initial article on St. Michael's, Marblehead, which appeared in the Spring issue of OLD-TIME NEW ENGLAND, the general character of the original building was suggested and some attempt made to relate it to the broader traditions of western ecclesiastical architecture. It is the province of this second and final article to record more specifically, on the basis of early documentary and internal evidence, the individual features of the original building, as well as the multiplicity of changes and additions which have marked its history through nearly two and one half centuries. It is only in this way that historical fact can be separated from oftentimes erroneous tradition.

Although the important letter from the parish to Colonel Francis Nicholson of November 1714, quoted earlier, very clearly specifies, for example, that a spire was projected "53. foot *Above ye*

Tower" (italics added), suggesting that the present western tower was only a part of the projected scheme, a lack of any further documentary evidence of its existence has prompted most writers to conclude that "the tower was never built."¹ Recent investigation has, however, brought to light a most interesting sequence of documents. While visiting Marblehead during his journey through New England in 1744, Dr. Alexander Hamilton, a resident of Annapolis, Maryland, attended a service at St. Michael's, noting in his diary that "upon this Church stands a steeple in which there is a public clock,"² which corroborates the evidence of the 1714 document. But it was the discovery of an unpublished water-color drawing dated 1763, showing St. Michael's with a tall spire, which is the clinching proof that the original intentions of the building committee were actually carried out. The only other surviv-

ing visual record of the building prior to the extensive alterations of 1833 is a drawing traditionally dated 1818, which shows the building without a steeple, indicating that this landmark had disappeared at some time between 1763 and 1818.³ Although the church records reveal that a number of repairs were made to the building within these years, however—particularly in the post-Revolutionary period—in no case is there any specific reference to work on the steeple, which seems especially strange in light of the minute records which were kept concerning less significant alterations to the building. Again, however, it is one of the Bowen family daybooks which provides the missing link, for on July 1, 1793, Nathan Bowen casually recorded that the “Church Steple [was] taken Down being Rotten.”⁴ Thus, with both verbal and visual documentation of the existence of a steeple at St. Michael’s throughout nearly the entire eighteenth century, the view which became current in the later nineteenth century that the steeple was never completed need no longer be perpetuated.

The Bowen drawing indicates only the general outlines of the design, which consisted of a simple tapering spire, probably four or six sided, surrounded by a balustrade and set upon the existing tower.⁵ Moreover, this sketch confirms the author’s opinion that the present Palladian openings in the tower—which first appear in the 1818 drawing—are not a part of the original design, but rather represent a later embellishment of the single round-headed windows which are shown in the Bowen drawing and which represent the standard of early eighteenth-century practice. An investigation of the interior construction of the tower reinforces this theory, for the supporting braces have

very obviously been cut at some time since the initial construction of the building, in order to enlarge the original round-headed windows in both the horizontal and vertical dimensions and to allow for the addition of the small side openings to create the Palladian motifs which presently ornament the tower.⁶

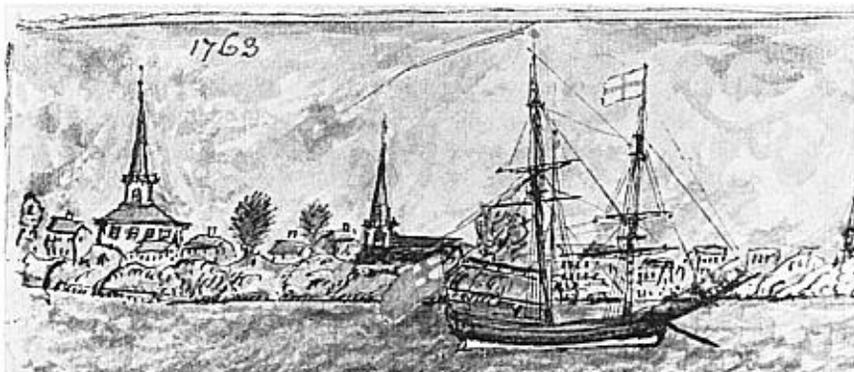
Although the removal of the steeple in 1793 and the enlargement and elaboration of the windows in the tower sometime prior to 1818 significantly altered the original appearance of St. Michael’s, earlier changes had already radically modified the 1714 design. Following a pattern which had by then become traditional in New England, the growth of the congregation had necessitated the addition of a second gallery as early as 1718. And in the same year a Mr. Goodwin was paid two pounds for “making . . . 2 windows to y^e Pulpit,” suggesting an arrangement similar to that which one still finds at St. Paul’s, Wickford (formerly Narragansett).⁸

Apparently by 1728, however, the congregation had increased to the extent that a major addition to the building became necessary, for on February fifth of that year it was voted at a general meeting of the vestry that “Capt. James Calley, John Oulton Esq & Capt. Nich Andrews, with the Church-Wardens, be a Committee to agree with Mrs. Elizabeth Brown & Mrs. Hannah LeGallais, for 15 Feet Northward of the Church, in Order to enlarge it.” This was accomplished without any significant delay, for the recent discovery of the original contract for the acquisition of this additional parcel of land indicates that the deal was consummated the next day.⁹

The land thus acquired, the proprietors next sought to collect funds necessary for the addition, and according to a vote

taken at a subsequent meeting, on April 22, 1728, it was decided that "the New addition be proceeded with forthwith [and] that Capt. Nich. Andrews, Capt. Abraham Howard, & Mr. Latimer

another elongated hipped roof built parallel to the others. By thus simply adding another "bay," the church was enlarged by one third. Meanwhile, however, the experience of time had made it obvious



WATER-COLOR VIEW OF MARBLEHEAD, 1763, SHOWING ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH AND SPIRE AT LEFT

From Ashley Bowen's *The Whole Art of Navigation*, Ms. daybook.

Courtesy of the Marblehead Historical Society.

Waters be impowered to solicit the Captains of the Ships for Contributions towards enlarging the church."¹⁰

Although when the original building of King's Chapel had been extended in two directions in 1711, major destruction of parts of the 1689 fabric had to be carried out before the projected additions could be commenced, seemingly the original plan of St. Michael's had taken into consideration the possibility—we should say probability—of future expansion; for although the building in its original state formed a complete unit in itself, with a recognizable prototype, it might also have been regarded as an incomplete system of bays which could be augmented in time of future need. In 1728, when the anticipated expansion became a reality, the north wall simply had to be moved back fifteen feet, the side walls extended, and

that the original multigabled roofing scheme of St. Michael's was most unsuitable to the New England climate: on March 30, 1719, for example, the church wardens and vestry had been "impowered . . . to look after the gutters & repair them at the charge of the Proprietors,"¹¹ indicating that the old gabled roof had already proved to be a most unsatisfactory arrangement. Consequently, although the church was extended in the most obvious direction, the entire old roof was covered over at this very early date with a massive hipped roof, preserving beneath it what seems to have been an architectural novelty in the British colonies in America.

The alterations carried out in 1728 changed quite considerably the original design of St. Michael's. Although, to be sure, the ponderous new roof concealed

one of the principal distinguishing characteristics of the early Anglican building, the installation of additional windows and the introduction of a new directional axis were also accomplished at this time. Of the placement of the windows, both in the building as it was initially conceived in 1714 and as it was subsequently altered in 1728, our knowledge is unfortunately very limited. The presence of at least one gallery at an early date suggests that the church had a double row of windows, and indeed, the 1818 drawing, already referred to, shows a double tier of windows in what was probably the scheme of fenestration as it existed following the alterations of 1728. Although the drawing quite clearly indicates that a row of round-headed windows was superimposed upon a row of rectangular windows, their original placement is somewhat more difficult to establish. The rather primitive manner in which the drawing was executed resulted in a number of ambiguities which makes it impossible to determine the precise size and location of some of the windows. Of the two sides of the building shown in the drawing, the south elevation presents the fewer difficulties, for the three windows of the upper level reflect, as one would expect, the three bays of the ground plan. The covered porch in the center of the wall below indicates the location of the main entrance, and a window at the left of it follows the symmetry of the window above, but an apparent overlapping of the porch and what appears to be another window may simply have resulted from the untrained artist's inadequate knowledge of perspective.

On the basis of the south elevation, one would suspect that the original three bays of the western side were similarly treated, and that when another bay was added to-

ward the north in 1728 a fourth window was introduced to complete the four-part elevation. Turning to the visual evidence, however, we find a series of four round-headed windows and an additional smaller window in the upper row, while below a central doorway is flanked by irregularly sized and shaped windows, which, contrary to what one would expect, do not line up with the windows above, and suggest, at best, a rather haphazard arrangement.

With regard to the fenestration of the north and east sides of St. Michael's, the problem is even more difficult. On the north elevation, one would conjecture that the original 1714 design included a double tier of windows in the end bays, which were augmented in 1718 with the introduction of "2 Windows to y^e Pulpit,"¹² probably at a height between that of the adjacent windows; there is no reason to believe that this solution was not retained when the building was lengthened in 1728. On the eastern side, the original three bays also probably each contained a double row of windows, although the placement of the altarpiece in the center of the wall may have been reason to eliminate the lower window of the central compartment. Again, in the 1728 alterations, the addition of another double tier of windows in the fourth bay would have given the desired uniformity to the elevation.

Thus, although our present limited visual knowledge of the original fenestration of St. Michael's makes it difficult to establish with any firm conviction the precise arrangement of the windows prior to the installation of the Gothic lancets in 1833, some recently recognized internal evidence happily suggests that our suppositions are well founded. Examination of the original cornice reveals a series of

Westy	Mr Harris	Capl/band	Mr Coley	Dulpit	Capt Wilson	Capt Quinn	Mr's Dowlin	Capl Duckin
	3	2	1		28	26	35	25
addition in 1724								
Parish	Mr 25	Capl French	Mr Keele		Mr Gillson	Capl Hinckley	Major Teagler	Whelges
4		27	30		31	32	33	21
Capl H. Blackler	Capl Prince	Mr's Keeper	Church as built in 1714	Mr Abraham	Mr Pelps	Major Teagler	Capl Frator	
5	34	36		37	38	39	23	
Door Knoy	Parish	Mr R Keeper		Mr French			Judge Sewall	
6	40	41		42			22	
Sevitors	Parish	Mr H. Adams		Mr L. G. Williams	Mr L. Williams		Mr S Coyne	
7	44	45		46	47		21	
Parish	Parish	Parish		Mr Blanchard	Parish			
8	48	49		50	51			
Door AND Bill Bope	Parish	Parish		Mr Dods	Mr Rees			
9	52	53		54	55			
Parish	Parish	Parish		Capl Blackler	1 Bible		Parish	
10	56	57		58	59		20	
Parish	Parish	Parish		Judge Sewall	Parish		Parish	
11	60	61		62	63		19	
Parish	64	Wardens	65	66	Wardens, Rev 67			
Parish	Judge Sewall	Mr Whitcomb	Entrance	Parish	Parish	Parish	Parish	
12	13	111		15	16	17	15	

Copy of a Plan of St. Michaels Church previous to the alteration in 1732.

PLAN OF ST. MICHAEL'S, BEFORE 1832-1833 (AFTER A PLAN DATED 1813)
 Courtesy of the Diocesan Library, Boston.

keystone-shaped cuts in positions which correspond exactly to those suggested on the basis of the general requirements of the plan and the limited visual evidence which is available.¹³ Beyond this, additional evidence for the position, size, and shape of the original windows certainly must exist beneath the present clapboards, and at some future date when these are renewed, one hopes that the pertinent data will be recorded. In addition to this, the precise size of the original window panes presents something of a problem, although a group of bills submitted by one Robert Harris including charges for "105 Sqars glass set 7 by 9 [at] St. Michael's Church" and "36 Sqars glass 7 by 9 & sett'g" may be employed as evidence in this direction.¹⁴

In the interior, two rough beams which had originally formed a part of the internal construction of the north wall became free-standing supports as a result of the alterations of 1728 and were sheathed in order to simulate the appearance of the original four columns. Concomitantly, the vaguely centralized plan of the original building, which had been achieved as a result of the four central piers and the intersecting vaults above, gave way to a new north-south directional axis.

Although the church records contain scattered bits of evidence which contribute to a more precise understanding of the original interior of St. Michael's, it is, however, the description which the itinerant diarist Dr. Alexander Hamilton recorded following his visit in July 1744 which most clearly indicates the general arrangement of the building as it existed during the first half of the eighteenth century:

This church is a building of wood, about eighty feet square, supported in the inside with

eight large octagonal wooden pillars of the Doric order. . . . The floor of the church is raised six or seven feet above the ground, and under it is a burying place. The pulpit and altar are neat enough the first being set out with a cushion of red velvet, and the other painted and adorned with the King's arms at top. There is one large gallery facing the pulpit, opposite to which at the south entry of the church hangs a pretty large gilt candlebranch.¹⁵

The plan of St. Michael's had, of course, been extended before Dr. Hamilton's visit, but nevertheless the arrangement which he describes probably very closely resembled the layout of the original plan. A careful reading of the document reveals that there was "one large gallery facing the pulpit," and, although this does not explicitly specify the exact location, the fact that the pulpit was also "opposite . . . the south entry" indicates that it was located on the north wall and that the single gallery was along the south wall. Indeed, a "Plan of St M[ichael's] Church By SWP 1813" has recently come to light,¹⁶ and although executed nearly a century after the building was completed, it corroborates not only the evidence of the Hamilton document for the location of the pulpit following the alterations of 1728, but also clearly suggests the site of the pulpit in a similar position on the north wall prior to the extension of the building.¹⁷ In addition, it indicates that the "south entry of the church" referred to by Dr. Hamilton was indeed the main entrance, which opened onto a broad aisle leading directly to the pulpit, although another door is shown on the west side, opposite the altar.¹⁸ The box pews were arranged in typical fashion around the walls and in blocks at the center, although the 1728 addition created an unusual arrangement near the pulpit, since the side aisles of the original plan were not extended at that time.¹⁹

Following a practice which was typical in both Anglican churches and nonconformist meetinghouses in New England, the orientation of the pews was directed toward the pulpit, and although the seats

floor plan of 1813 is important in being the principal evidence for establishing the original position of the altar, enclosed within a serpentine communion rail, on the center of the eastern wall, a location



INTERIOR OF ST. MICHAEL'S (LOOKING NORTH), LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Courtesy of Harold Hodgkinson.

were arranged in order to enable the maximum number to face the preacher, others were forced to sit with their backs to the pulpit; the high sides of the pews, together with the curtains which were often introduced for the sake of privacy and added warmth, certainly prevented an unobstructed view of the altar on the east wall. The plan indicates, furthermore, that access to the gallery pews was gained by means of a stairway in the southwest corner.²⁰ Beyond this, the

which apparently remained unchanged when the building was subsequently extended.²¹

Although the Hamilton document is important in establishing the basic layout of the building during the first half of the eighteenth century, it does, however, present certain inconsistencies when studied in connection with the other contemporary documents. Hamilton's obviously incorrect estimate that the building was "eighty feet square" may be re-

garded as sheer miscalculation, but his statement that there was "one large gallery" (which was clearly along the south wall) is less easily explainable. As we review the church records, we find that there is mention of a "New Gallery" in 1718, which almost presupposes the existence of an older gallery; in 1722 the sale of "Two Front pews in the West Gallery" is recorded. Interestingly, on February 17, 1724, reference was made to "1 Corner Pew between the Galleries," which supports the theory that there were already two galleries at St. Michael's within its first decade and that the parish had already exhausted the possibilities of further expansion by the construction of additional galleries. In 1729, following the extension of the building to the north in the preceding year, a vote was passed by the vestry "that a Rate be laid upon the Pews to support the minister and Clerk," and in this connection we learn that a tax of twenty-six shillings was placed upon three pews "in the Gallery Addition," referring to an extension of the western gallery, which existed well into the nineteenth century, for not until 1833 do the records state that "the Western Gallery was taken down." The south gallery still exists, and physical evidence suggests that it dates from the original construction of the building in 1714.²² Thus, even though Dr. Hamilton specifically noted in 1744 that "there is one large gallery facing the pulpit," this is at variance with other contemporary evidence which indicates quite clearly that there were two galleries in the church—on the south and west sides—from 1718 until 1833.

Although the 1813 plan and the Hamilton account, taken in conjunction with surviving evidence in the building itself, thus convey a fairly accurate conception

of the internal arrangement of the building, our knowledge is very much more limited concerning the precise character of the original interior finish. The four central piers and the vaults above date from the initial construction of the building, and the remaining paneled gallery front presents some idea of the bold, yet restrained richness of the original detailing.²³ Beyond this, however, we are left in a world of conjecture, for the extent to which the basic structural forms of the frame were exposed, for example, remains a secret hidden to modern eyes when the walls were "newly firred, lathed, and plastered" in a nineteenth-century restoration.²⁴ Whereas in this connection the evidence is internal, however, and exists within the building itself, in the case of the wall pulpit we can only try to envision its appearance on the basis of contemporary examples in surviving New England meetinghouses.²⁵ With regard to the element of color, our information is again nearly nonexistent, although, in a negative way, the fact that the four central columns and the paneled gallery front have never been painted suggests that the basic color scheme derived from the familiar juxtaposition of wood and white plaster.

As one reviews the detailed records of the church throughout the eighteenth century, it becomes evident that St. Michael's was almost always in need of repair; alterations to the original plan and finish were also frequent. A random sampling of entries of this kind shows, for example, that the proprietors voted at a meeting on April 11, 1757, that "the Church be repaired as the Committee chosen for that purpose shall think necessary." Two years later, on May 28, 1759, the proprietors voted that "Captⁿ Alex Watts Messrs John Webber, Henry

Saunders & Joshua Coomb be a Comt^{ee} to sell the unappropriated pews in the Gallery . . . and to Appropriate the Money in Repairing the Eastward end of the Church." And again in March 1761 it was voted that "the Church be Repaired as the Committe Chosen for that Purpose shall think proper."²⁶ Just exactly what was involved in these frequent repairs is impossible to determine, but that they were of a minor nature seems probable, since more ambitious projects resulting in major changes to the building were generally recorded in greater detail: for instance, at a meeting of the proprietors of St. Michael's on April 23, 1764, "upon reeding the petition of Peter Jayne & others for Liberty of building a Gallery at the front of the organ (at their own expense) for a *Singing Gallery*—It was considered and voted that leave be given for building said gallery at the expense of said petitioners under the inspection of the wardens and vestry."²⁷ Despite an apparent lack of approval on the part of the congregation as a whole—music had, after all, not yet become a widely accepted part of the Anglican service in New England—the singing gallery was to occupy an important position within the church. Constructed as a bay projecting from the center of the south gallery and supported in part by two of the four original central columns, the addition, which still exists today, carried out the basic design of the earlier paneled gallery front, although the awkward manner in which it was joined to the older fabric is, apart from the documentation, evidence enough to attest of its being a later edition.

Two years later, on March 31, 1766, there is another seemingly routine vote, directing a committee "to see to the Repairs of the Church," but the interesting

addition of the phrase "& lowering the Pullpitt" stands as our only evidence that the pulpit was altered at this time. In the following year, the acquisition of a new organ prompted the vestry to select a "Committe of three men . . . to Purchase Two Pews in the Gallery . . . in order to enlarge the Organ Loft . . . for the Receiving of the New Organ at the Expense of the proprietors of the . . . Church."²⁸

The following years apparently witnessed a significant expansion of the St. Michael's congregation, which is not surprising, considering that this was the very moment when Marblehead experienced its greatest mercantile prosperity. According to Isaac Mansfield, a justice of the peace in Marblehead, "the town before the American revolution . . . swarmed with inhabitants, was a pattern of industry, flourished in trade, and abounded with wealth; from hence, as from a fountain, streams of wealth flowed out, which greatly enriched the vicinity, and penetrated far into the country.

"About the year 1770, this town was supposed to contain a greater number of inhabitants than any other town of the province, Boston excepted; its proportion in the province tax was next to Boston, and was supposed at that time to have imported more hard money than any other town in the province."²⁹ This new prosperity could not, of course, fail to affect St. Michael's: several proposals were forwarded during the years 1771-1773 for expanding the church, always, to be sure, with the objective of an increased seating capacity. A "Notification" posted at the church on April 6, 1771, for example, informed the "Proprietors of the house Call'd St. Michael['s]'" of a meeting "to Consider whether they will build a porch at the South door of s^d house, & to take away the stairs in the W corner of

the house & to stop up the door of the W side of the s^d house, and build pews in the place of s^d stairs & door." Apparently the projected alterations met with the general approval of the parish, for at the next meeting of the proprietors, on April 22, 1771, it was voted "that Thomas Lewis, John Weber, & Samuel White be a Committee to build a porch over the south door of s^d church of a proper width and highth & build a pair of stairs therein for the Accomodating the people going into the Gallery. Also to remove the stairs that now lead onto the s^t Gallery & also to Close the doors on the West side of s^d house & to build as many pews as they can with convenience." Further consideration of the projected changes, however, apparently resulted in the conclusion that the relatively small number of new pews would not justify the contemplated alterations, for on the following August 19 it was voted that "a Note pass'd 22^d April last Respecting the building a Porch at the South door of the Church &c. be . . . hereby revok'd and made Void," although the idea of a smaller covered porch at the south door was not totally abandoned, the record of a further vote stating that "the Proprietors Committee . . . [be] Impower'd to build a Stand at the South door of the Church, & shut up the door leading under s^d Church, as soon as may be." The move to increase the number of pews was dropped for the moment, for it was also voted that "at present we think it convenient to keep Open [the] door leading into the Garden belonging to the Estate of the late W^m Bowen Esq Deceased."³⁰

But the pressure of an expanding congregation apparently again brought new demands for additional pews, and at a meeting of the vestry on July 20, 1773, it was voted that "the house call'd St.

Michaels Church shall be enlarged as the Proprietors shall think most convenient . . . that the Enlargement will be Carr'd up as high as the Eves of the Church . . . [in order] to make as many Pews as the Enlargement will admit of . . . [and finally] that the Committee have full power to treat with & purchase of the heirs and executors of the Estate of the late W^m Bowen Esq Deceased a piece of land adjoining to the sd. Church to further the Enlargement."³¹ Although the exact nature of the projected additions were not specified beyond the fact that they were to reach "as high as the eves," the move to purchase land belonging to the estate of the late William Bowen suggests that an extension to the western side of the church was contemplated at this time. The church records contain no further reference of these projected additions, however, and since the church fabric as it exists today shows no evidence of any such changes at this time, the obvious conclusion must be that once again the proprietors rescinded their former approval and resolved to leave the building untouched.

The years of the American Revolution proved to be especially difficult at St. Michael's, although a lack of any official church records for the period from 1776 through 1780 makes it almost impossible to sort out local and patriotic tradition from historical fact.³² Traditionally, "the wildest enthusiasm, and the most extravagant manifestations of joy" which accompanied the news of the Declaration of Independence resulted in the removal and destruction of the royal coat of arms from above the altar as well as a continuous ringing of the bell until it had finally cracked.³³ Although the rector, the Reverend Mr. Joshua W. Weeks "generally attended divine Serv-



INTERIOR OF ST. MICHAEL'S (LOOKING SOUTH), *ca.* 1888
Courtesy of the Essex Institute.

ices in the Church, where he used the liturgy complete . . . for nearly a 12 month after the declaration of independency," his loyalist sympathies and his consequent refusal to eliminate prayers for the royal family from his services eventually forced him to abstain from preaching and finally to return to England.⁸⁴

The church records for the years following the Revolution reveal no major changes to the building, although a committee of proprietors was selected in 1780 to "make an Estimate of the Expence that shall arise in making Fences, Gates, [and] Clockwight Case Windows," replacements which may have been necessitated by the destruction of the past war.⁸⁵ Routine repairs were recorded throughout the 1780's, but in 1793 not only was an advance collection of taxes on the pews made "to defray the expenses of building a Standard and other repairs last made at Said Church,"⁸⁶ but, as has been noted, the appearance of the church was significantly altered when the steeple was removed in that year.

Unspecified, but seemingly minor repairs to the building were recorded in the following years, but in March 1805 a record concerning "Proposals for Repairing the Church" suggests that a good deal was done at this time, although the nature of the work does not indicate that any major structural changes were contemplated: "Clapbarding The Whole, Repairing Window Fraims and new one's Where wanted, Water Tables and Corner boards. Repairing The Coving. A New doorhead and Standred, New Doors on the West side, New planks Where wanted, Shingling all Except The North Side new boards in The Roof where wanted, which putt the outside In Complete Repair. . . ."⁸⁷

Apparently as early as August 1791

a significant decrease in the size of the St. Michael's congregation had necessitated "a Meeting of the . . . Proprietors, and also of the Occupants of Pews . . . to consider of the State of the said Church, and whether the Public Worship under a Settled, ordained Minister may be longer continued there—and of the measures to be taken for that purpose if it should be agreed to continue. . . ."⁸⁸ It seems that enough enthusiasm was indeed fostered at this time, for in that same year the Reverend Mr. William Harris was ordained as minister, and served until 1802. He was followed by several other ministers, but finally in 1818, when the Reverend Mr. Benjamin Bosworth assumed the rectorship, the parish had become so reduced in size that he was forced to resign in the succeeding year. For several years services were suspended and the church remained closed, and as a result of the influential Channing movement in the Congregational churches in New England at the time, a move from within the parish of the neighboring Second Congregational Church attempted to re-charter the St. Michael's parish as a Congregational meeting. But another faction within the old St. Michael's congregation was determined to maintain its traditional religious affiliations, and it was instrumental in fostering enough strength to resume Anglican services with the assistance of a rector from nearby Salem.

During the 1820's a succession of ministers kept St. Michael's open, but again in the years 1827-1831 the church was forced to close. Opening once more in 1831, the church was found to be in a deplorable state of neglect as a result of the difficulties and lack of interest in the preceding years, and under the direction of the Reverend George V. C. Eastman extensive repairs and alterations were car-

ried out. The church records inform us that at a meeting of the wardens and vestry on December 31, 1832, it was voted "to choose a committee of two persons to inquire of a carpenter what the expenses would be to lay a new Floor & Step [Slip?] Pews in the Church and Galleries and also to procure a plan in which they are to be executed & to report it at the adjournment." The proprietors at the meeting were requested "agree to relinquish their rights in said Church . . . and agree to such alterations as . . . may be agreed on." And it was further voted that "the Committee be requested to obtain a relinquishment in writing for [*sic*] the present proprietors of pews and to open a Subscription for the new slips as contemplated and to contract for putting in said Slips, the floor first being put in order to receive them."³⁹

Although these entries in the 1832 records would suggest that a replacement of the old-fashioned pews was the most significant change introduced at this time, a subsequent document, dated October 2, 1833, indicates that the new seating arrangement was actually a very small part of extensive alterations which transformed St. Michael's at this time into a building of essentially Gothic Revival appearance; despite the vicissitudes of nearly one and a quarter centuries, it was not until this time that the eighteenth-century character of St. Michael's was irrevocably altered:

St. Michael's Church being in a State of Decay it was thought necessary by the unanimous vote of the Parish to have it repaired as it was no longer tenantable, accordingly in March 1833, the Carpenters proceeded to the repairs. All the boards on the flat of the roof which were not perfectly sound were replaced by new ones and the flat new shingled. Blinds were put up in the tower the old windows taken away and new Gothic Windows substituted the clapboards

fresh nailed and 2 coats of paint laid on the whole exterior of the church. The old floor and pews were taken away by the consent of the former Proprietors, new rafters and beams laid on The ceils and a new floor laid on this, were placed sixty six new slip pews. A new Pulpit including a vestry room. The old chancel stood formerly on the North East part



ST. MICHAEL'S, DETAIL OF COLUMN AND CAPITAL SUPPORTING THE GALLERY

of the Church was now removed on the N. W. part and enclosed the Pulpit vestry &c. The Alter Piece designed and executed in England in the year 1717 was placed directly over the Pulpit. No alteration was made to the design except laying on two coats of varnish. The Western Gallery was taken down; the walls newly firred, lathed and plastered. The old organ taken away and a new organ placed in its stead presented by John Hooper Esqr. A partition with two doors fronting the Aisles was put up leaving a recess the width of the Church and eleven feet deep including the stairway to the Gallery and a room for the Sabbath School library. On examining the frame of the church the ceils &c., it was found to be White Oak in an excellent state of preservation and supposed by the Carpenters to continue so for a century to come. . . .⁴⁰

Although this lengthy report in the church records following the extensive renovations of 1833 is of some value for its occasional reference to the original—or, at any rate, earlier—appearance of the building, its greatest significance results rather from its specific identification of the changes which were introduced at this time. Although, for example, the Palladian-type openings in the tower had been introduced some time prior to 1818, the shuttered blinds which still exist today were clearly a part of the extensive renovations of 1833. Likewise, the design of the exterior was drastically altered at this time, when the earlier double tier of windows was replaced by the tall lancet Gothic windows which remain today, and which certainly more than any other change altered the basic character of the building. On the interior, the removal of the west gallery momentarily created a more spacious feeling, but this gain was more than compensated for with the concomitant introduction of a partition removing eleven feet from the length of the church in order to create a vestibule under the remaining south gallery. Whereas the orientation of the church had formerly been divided between the altar on the East wall and the pulpit on the north wall, the placement of the altar and the pulpit in a single grouping at the north end opposite the main entrance established a single longitudinal axis. And, finally, the introduction of slip pews and a new organ case and pulpit in the latest medieval taste established the essentially Victorian Gothic character which has remained the dominant note of the building to the present day.

During the remaining years of the nineteenth century, the interior of the church was subjected to numerous “restorations” according to the whim and

fancy of constantly changing Victorian taste. The walls were frescoed, painted, and wallpapered a number of times, and the woodwork grained in imitation of English oak. Finally, with the thought that “restorations are . . . only temporary,”⁴¹ the church was “greatly improved and most handsomely adorned” during the early months of 1888. Indeed, according to a contemporary account, St. Michael’s now gained the distinction, and at least local reputation, of being not only “one of the oldest church edifices in the United States, but also among the handsomest in its interior:”

The walls and ceilings are frescoed in oil colors, after four coats of the best oil paint had been put upon them. The designs of both ceiling and walls are churchly and appropriate, and executed in the most artistic and workmanlike manner possible.

. . . Centered around the old chandelier . . . are the symbols of the four Evangelists in gold mosaic on a celestial blue ground, which is also the ground color of the large concave Maltese cross which forms nearly the entire ceiling of the Church. In each end of the cross is an ecclesiastical emblem also done in gold mosaic. The side walls are of a rich terra-cotta halfway up from the dado, which is in antique bronze two-feet wide, and a light cream color up to the frieze. Over the reredos, which is very ancient, is a large gilt cross, with the sun’s rays coming out from behind it on a background of passion flowers and vines.⁴²

The setting was completed with “a handsome set of chancel furniture in the latest fashion,” and a series of elaborate stained glass windows.

During the present century, no further structural deviations from the original building have been attempted, although a new concept of “restoration” has been instrumental in removing the florid fresco decoration of the past century, apparently in an effort to capture something of the eighteenth-century character of the building. The slip pews, stained glass windows,

and Victorian embellishments remain, however, the predominant note of a building which is today only regressively "colonial."

Although within recent years St. Michael's has been dubbed a "rather homely little church,"⁴³ this represents an unfair judgment based more upon its vicissitudes than upon its early appearance. Interestingly, in marked contrast to this estimate, the original subscription talks of "a handsome Church" in anticipation, and the important letter of November 1714 from the parish to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts speaks of "a Handsome Church" in realization. But on what basis did the early Anglicans in Marblehead pass aesthetic judgment? And was this aesthetic judgment in the usual sense? Certainly, the provincial reflection to which they gave form—pointed vaults which were already many years out of date and columns which lacked even the most modest degree of academic sophistication—was not to be so described. But rather, it seems that the Anglicans—a persecuted minority in the isolation of Congregational New England—were transferring their personal affection for the institution of the Church of England to the embodiment of it in material form. What must have seemed to them a "handsome" religion—in contrast to the more austere character of unadulterated Puritanism—could only, of necessity, be incorporated in a building which was itself "handsome."

The Church of England at Marblehead seemingly represents, in fact, the initial introduction of a specifically Anglican-conformist architecture in Congregational-nonconformist New England. Based upon an architectural type which emerged in England and on the

Continent during the seventeenth century as a manifestation of the reforming spirit of Protestantism, the original design of St. Michael's was tempered, however, by the established architectural traditions of New England and modified accordingly in the direction of meeting-house architecture. Thus, although its unique plan with four central columns and intersecting vaults above was a marked innovation in the history of Anglican architecture in New England, in contrast to the more conservative plans at Boston, Newport, Narragansett, and Newbury, it was nevertheless still stamped with the unmistakable character of Congregational architecture.

Within the decade following the erection of St. Michael's, the construction of Christ Church in Boston established, finally, in New England an ecclesiastical architecture that was specifically Anglican, or conformist, in spirit. St. Michael's is, however, significant of the moment when the emerging Anglican society of New England sought to remove itself from the traditional setting of "established" Congregationalism.

NOTES

¹ George F. Marlowe, *Churches of Old New England* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), p. 188. On the other hand, in 1875, Samuel Drake, *Nooks and Corners of the New England Coast* (New York: Harper Bros.), pp. 248-49, had recorded the former existence of a "shapely spire" on the basis of information received locally.

² Albert B. Hart (ed.), *Itinerarium, by Dr. Alexander Hamilton* (St. Louis: William Bixby, 1907), p. 145.

³ In 1939 this drawing was reproduced by Mr. Harold Hodgkinson in a publication printed on the 225th anniversary of the church, but its present location is unknown.

⁴ W. Hammond Bowden (ed.), "Extracts from Interleaved Almanacs of Nathan Bowen,

Marblehead, 1742-1799," *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, XCI (1955).

A gap in the church records for the period from May 20, 1793, through April 21, 1794, explains the fact that the existing records do not contain any reference to the disappearance of the steeple, which occurred between these dates.

⁵ An inspection of the early Price-Burgis views of Boston suggests that the spire was of a type familiar in Boston at the time. The Brattle Street Meeting House of 1699 is shown with a six-sided spire and the New North Meeting House of 1714 with one that was square in plan.

⁶ The width of the center section of the present Palladian openings is four feet, ten inches. Considering that at the present width the center openings could not originally have been higher than five feet, the resultant rather stubby proportions suggest that a shortened version of the present central sections does not represent the exact form of the windows as they existed in the early eighteenth century, but, rather, that the windows were also substantially widened in the process of transformation.

The original proportions of the four round-headed windows in the tower were probably more closely related to the single window on the western side of the tower, which is shown in the 1818 drawing, and which remains in the building to this day. Measuring at its largest slightly less than six feet high and a bit more than three feet wide, the placement of the window follows good eighteenth-century practice, and although the delicate proportions of its sash suggest that it is a later replacement, the original sash, with its wide mullions, still survives at the church. Examination of the successive layers of paint indicates that the sash was originally painted white. The exterior woodwork framing this window appears to be of the eighteenth century in style and scale and may represent the sole survival in the building of the original exterior window trim.

⁷ Church Records, I, 47, 48.

⁸ Antoinette F. Downing, *Early Homes of Rhode Island* (Richmond, Va.: Garrett and Massie, 1937), Pl. 32.

⁹ Church Records, I, 38. Essex County Deeds, Book 50, p. 72.

¹⁰ Church Records, I, 39.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, I, 8.

¹² Church Records, I, 47.

¹³ Breaks in the cornice resulting from the extension of 1728 are still in evidence on the east and west sides, indicating that the cornice dates from before 1728, and, in all likelihood, from 1714. The exact relationship between these cuts and the original windows is impossible to determine at this time, although the cuts undoubtedly represent places where the cornice broke out over the keystones of the arched windows. For a similar treatment, see the cupola of Richard Munday's Colony House, Newport. [Antoinette F. Downing and Vincent J. Scully, Jr., *The Architectural heritage of Newport Rhode Island, 1640-1915* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), Pl. 63.]

¹⁴ Bills from Robert Harris to John Humphrey, Dec. 13, 1815, and Dec. 24, 1819. These bills are but two of a large number of similar documents preserved at St. Michael's which refer specifically to the replacement of broken window panes. In the large majority of cases, the size "7 by 9" is given, but in several instances, such as a bill of Jan. 8, 1794, for "i doz. 8 by 10 Glass . . ." a larger size is also mentioned.

¹⁵ Hart, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

¹⁶ Actually, two early plans of St. Michael's have recently been found. One, discovered in the manuscript collections of the Diocesan Library, Boston, and reproduced here, is inscribed "Copy of a Plan of St. Michael's Church Previous to the alterations in 1832." The other, in the possession of St. Michael's, is by the same hand and bears the date 1813.

¹⁷ Although the later nineteenth century considered the present free-standing pulpit to be the "ancient pulpit" [Roads, *op. cit.*, facing p. 24], and more recent writers have noted that it is "a successor to an earlier one of wine glass pattern" [Hodgkinson, *op. cit.*, p. 5], early documentary evidence clearly reveals that the original pulpit was constructed against the north wall, and was not of the free-standing, so-called "wine glass" type. A bill from the year 1718 "for making of 2 Windows to ye Pulpit" [Church Records, I, 47] indicates the relationship of the pulpit and the wall, which is indeed confirmed by the evidence of the 1813 ground plan.

The present pulpit of Gothic Revival design is documented as an addition of 1833 [*Ibid.*, II, 9]. Although it has been written that "the sounding board at King's Chapel was copied from that at St. Michael's, and the original

[at St. Michael's] having disappeared the present replica was copied back again from King's Chapel," [Davis, *op. cit.*], there is no reason to believe that this is correct, since the present sounding board at St. Michael's is for a free-standing pulpit and the original pulpit was against a wall.

¹⁸ This western door is referred to in several entries in the church records for the year 1771 [I, 113 ff.]. The 1813 drawing suggests that the western door was not directly opposite the altar, but was rather slightly more to the south. This may represent, however, an error in draughtsmanship on this crudely executed plan. It seems unlikely that a cross aisle originally connected the western door and the altar.

¹⁹ According to an entry in the church records for April 7, 1729 [I, 39-40], we learn that at this time there were sixty-one pews on the main floor, fourteen of which were "in the New Addition below," and eighteen pews in the gallery, three of which were "in the Gallery Addition." "A List of the Numbers & Value of the several pews in St Michaels Church in Marblehead Estimated August 3, 1767," also in the church records [I, 83], shows that there were sixty-seven pews on the ground level and nineteen in the gallery at that time. The 1813 plan shows sixty-seven pews on the main floor, indicating that since the alterations of 1728 the number of pews had not been substantially increased.

²⁰ The church records of 1729 indicate that there were at that time fifteen pews "in the old Gallery," three pews "in the Gallery Addition," and one "Gallery Corner Pew" [I, 39-40]. It seems likely that the galleries at St. Michael's were filled with slip pews.

The earliest mention of the gallery stairway in the church documents is in 1771 [I, 113-14], but there is no reason to believe that it does not date from the initial introduction of a south gallery. The stairway in the southwest corner today appears to be of later date.

²¹ The church records and other contemporary documents pertaining to St. Michael's contain no reference to the altarpiece, which remains in the church to this day. Dr. Alexander Hamilton, visiting the church in 1744, noted simply that the altar was "painted and adorned with the King's arms at top" [Hart, *op. cit.*, p. 145], suggesting a popular treatment of the period, but one which has apparently survived

in but a single example, at St. James's Church, Goose Creek, South Carolina [Dorsey, *op. cit.*, p. 25, Pl. 53]. Traditionally, the altarpiece is said to have been "brought from England . . . entire in readiness to be placed in position" [Roads, *op. cit.*, p. 11], and the date of its arrival has been given variously as 1714 and 1717, but both are without early documentation. The altarpiece was indeed something which the SPGFP was apparently wont to supply, for on December 12, 1710, the Rev. Mr. James Honyman and several members of the vestry of Trinity, Newport, wrote to Col. Francis Nicholson, expressing the hope that "to your other Kind Appearances for y^e Interest and Honour of our Church we Also Most Humbly Intreat that this may be added Namely that you Would Interceed with y^e Hon^{ble} Society for an Altar Piece for it [is] y^e Only Ornament thats Wanting to finish & Compleat its Beauty we have already sent y^e Dimensions to Mr. Chamberlain. . . ." [Isham, *op. cit.*, p. 20.]

The rather provincial interpretation of Baroque design which the altarpiece represents, however, suggests that the possibility of fabrication on this side of the Atlantic should not be denied due consideration. Further comment on the Marblehead altarpiece must await a careful investigation of the internal evidence, as well as a precise comparison of it with a group of similar contemporary altarpieces in Anglican churches in Virginia and the Carolinas and, of course, with the large number which still remains in England from this period.

²² Church Records, I, 48, 51, 30, 39-40, and II, 92. The gallery is supported by five, solid, octagonal columns, which carry out the basic design of the four central piers. Although the placement of two of these was changed at one time, apparently in 1833 when the present slip pews replaced the earlier box pews, their original positions can be readily distinguished on the basis of cuts and markings along the base of the paneled gallery front. These two supports are hollow and appear to be later replacements. An old tradition holds that the two original posts were used as supports for the south porch, but existing evidence does not ratify this. [Hodgkinson, *op. cit.*, p. 5.]

²³ In addition to the gallery front, the only other eighteenth-century paneling which remains at St. Michael's is arranged as a dado along the east and south walls (behind the or-

gan) of the gallery. The paneling is not original to this area, and may represent the sole survival of the early box pews.

²⁴ Church Records, II, 92.

²⁵ For illustration, see Downing, *op. cit.*, Pl. 32.

²⁶ Church Records, I, 61, 65-67.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 74-76.

²⁹ Isaac Mansfield, *A Topographical and Historical Account of Marblehead* (Boston, 1802), p. 57. A letter dated June 21, 1768, from the Rev. Mr. Weeks to the SPGFP says that there were 6500 people in Marblehead, of which one fifth belonged to the Church of England [Copy of letter in the Diocesan Library, Boston].

³⁰ Church Records, I, 113-14, 117. The exact date of the porch at the south door is unknown, but it is certainly not prior to the nineteenth century. The original exterior treatment of this doorway cannot be established on the basis of surviving documentation.

³¹ Church Records, I, 135.

³² The rector at this time, the Rev. Mr. Joshua Wingate Weeks, ultimately settled in

Halifax, Nova Scotia. In 1791 the parish "voted to write to the Rev. Joshua Wingate Weeks of Halifax and request a return of the books taken from the parsonage and give some information concerning the lost leaves cut from the record at the time of the war" [Copy of a lost manuscript, in the possession of the Diocesan Library, Boston]. The lost pages appear never to have been returned.

³³ Roads, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

³⁴ Copy of a letter from the Rev. Mr. Weeks to the SPGFP, in the possession of the Diocesan Library, Boston.

³⁵ Church Records, I, 245-46.

³⁶ Ms. dated Dec. 20, 1793, in the possession of St. Michael's Church.

³⁷ Ms. in the possession of St. Michael's Church.

³⁸ Ms. in the possession of St. Michael's Church.

³⁹ Church Records, II, 130-31.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁴¹ Roads, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

⁴² *Boston Globe*, April 17, 1888.

⁴³ Marlowe, *op. cit.*, p. 188.