

The  
Story  
of  
Old  
John Street  
Church



"... the Methodists have shown good taste as well as religious reverence in its preservation. Small and somewhat insignificant as the structure is, for it has no claim to architectural merit, it is yet a monument of religious devotion and zeal..." "...the Methodist Church has grown great and rich, and in all ways prosperous. It has, at least, perhaps, something of its simplicity; and if J. Wesley could visit us, possibly the U.S. Meeting House would win his approval over such more pretentious structures. It speaks of primitive Methodism. It reminds us of that day of small things, in which John and Charles Wesley and Whitefield, and Howell Harris,

**This special Bicentennial, limited edition, has a press run of only two hundred and fifty copies. This is copy number 81.**

"...as the American for New York encounters this (religious structure), here and there, the pleasant surprise is that in his own city the movement has taken so many religious societies away from the lower part of the city, and that the rise in the value of real property has caused the destruction of so many temples. It was inevitable, perhaps; but even inevitable things are sometimes to be regretted. The Methodist, the Episcopalian and the Catholic who have churches left "below six-story" will no longer willingly let them go. Their value is beginning to be appreciated - a value which no possible sum of money offered for the land could equal. As we are growing old, it becomes us to have at least a few antiquities. Morally, we cannot afford to be always pulling down and rebuilding; and when we are just a little bit older we shall understand that the feeling of preservation is not altogether sentimental, in the bad sense of that word."

*Raymond R. Rogers*

"... the Methodists have shown good taste as well as religious reverence in its preservation. Small and somewhat insignificant as the structure is, for it has no claim to architectural merit, it is yet a monument of religious devotion and zeal,..." "...the Methodist Church has grown great and rich, and in all ways prosperous. It has lost, perhaps, something of its simplicity; and if J. Wesley could visit us, possibly the J.S. Meeting House would win his preference over much more pretentious structures. It speaks of primitive Methodism. It reminds us of that day of small things, in which John and Charles Wesley and Whitefield, and Howell Harris, and John Fletcher and Thomas Walsh (to name no others) carried on this wonderful work of revival, and travelled and toiled and suffered in its behalf..."

"...as the American from New York encounters them (religious structures in London), here and there, they bring him a pleasant surprise; and he can but regret that in his own city the uptown movement has taken so many religious societies away from the lower part of the city, and that the rise in the value of real property has caused the destruction of so many temples. It was inevitable, perhaps; but even inevitable things are sometimes to be regretted. The Methodist, the Episcopalians and the Catholics who have Churches left "below Bleecker" will not now willingly let them go. Their value is beginning to be appreciated - a value which no possible sum of money offered for the land could equal. As we are growing old, it becomes us to have at least a few antiquities. Morally, we cannot afford to be always pulling down and rebuilding; and when we are just a little bit older we shall understand that the feeling of preservation is not altogether sentimental, in the bad sense of that word."



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# The Story of Old John Street Church

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To Dorana and Brian for their  
love and understanding and to  
Rev. Arthur B. Moss for his  
guidance.

The  
Story  
of  
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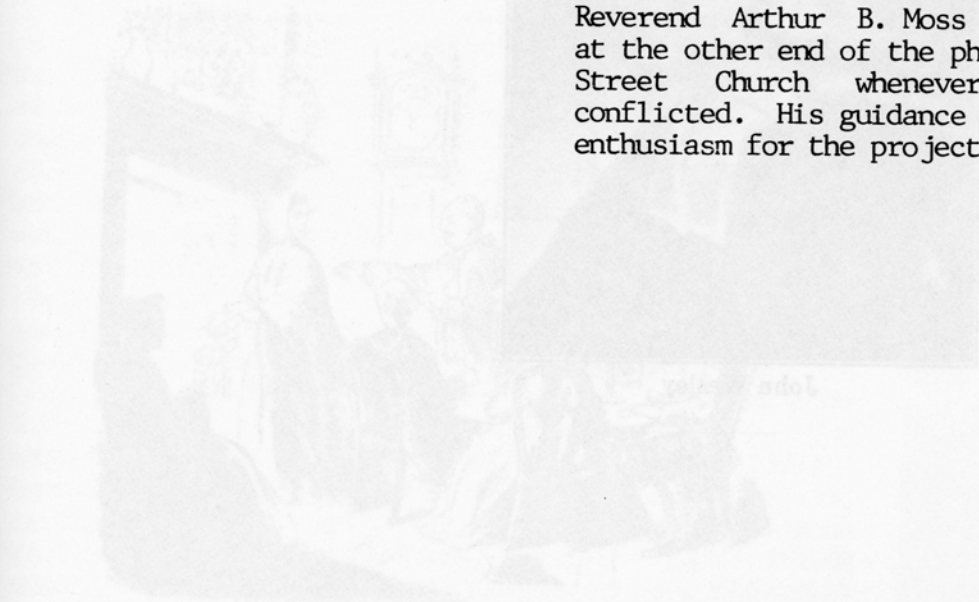
# Introduction

Looking at lower Manhattan these days, it is hard to imagine a time when the tallest structures were church spires and the area was home to dozens of firmly established churches.

Today four structures remain from that earlier time, dwarfed by their neighbors, almost hidden from view: St. Paul's Chapel (1764-1766), St. Peter's Church (1836), John Street Church (1841), and Trinity Church (1846). These four, fine period pieces are able to provide a calming respite in the midst of a harried and crushing daily working routine.

This monograph grew out of a talk delivered by the author at John Street Church and a desire to increase the knowledge of its past. The history of this old church, covering a span of over two hundred years, has been both arduous and spiritually uplifting.

A lot of work went into the development of the updated history. I would like to thank Dr. Warren L. Danskin, pastor of the John Street Church who added his generous support and advice, Mrs. Betty Henderson who patiently created the text on her word processor, Dr. Anastasia Van Burkalow for suggesting valuable information and Ms. Gale Walker for editing the manuscript. The Reverend Arthur B. Moss gets special thanks for being at the other end of the phone, ready to discuss John Street Church whenever the facts and legends conflicted. His guidance was very important and his enthusiasm for the project never waned.



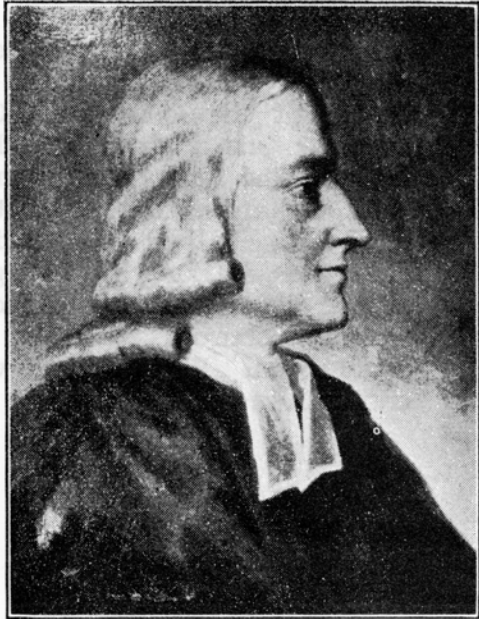
Philip Esbury was converted by the preaching of John Wesley in Ireland, in 1752 and received from Wesley a license as a local preacher and class leader. Philip and his wife Margaret were part of a group of Belshires that arrived in New York City on August 13, 1760 aboard the Perry. The group aboard this "Methodist Mayflower" also included Paul and Barbara Beck, Philip's two brothers, and several other relatives. Philip Esbury and this group had one

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The development of the updated book is due to the help of many people. I thank Dr. Warren J. Danks for his help in locating the manuscript. The following people provided valuable information and assistance: Dr. Anastasia Betsy Henderson who patiently read the manuscript and provided special thanks for being so ready to discuss John Street Church and its legends and facts and legends. It was very important and his help was never waned.



John Wesley

The Rev. George Whitefield delivered the first sermon by a Methodist preacher in New York City in November 1739 at a gathering north of the small city in the open fields. "On the evening of the same day" he preached "to a very thronged and attentive audience in the Rev. Pemberton's meeting-house, the Wall Street Presbyterian Church, and continued to do so twice or thrice a-day for above a week...with very great success." The next twenty-five years saw the Rev. Whitefield returning to New York City several times, including stops at Staten Island and Brooklyn. But, no permanent society was established during those visits.

IN THE BEGINNING...

The first organized Methodist Society in New York City was established in October 1766 when Barbara Heck, angered at discovering her relatives and friends playing cards, called on her first cousin, Philip Embury to "start preaching to the lost souls of New York." She felt her friends and kinsmen had strayed from the teachings of John Wesley since their arrival six years earlier from Limerick, Ireland and needed a strong leader to help them find their way back to God.



BARBARA HECK



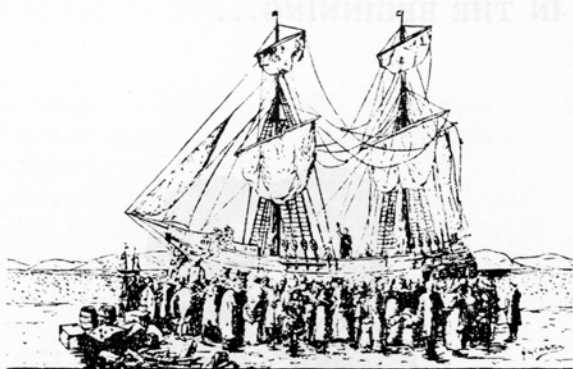
Barbara Heck breaks up the card game by throwing the cards into the fire.

Philip Embury was converted by the preaching of John Wesley in Ireland, in 1752 and received from Wesley a license as a local preacher and class leader. Philip and his wife Margaret were part of a group of Palatines that arrived in New York City on August 10, 1760 aboard the Perry. The group aboard this "Methodist Mayflower" also included Paul and Barbara Heck, Philip's two brothers and several other relatives. Philip Embury and this group had one



PHILIP EMBURY

objective: to secure, if possible, an official land-grant of suitable character in which they could settle. After several attempts and delays, a grant of 8,000 acres lying immediately south of the Battenkill River in Vermont was secured by a charter granted in 1765. Philip and his family with many of their friends left New York in 1770 and settled the area.



The ship "Perry" leaving Limerick, Ireland with the first Methodist converts to come to America. Philip Embury, can be seen on deck delivering a sermon prior to debarkation.

Philip, an accomplished carpenter, had helped with the design and construction of a "preaching house" in Ballingarane, Ireland in 1758. He was able to support himself and his family through carpentry since New York City was in a constant state of expansion. It appears that Embury was also an experienced teacher. The April 20, 1761 edition of the New York Gazette contained an ad placed by Philip and his brother John, offering their talents as teachers.

### *Phil. Embury, School-Master,*

**G**IVES Notice, that on the first Day of May next, he intends to teach Reading, Writing, and Arithmetick, in English, in the New School-House, now building in Little Queen-Street, next Door to the Lutheran Ministers: And as he has been inform'd, that several Gentlemen were willing to favour him with their Children, he gives farther Notice, that if a sufficient Number of Scholars should attend his School, he would teach in Company with Mr. John Embury, (who teaches several Branches belonging to Trade and Business) that Children might be carefully attend as he faithfully desires the Good of the Publick. He now teaches at Mr. Samuel Foster's, in Carman's-Street.

### AUGUSTUS STREET, 1766



Philip Embury's rented home on 10 Augustus Street 1766.

Little else is known about Embury's activities in New York City after his arrival in 1760. It is thought that due to his license as class leader and his activities as a local preacher in Ireland, he may have attempted to conduct services in his new homeland, but quickly lost his desire when proper facilities could not be found. Embury none-the-less retained his post and duties as the recognized leader of the closely knit Palatines. His leadership among them was functional.

Philip and his wife became active members of the Trinity Lutheran Church. Their two sons and one daughter were baptized there. The Trinity Lutheran Church had been founded fifty years earlier (1710-1712) by a group of refugees from the German Palatinate - the home of the Hecks' and Embury's ancestors.

Barbara Heck gathered that first congregation together on Sunday October 12, 1766. That small group led by Philip Embury consisted of Barbara, and her husband, Paul, Margaret Embury, John Lawrence and Betty - a servant - in Embury's small rented cottage at 10 Augustus Street.

This small one story, woodframed structure had a peaked roof, a stone foundation and a small yard to one side. Workers' housing such as this was a very



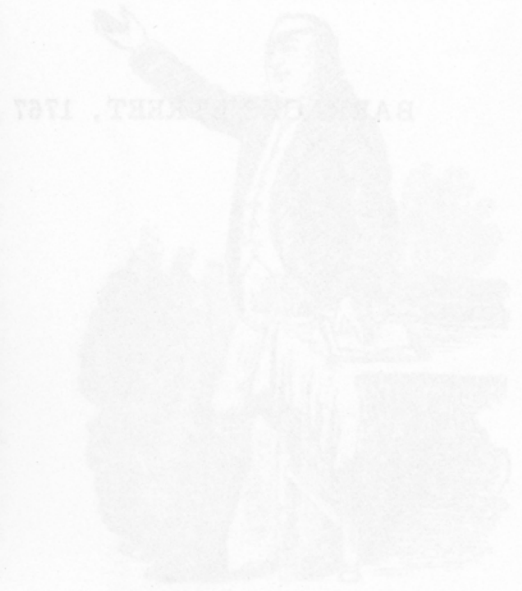
Philip Embury preaching the first sermon in New York in his own home in 1766. In the group opposite Embury are Paul and Barbara Heck. Behind Barbara is John Lawrence, beside her is Betty, a servant, and standing in the doorway is Paul Ruckle, Barbara's brother. This painting completed in 1888 by J. B. Whittaker of Brooklyn is in the possession of John Street.

common sight throughout the city in the mid-18th century. Even the interior of the cottage reflected its sparse exterior. The two candlesticks seen on the mantle in the above painting are in the possession of the church. The living area included a sitting room, dining room and kitchen. In all likelihood, the floor would have been dirt with a layer of sand or a carpet of woven rags. The sparse furnishings may have included Windsor chairs, a table of pine or cherry, and other pieces that would contribute to a comfortable home.

The property, which is now under the northern side of the Municipal Building at Chambers Street, east of City Hall, was far removed from the center of New York. A part of Augustus Street still exists to the northeast of the Municipal Building. It was renamed Cardinal Hayes Place in 1941.

Though small in number, it was not long before more people became interested in this young Methodist congregation. After only two months of worshipping at the Embury's house, more spacious accommodations were needed.

Thomas Taylor, one of the original trustees of John Street Church and a former member of the Methodist Society in Plymouth, England, had been asked by his friend, John Wesley, to seek out the small New York Society and to report on its progress. In a letter written to Wesley on April 11, 1768 (in the form of a report sent during the fund raising campaign to assist in the construction of Wesley Chapel) Taylor asked for much needed assistance for the young



## BARRACKS STREET, 1767

congregation. In that letter (exerpts of which are to be quoted throughout this monograph) Taylor outlines a lengthy history of the society and Methodism.

Recalling the early move from Embury's small home in December of 1766, Taylor said,

"They then rented an empty room in their neighborhood, which was in the most infamous street in the city, adjoining the barracks."

This "infamous street" just around the corner from Augustus Street, was Barracks Street. The street was only long enough to serve the army barracks. The building occupied virtually the entire length of the southside of the street. This street no longer exists; it is now located under the entry ramps to the Brooklyn Bridge.

Once this larger room was secured, a collection of money was started to help cover the cost of the rent each week. Nothing is known about the physical appearance of the building. In all probability it was a wood-framed structure of at least two stories since the rented meeting room was on the second floor.

During the early winter of 1766-67, three devoted and experienced Methodist class leaders reached New York City. They proved to be a major element involved in the rapid growth of the society while in the Barracks Street location. These three classleaders were Henry Newton, Richard Sause and Charles White. These men promptly joined the young Methodist Society and attended all the activities offered. They helped Embury to organize and lead new classes which developed from the growing congregation. Their prominence in the society is well documented. They were included among the purchasers of the original John Street property in 1768.

This small, but growing congregation had a definite effect on the community. Seaman says in his *Annals of New York Methodism*:

"No small excitement was caused by these little assemblies. Spectators came in crowds, including soldiers from the nearby barracks. Among the first fruits of the revival were three members of the regimental band who were attracted by the singing."

Singing hymns with the help of members of a regimental band must have been exciting. It is possible that several of the soldiers had been Methodists in England.

It was about this time, February 1767, that



CAPTAIN THOMAS WEBB

Captain Thomas Webb, "...of the King's service; a soldier of the Cross; a spiritual son of John Wesley.", came upon the scene.

Captain Webb had been forced by the death of his young wife in late 1763 to leave his post as Barrack-master in Albany, travel to Jamaica, Long Island, New York to leave his young son with friends and return to England to settle his affairs. While there, he was converted to Methodism at the New Room in Bristol, where he became an active member.

John Wesley appreciated his devotion and approved of him to lead services and preach in the unexpected absence of a stated preacher.

Upon his return to America, he reassumed the duties of Barrack-master in Albany, New York. Having settled himself at his post of duty, Webb established simple Methodist services in his residence. He also preached on occasion to the troops stationed in the area.

Webb found himself frequently in New York either to visit his young son in Jamaica or to fulfill his military responsibilities. It was on one such occasion in February 1767, having learned of Philip Embury's new Methodist Society, that he attended their service. This was apparently just before the society moved their place of worship to the Rigging Loft on William Street. Webb soon preached for Embury and joined the society, becoming as active a member as his obligations at Albany would permit. Whenever it was announced that he would preach, the house was crowded to capacity.

Captain Webb and his second wife, Grace Gilbert whom he married in 1773 during one of his trips to England, returned to England leaving New York in Mid-October 1778. He died December 20, 1796 and was buried in a vault beneath the altar in Portland Chapel, a church he assisted in building in Bristol, England. Due to the changing neighborhood, Portland Chapel was taken down and the remains of Captain Webb and his wife, buried beside him upon her death on January 20, 1820, were re-interred in the forecourt of the Wesley Chapel, Bristol on May 22, 1972. The plaque marking Captain Webb's resting place at Portland Chapel was presented to Rev. Arthur B. Moss, representative of Old John Street Church, and is now displayed on the west wall of the sanctuary.

In Taylor's 1768 letter he declared that Webb:

"preached in his regimentals. The novelty of a man preaching in a scarlet coat brought greater numbers to hear than the room could contain.."



CAPTAIN THOMAS WEBB as he preached.

Sacred to the Memory of THOMAS WEBB Esq.  
Lieutenant in the 48th Reg. of foot.  
who died the 20th, Dec. 1796, Aged 72.  
and whose remains are interred in the recess.

As a Soldier,  
he was brave-active-courageous.  
and loft an eye at the fiege of Louifbourg.1758

When afterward enlisted under the banner of CHRIST

As a Christian,  
he was exemplary  
for fimplicity and godly fincerity.

As a Preacher,  
he was faithful-zealous-fuccefsful  
both in Great Britain and America.  
In the latter he founded  
the firft Methodift Churches.  
and was  
the principal Infrument  
in erecting this  
Chapel.

## THE RIGGING LOFT, 1767



THE RIGGING LOFT at 120 William Street, 1767.

As had occurred only two months earlier, this growing congregation needed to find larger quarters.

In the early part of 1767 better accommodations were found at 120 William Street, between Fulton and John Streets, on the east side. This 60' X 18', two story, wood framed structure, was known as the Rigging Loft. The building contained a ship-chandler's shop with a store room on the first floor and a rather spacious sail loft on the second floor. This room was known as a religious meeting place since it had been used by the Baptists some years before. The Rigging Loft was radically altered in 1854 when several additional stories were added and was completely destroyed in 1910 when an office building was built. That part of the site occupied by the Rigging Loft is now an entrance to the IRT subway. A bronze tablet on the wall just to the north of the entry identifies the location.

Because of the Society's affiliation with the Church of England, worship at the Rigging Loft was limited to early and late hours on Sundays. Seaman says this of services at the Rigging Loft:

"here there was preaching on Sabbath mornings at 6:00 A.M. and on Sabbath evenings also. The singularly early hour of the morning service is accounted for by the fact that Methodists then regarded themselves as a Society of the Church of England, and were careful not to interfere with the regular services of that church."

It is important to repeat that the New York Methodists "regarded themselves as a Society of the Church of England." This regard was reciprocal. Officials in New York and the Anglican clergy considered the Methodists an integral element of that parish and their work.

After only six months in the Rigging Loft, it was becoming evident by the size of the weekly congregation that, as had happened before, a more spacious meeting place was needed.

At first, Philip Embury suggested that the congregation find additional space to rent. A lease of 21 years had already been negotiated for a small piece of property, the exact whereabouts of which is unknown today, upon which to build a "wooden tabernacle".

## WESLEY CHAPEL ON JOHN STREET, 1768

The congregation eventually decided against leasing and planned to erect a more permanent chapel. Anticipating the legal requirements involved in acquiring and holding property, Embury appointed the Society's first board of eight "trustees" in February



1768. Paul Heck, Captain Webb, William Lupton, Henry Newton, Charles White, Richard Sause, Thomas Taylor and Philip Embury constituted that first "board".

William Lupton, the society's treasurer, began to raise the necessary funds to pay for the construction of the new building by organizing a general appeal throughout the city. The subscription paper drawn up in February 1768 contains the following preamble and appeal:

"A number of persons desirous to worship God in spirit and in truth, commonly called Methodists (under the direction of the Rev. John Wesley) whom it is evident God has often pleased to bless in their meetings in New York; thinking it would be more for the glory of God and the good souls had they a more convenient place to meet in, where the Gospel of Jesus Christ might be preached without the distinction of sects or parties; and as Mr. Embury is a member and helper in the Gospel, they humbly beg the assistance of Christian friends in order to help them to build a small house for that purpose, not doubting that the God of all consolation will abundantly bless all such as are willing to contribute to the same."

This subscription document is contained in the "Old Book." This book is the oldest document in existence containing a specific record of the Methodists in America.

The following excerpt from Taylor's letter of April 1768 illustrates some of the problems encountered during the fundraising for the new building and their eventual solution:

"Before we began to talk of building, the devil and his children were very peaceable; but since this affair took place many ministers have cursed us in the name of the Lord and laboured with all their might to stop their congregations from assisting us. But He that sitteth in the highest laughed them to scorn! Many have broken through, and given their friendly assistance. We have collected about one hundred pounds more than our own contributions; and have reason to hope in the whole we shall have two hundred pounds, but the house will cost us four hundred pounds more so that unless God is pleased to raise up friends we shall yet be at a loss. I believe Mr. Webb and Mr. Lupton will borrow or advance two hundred pounds rather than the building should not go forward. But the interest of money is a

ON THIS SITE ON WILLIAM STREET  
FORMERLY HORSE AND CART STREET  
STOOD THE  
RIGGING LOFT  
WHERE MEMBERS OF THE FIRST  
METHODIST SOCIETY IN AMERICA  
WORSHIPPED FROM 1767 - 1768  
AMONG THE ORIGINAL LEADERS WERE  
PHILIP EMBURY - BARBARA HECK  
CAPTAIN THOMAS WEBB  
ON OCTOBER 30, 1768 WESLEY CHAPEL  
NOW JOHN STREET METHODIST CHURCH  
WAS DEDICATED AT 44 JOHN STREET

great burden — being seven percent."

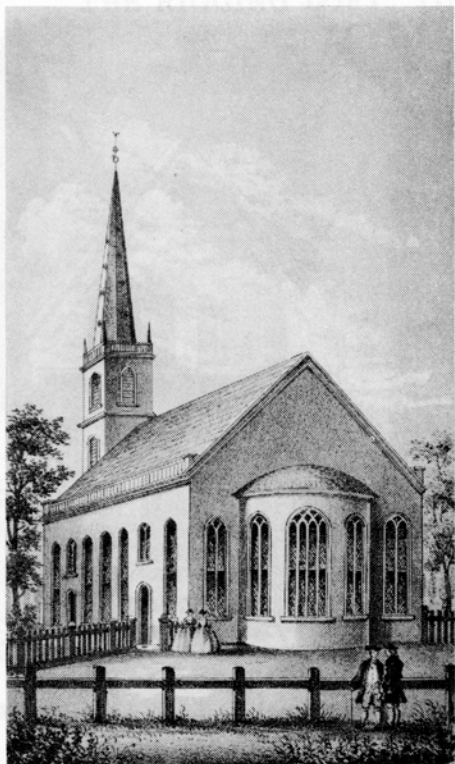
A short time after the appeal was started, 250 subscribers were secured. These subscribers were not only persons of prominence from Methodism, but a surprising number of non-Methodist persons as well. The society now had the necessary funds. This proved sufficient to defray all costs of construction of the chapel, making it unnecessary to call upon Webb and Lupton to activate their underwriting of any possible deficit.

At this same time two parcels of land on the south side of John Street (named after the tanner John Harpending) between William and Nassau Streets were purchased from the executors of the estate of the Rev. Henry Barclay, the third Rector of Trinity Church. Other than the Rector's widow, Mary Barclay, the three other executors were prominent New Yorkers: Andrew Barclay (member of the family) Leonard Lisperard, and David Clarkson. These two plots, on what was also known as Golden Hill were originally a part of the land commonly known as "Shoemakers Ground".

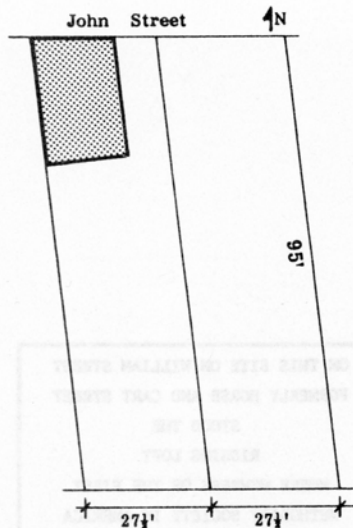
According to Taylor's April 1768 letter to Wesley, "There are eight of us who are joint purchasers; among whom Mr. Webb and Mr. Lupton are men of property...as we were ignorant how to draw deeds (for the Methodist society), we purchased for us and our heirs, until a copy of the writings from England was sent to us..." The eight "trustees" purchased and held the property in their name, not in the name of the congregation. Sometime later, to prevent problems with the title, the property was transferred to David Embury, Philip's brother. After several more months, the property was again transferred to the care of Joseph Forbes.

The purchase price of the John Street parcels was 600 pounds. This amount was provided by a short-term mortgage, which was satisfied in about four months, by the society paying "ground rent" to the Barclay Estate as specified in the lease agreement dated March 29, 1768. The deed was delivered March 30, 1768 in accordance with 18th century legal procedures. The remainder of the cash necessary to satisfy the mortgage was provided personally by Captain Webb and Lupton. They accepted notes from the society representing the congregation's obligation to them. Upon satisfaction of the mortgage by this process, the payments of "ground rent" to the Barclay estate ceased, and payments to Webb and Lupton were made.

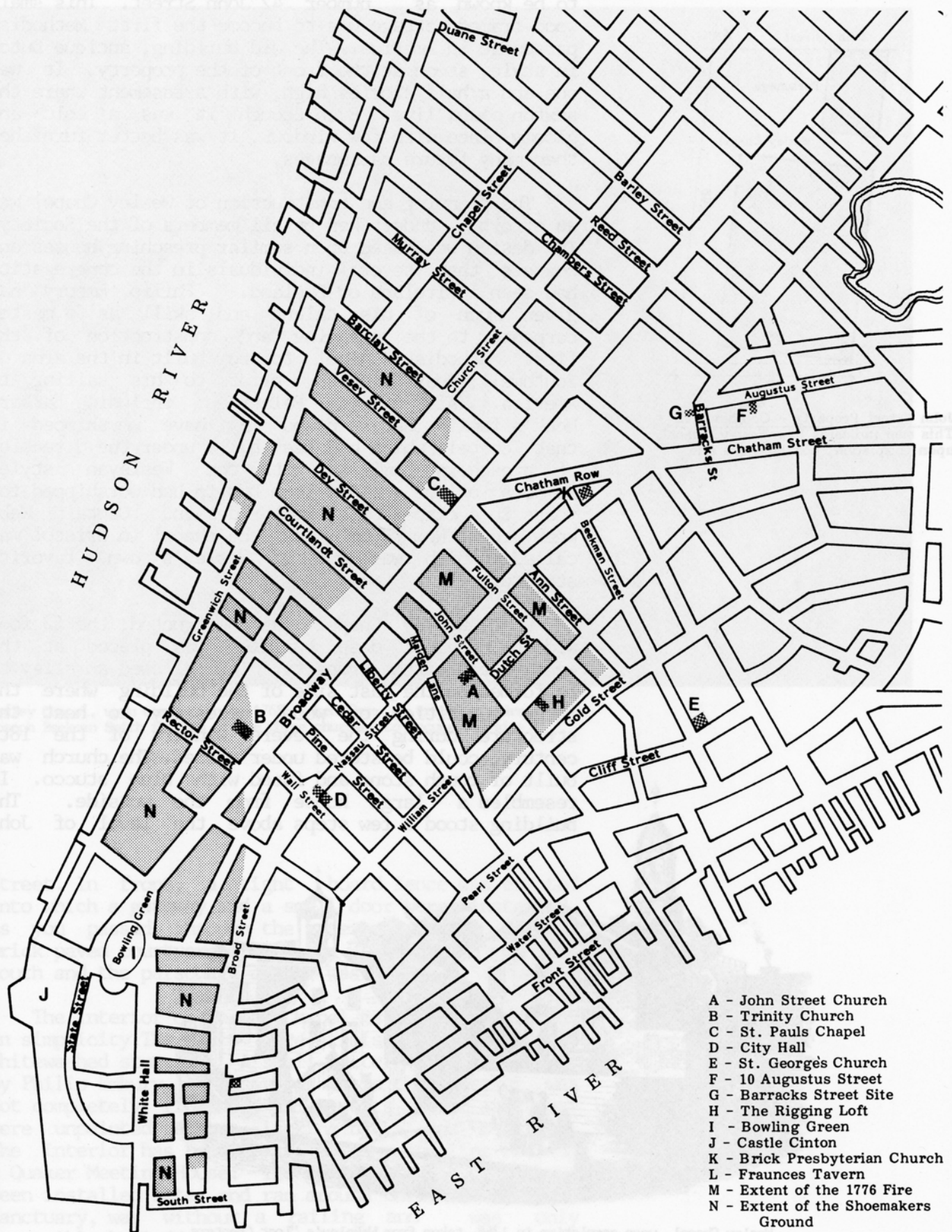
The two properties each measured, as stated in the original deed, "more or less", 25 feet in breadth and 95 feet in depth. In actuality, the combined frontage on John Street was approximately 55 feet. Included in the west plot was a small cottage, that was eventually



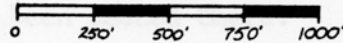
The First Trinity Church, erected in 1735.

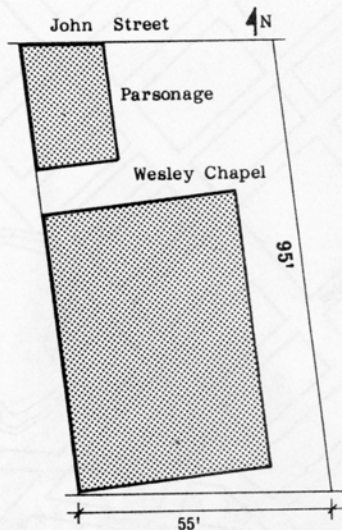


John Street Property - January 1768  
This map indicates the boundaries of the parcels when purchased from the Barkley estate.



- A - John Street Church
- B - Trinity Church
- C - St. Pauls Chapel
- D - City Hall
- E - St. Georges Church
- F - 10 Augustus Street
- G - Barracks Street Site
- H - The Rigging Loft
- I - Bowling Green
- J - Castle Cinton
- K - Brick Presbyterian Church
- L - Fraunces Tavern
- M - Extent of the 1776 Fire
- N - Extent of the Shoemakers Ground



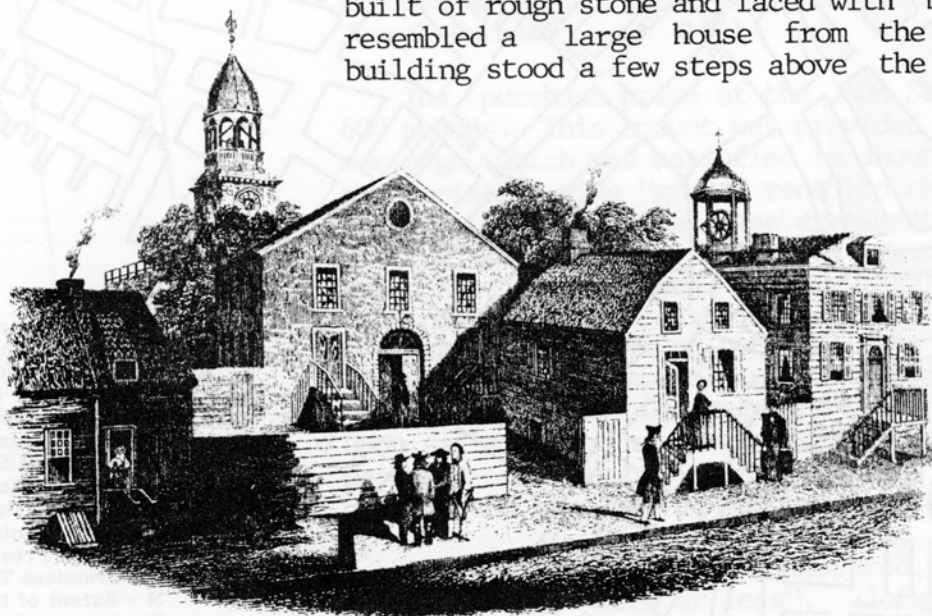


John Street Property - October 1768  
 This map indicates how Wesley Chapel,  
 upon completion, occupied the site.

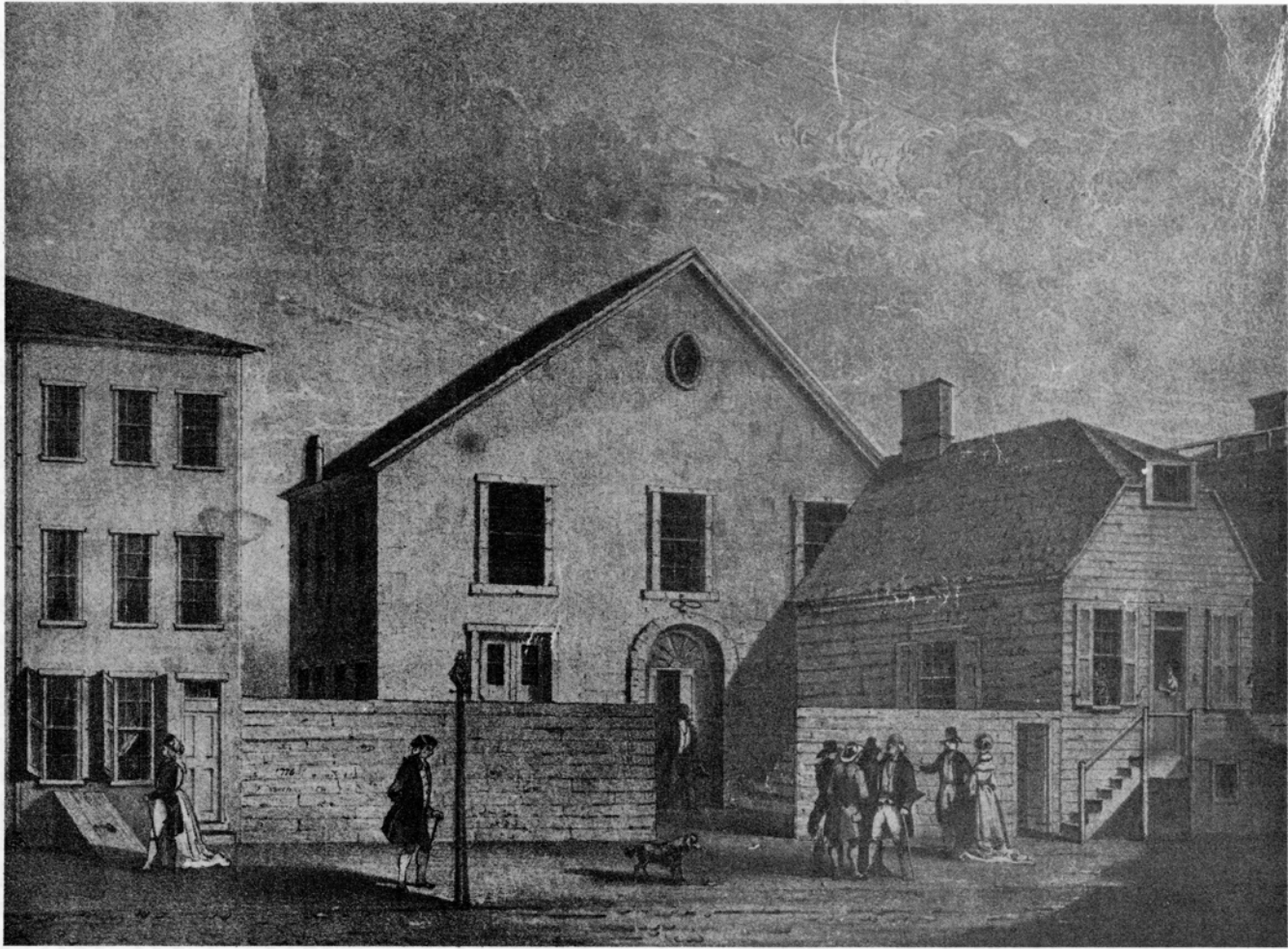
to be known as number 42 John Street. This small wood-framed cottage was to become the first Methodist parsonage in America. The old building, antique Dutch in style, stood at the front of the property. It was one and a half stories high, with a basement where the sexton could live. Even though it was a cold and gloomy place with few windows, it was better furnished than many future parsonages.

The planning and construction of Wesley Chapel was an effort undertaken by all members of the Society. The design was based upon similar preaching houses and chapels that several individuals in the congregation had seen in Ireland or England. Philip Embury had given much of his talent and skill as a master carpenter to the planning and construction of the first Methodist Chapel to be built in the area of Southwell, near Limerick, prior to his sailing to America. All of the Palatines, including Barbara Heck's family, had seen and may have worshipped in that chapel, which had been built under the direction of preachers familiar with the Wesleyan style. Members of the society from Dublin had worshipped for years in a chapel of a similar design. Captain Webb knew the "New Room", as the chapel in Bristol was called, which was one of Wesley's own favorite structures.

When Wesley Chapel was constructed, the 42 foot wide by 60 foot deep building was placed at the western end of the property. This allowed an alley to be formed on the east side of the building where the large quantities of wood, necessary to heat the structure during the severe winters of the 18th century, could be stored under a shed. The church was built of rough stone and faced with blue stucco. It resembled a large house from the outside. The building stood a few steps above the level of John



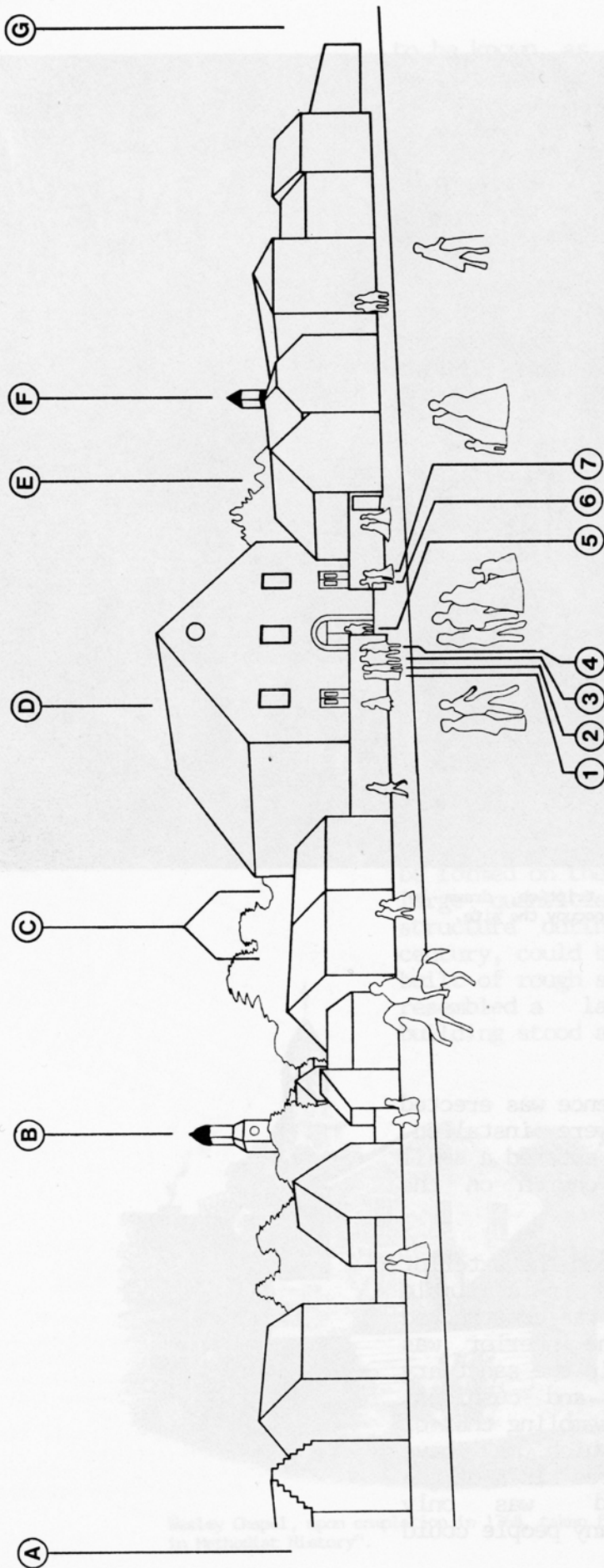
Wesley Chapel, upon completion in 1768, taken from Wakeley's "Lost Chapters in Methodist History".



Wesley Chapel, upon completion in 1768, taken from a triptych, drawn by Joseph Beekman Smith in 1844 of the three churches to occupy the site.

Street. In front, a tight board fence was erected into which a gateway and a small door were installed. As you passed through the gate, you entered a small brick paved courtyard framed by the church on the south and the parsonage on the west.

The interior of Wesley Chapel matched the exterior in simplicity. The walls were finished in a simple whitewashed stucco. A small lectern was constructed by Philip Embury. For several years the interior was not completely finished. The seats in the sanctuary were unpainted benches lacking backs and cushions. The interior has been described as resembling that of a Quaker Meeting House. The gallery, which may have been installed later and ran around three sides of the sanctuary, was without a railing and was only accessible by ladder. It is unlikely many people could have been seated there.



The PAINTING of WESLEY CHAPEL on JOHN STREET, in 1768, by Joseph Beekman Smith

#### LEGEND

- A - William Street
- B - The Middle Dutch Church
- C - Property purchased in 1785
- D - Wesley Chapel, 1768
- E - The first parsonage
- F - First German Reformed Church
- G - Nassau Street
- 1 - William Lupton
- 2 - Richard Sause
- 3 - Captain Thomas Webb
- 4 - Philip Embury
- 5 - Peter Williams
- 6 - Paul Heck
- 7 - Barbara Heck

Joseph Beekman Smith's superb painting of Wesley Chapel, the first edifice of John Street Methodist Church, New York City, is one of the outstanding works of art pertaining to early American Methodism. An accurate and beautiful representation of the building Philip Embury assisted in designing and building in 1768, it is a priceless trophy of Methodist origins in America.

The recognition accorded this painting can be seen by its exhibition at several prominent sites. The Smithsonian Institution included it in its exhibit in the United States Building at the 1958 World's Fair in Brussels, Belgium. It was accorded this distinction because it is regarded as the best extant original canvas portraying a typical American colonial church in its surroundings. The painting was exhibited in the New York City Pavilion at the 1964 World's Fair. It had been shown at the Museum of the City of New York between the two world's fairs and for a special exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York for America's Bicentennial.

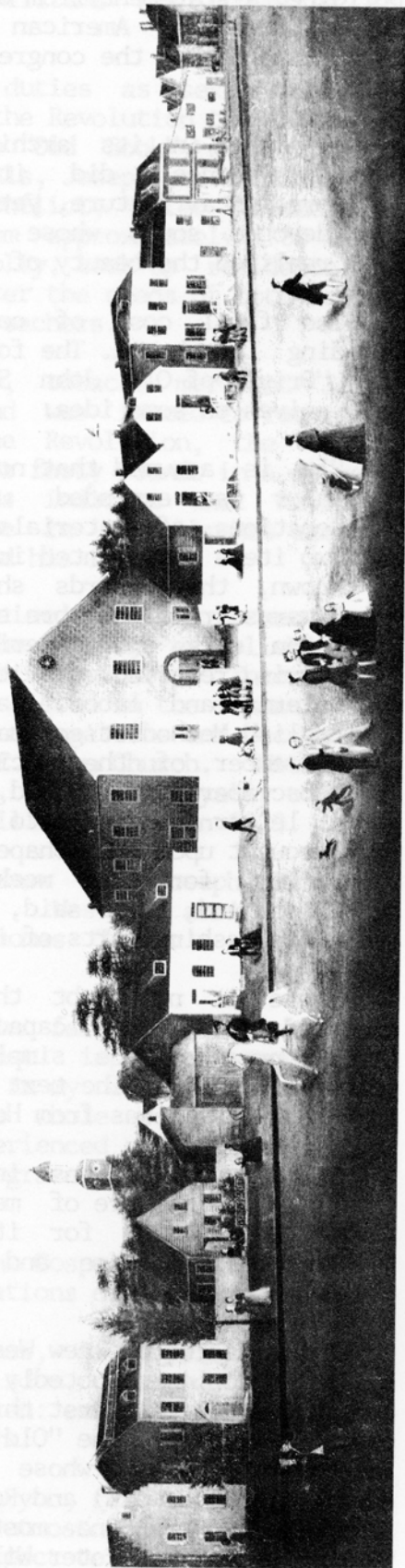
This painting is a rare and beautiful view of the south side of John Street, from Nassau to William Street, in 1768; the canvas measures 60 by 30 inches... the viewer's position is the spot where Dutch Street reaches John Street, and it maintains adequate treatment of the facade while presenting the

depth and height in true proportion and perspective.

The view shows the original Wesley Chapel which was opened October 30, 1768. This was the first Methodist Church structure in America. The parsonage at the right and partly in front of the church had been built many years before. The second church was built on this site in 1817-1818. The present building, the third, was erected in 1841.

The steeple to the left is that of the Middle Dutch Church in Nassau Street and the smaller steeple, to the right, is that of the First German Reformed Church which was built in 1765 on the front of the deep lot containing the old Nassau Street Theatre which was in the rear of Nos. 64-66. This church was sold in 1822 to the South Baptist Church.

John Street, during this period, contained a mixture of homes and small shops of wood-workers, painters, and professional men: The shop of Thomas Ash, Windsor chairmaker, was in the east end of the double house adjoining the Chapel yard fence in 1789. Blasius Moore, lived at No. 2, James Seaman, victualling house, No. 8; Elbert Kip, (of Kip's Bay) No. 11; Rubven and Son, Ivory turners, at No. 14; P. Bailey, coach and heraldry painter, No. 16; Amos Root, grocer, No. 16; Widow Margaret Roosevelt, No.



19; John Hyslop, No. 27; Charles and William Rollinson, engravers, at No. 28; John Scott, bookbinder, No. 31; William Colgate, tallow chandler, (founder of the Colgate Soap dynasty) lived at No. 34; Francis Hall, painter, lived at No. 41; Alex Patterson, chairmaker, at No. 54; Samuel B. Harper, grocer, at No. 57; Charles Fraser, painter, at No. 69; Jesse Scofield (of Keeler and Scofield, and later Scofield, Phelps & Co., Merchant Tailors) home, No. 73; Phillip I. Arcularius Jr., chairmaker, No. 75.

The street numbering of John Street prior to 1794 started on the north side, beginning at the house adjoining the Broadway corner, running consecutively to William Street, then back from William Street to Broadway on the south side of John.

Joseph B. Smith lavished the ultimate of his skill on this painting and it is the one he personally liked best. Frances G. Howell, pastor of John Street Church 1891-1895, believed that Smith

began the painting quite early in his career but supposed that in view of the maturity which the work demonstrates in technique and composition, it was completed years later. Smith did not display the painting but it was always keenly admired by those who saw it in his home or at his office-studio. Indeed, it received no public acclaim until Francis G. Howell arranged for its care and display on loan at the Museum of the City of New York. Clear and precise in line, rich and unfaded in color, the painting still maintains its fascination after more than a century and a half.

Joseph B. Smith developed the painting from his first drawings made in 1817, and it was completed not later than 1840. About 1865 he presented the painting to his physician son, Joseph Smith. On the death of Joseph Smith, the physician, title to the painting passed to his widow. During his pastorate at the John Street Church, Francis G. Howell found the painting still in Mrs. Smith's possession. Since

there were no immediate heirs, she sold the painting and many related items to Howell.

When Mayor Robert F. Wagner requested and received permission to place the painting in the New York City Pavillion at the 1964 World's Fair, he issued a Proclamation which reads in part:

WHEREAS, the John Street Methodist Church is the oldest Methodist Society in America, having been organized in 1766, and

WHEREAS, the John Street Methodist Church has for nearly two centuries made important contribution to the spiritual welfare of the City

NW THEREFORE, I, Robert F. Wagner, Mayor of the City of New York  
 DO PROCLAIM October 5, 1963 as  
 JOHN STREET METHODIST CHURCH DAY  
 in New York City, and direct the attention of all citizens to the rich spiritual and historical heritage of this religious institution.

Although it was a plain and sparsely furnished building, a statement from the pamphlet, "Story of the Mother Church of American Methodism" published in 1934, indicates the congregation never considered it uninviting:

"Neither in its architecture nor in its furnishings, did it display a single ornamental feature, yet, in the eyes of the devoted souls whose creation it was, it realized the beauty of holiness."

The final cost of construction for the new building is unknown. The following passage taken from the "Origin of Old John Street, New York," dated 1916, gives us some idea:

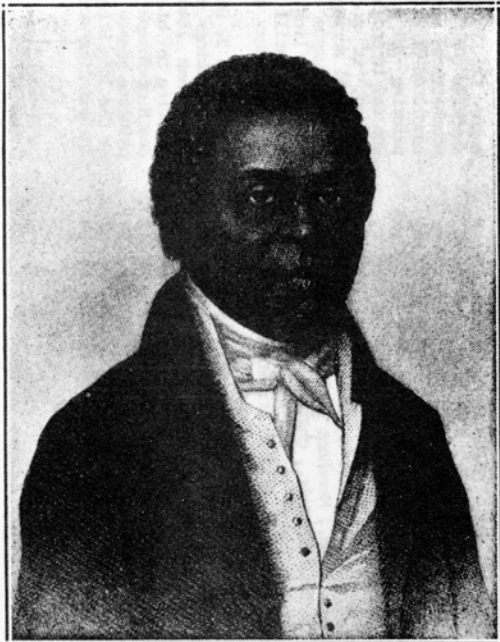
"It is assumed that not a little gratuitous labor was expended upon it, including donations of materials, but how much these two items represented in cash value is not known, the records show that one Samuel Edwards, received more than 500 pounds for mason work and materials; that one, David Norris, received more than 100 pounds for material and labor. One Thomas Bell, an English Methodist emigrant, for a short time a member of the Society, is listed as a subscriber of one pound and is on record, in a letter he wrote to Mr. Wesley, as having 'wrought upon the Chapel six days.' Mr. Embury, for some weeks wrought upon the Chapel and, it is said, Barbara Heck aided in white washing parts of its interior."

There is no doubt that the new building easily exceeded its planned capacity of 400 when Philip Embury preached the simple dedication service on October 30, 1768. The text of that first sermon heard in Wesley Chapel was from Hosea 10:12:

"Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap after the measure of mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and raine righteousness upon you."

The care of the new Wesley Chapel was undertaken by a sexton, undoubtedly with help from the congregation. The first three sextons as indicated by payments listed in the "Old Book", were John Murphy, Balthazar Creamer (whose slave may have actually carried out the work) and Robert Duncan. The fourth Sexton, and the one most closely associated with Wesley Chapel, was Peter Williams.

Peter Williams' parents were slaves of a wealthy family living on Beekman Street. He became a regular



PETER WILLIAMS



attendant at the Methodist services being held at the nearby Rigging Loft. Williams was converted to Methodism by Captain Webb.

Williams started his duties as sexton in the spring of 1776. During the Revolution the duties of sexton, as indicated in the "Old Book" were rotated among two other individuals, Joseph and Richard, but towards the end of the conflict, Peter became the principal caretaker. From approximately 1780 until 1787 Peter and his wife, Molly, took up residence in the parsonage, looking after the needs of both Wesley Chapel and the itinerant preachers.

Because Peter's owner, tobacco merchant James Aymar was a loyalist and was forced to return to England at the end of the Revolution, the Church Trustees purchased Peter for forty pounds in a private sale. The church accounts indicate that Williams repaid his purchase price in installments until 4 November 1785 when he gained his freedom.

With the knowledge he gained from his former owner Peter Williams entered the trade, establishing a successful firm and acquiring property. Through his wealth and generosity, he assisted in the formation of several black Methodist congregations and became one of the founders of the A.M.E. Zion Church. With all of his outside interests, Williams' loyalty to John Street never waned. Peter Williams died in 1823.

In 1769 Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmore, missionaries sent by John Wesley, arrived in New York. Again according to Thomas Taylor's letter of 1768:

"There is another point far more material, and in which I must importune your assistance, not only in my own name, but also in the name of the whole society. We want an able and experienced preacher, one who has both gifts and grace necessary for the work.

...the progress of the Gospel here depends much upon the qualifications of preachers.

"In regard to a preacher, if possible we must have a man of wisdom, of sound faith, and a good disciplinarian: one whose heart and soul are in the work.

"Dear sir, I entreat you, for the good of thousands, to use your utmost endeavors to send one over. With respect to money for the payment of the preacher's passage over, if they could not procure it we would sell our coats and shirts to procure it for them."



RICHARD BOARDMAN



JOSEPH PILMORE

The strength with which Taylor presented his case persuaded Boardman and Pilmore to offer themselves for service in the Colonies when Wesley read the letter before the Conference in Leeds in 1769. A special collection at the Conference, provided for their passage and they set sail for New York in August 1769.

Richard Boardman, armed with the authority given him by John Wesley set about reorganizing the leadership of the young congregation at Wesley Chapel. A new board of trustees was created to hold and manage the property with Boardman as its head and the following individuals as members: Joseph Pilmore, William Lupton, Captain Webb, John Southwell, Henry Newton and James Jarvis (Philip Embury was now on his way to Vermont). This newly organized board of trustees, now responsible for Wesley Chapel, formally "purchased" from the first trustees, the property upon which the Chapel had been constructed. The second deed was executed on November 2, 1770 between Boardman, Joseph Forbes and the other trustees.

This new deed outlined the transfer of the property for "the consideration of" ten shillings. Many years later, after Forbes' death, his grandson, a Methodist preacher, said that his grandfather was "always proud of the fact that he gave the deed to John Street Church".

Among the first fruits of Boardman's ministry in New York, "was the conversion of John Mann, who became a useful preacher and supplied the pulpit at John Street during the Revolutionary War, when the English preachers had either returned home or gone into retirement..."



The "Battle of Golden Hill" - January 19, 1770. From an oil painting by Eleanor Gay Lee.

Near the site of Wesley Chapel on January 18, 1770, Isaac Sears, a contributor to the Wesley Chapel building fund and a leader of the Sons of Liberty, and Walter Quackenbos came upon three British soldiers posting placards denouncing the Sons of Liberty. The two accosted the soldiers, managing to take two of them to the Mayor of the city. The commotion brought out crowds of citizens to help secure the prisoners. A contingent of soldiers, alerted to their comrades arrest, came upon the crowd but Mayor Hicks called for calm. The troops then retired as far as Golden Hill on John Street, between William and Cliff streets, closely followed by the citizens. When the troops met reinforcements, the command was given to turn and charge the populace. Numerous people were wounded and several were taken to Wesley Chapel to care for their injuries. Several frays ensued into the next day. The conflict finally came to an end when the citizens managed to disarm several soldiers and force them back to their barracks. Even though this battle predated the "Boston Massacre" by nearly two months, the significance of the "Battle of Golden Hill" is often overshadowed by later events.

GOLDEN HILL  
 THE ORIGINAL NAME OF JOHN STREET EAST OF WILLIAM STREET  
 NEAR BY, JANUARY 19TH & 20TH 1770 OCCURED THE  
 BATTLE OF GOLDEN HILL  
 BETWEEN CITIZENS AND BRITISH TROOPS  
 FIRST BLOODSHED IN THE FIGHT FOR INDEPENDENCE  
 NEAR THIS SITE, AT 131 WILLIAM STREET  
 WASHINGTON IRVING  
 WAS BORN APRIL 3RD 1785  
 Erected by the Maiden Lane Historical Society 1926

In the spring of 1770 Pilmore wrote to John Wesley describing the work being done:

"Our congregations are large...The religion of Jesus is a favorite topic in New York...society here consists of about one hundred members.."

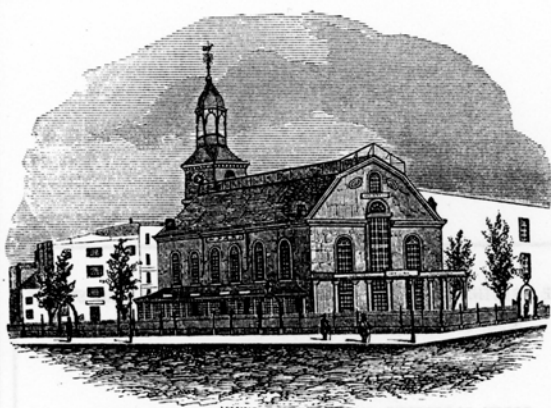
Boardman, continuing to exchange posts with Pilmore approximately every three months, returned to New York from Philadelphia and in April 1771 wrote to Wesley, "...we have a great awakening here."

Francis Asbury, at the age of twenty-six, was appointed by John Wesley at the Bristol, England Conference of 1771, to come to the colonies. He came to New York City November 12, 1771 after having originally arrived in Philadelphia, October 27, 1771. Francis Asbury began his service to the Lord in the colonies on November 13, 1771 with his first sermon at Wesley Chapel. From that day on he would continue to make frequent visits to Wesley Chapel while spreading the Gospel across the country.

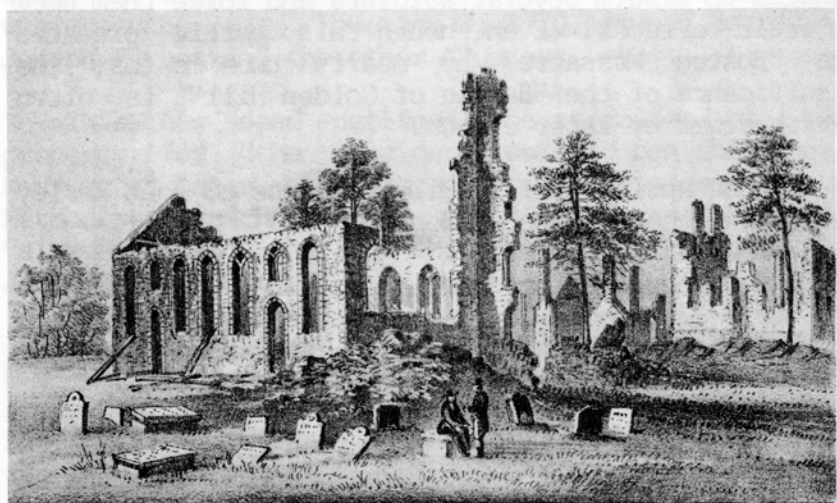
During the turbulent American Revolution and the concurrent British occupation of New York City, Wesley Chapel was allowed to remain open because Methodism was considered an Anglican sect and the Chapel an adjunct of Trinity Church and the Church of England. All non-Anglican churches were requisitioned for military purposes. For example, the Middle Dutch Church was used as a prison, the French Church as a jail and the Baptist Church was used as a stable. Wesley Chapel continued to offer Methodist Services

throughout the week, except on Sunday mornings when the Hessian soldiers occupied the premises for their worship.

Shortly after the occupation of New York City by the British in 1776, a great fire broke out and devastated the town. At about midnight on September 21, 1776, a small fire started in a house on Whitehall Street. Strong winds spread the fire which rapidly destroyed nearly one-third of the city before it was brought under control. It was not until the end of the war in 1783 that any major reconstruction took place. The first Trinity Church constructed in 1735 was destroyed in this fire. Although the Anglican Church moved to St. Paul's Chapel to continue its worship, Old John Street Church, a chapel of Trinity and unharmed by the fire, continued to accommodate Christian worship.



THE MIDDLE DUTCH CHURCH



The ruins of the first Trinity Church after the fire of 1776.

For the six years of the British occupation the congregation was out of touch with the annual conferences held by Wesley in England. During that period minutes do not record any appointments to New York City. John Mann and Samuel Spraggs served the congregation during those turbulent times. John Mann guided the society on his own until Samuel Spraggs arrived from Philadelphia a short time after its occupation by the British in October 1777. Mann then served the society as assistant to Spragg until the end of the war. Records indicate collections were stronger at this time than anytime before and for sometime after the war. With numerous churches closed for the duration of the war, the two preachers certainly had a tremendous task serving the needs of a large and religiously diverse flock. British soldiers composed a good part of the ministry of the society.

Peace did not reign for the Methodists during the

occupation. Undesirable elements from both the populace and the British army were always ready to disrupt a Methodist meeting. There are several entries in the "Old Book" covering the expense of guards hired for protection, especially during evening "watch night" services.

One such incident occurred on Christmas Eve 1777. As Seamen explains, "...some of the officers of (General) Howe's army acted in a play...entitled, The Devil to Pay in the West Indies'. After it they got drunk and went reeling and yelling through the streets. Passing the Methodist Chapel, where a "watch-night" was in progress, they went in. The officer (a well known colonel) that represented the devil had a cow's hide fastened to his shoulders, with the horns painted red, while the tail dragged on the floor. He went up and stood beside the preacher. The preacher stopped and the women screamed. Two strong men laid hold of him..." While keeping the soldier within the chapel under arrest, his companions started to attack the doors and windows. The commotion quickly ended when the guard arrived and took the man away. "General Howe found it necessary to conciliate the Methodists, setting a guard to protect them."



Capture of the Devil in John Street Church.



St. Paul's Chapel - 1764-1766

Although the population of the city suffered greatly during the British occupation, relief came upon the signing of the Treaty of Paris on September 3, 1783. These new waves of people coming to the city created a shifting population base and continued the congregation's growth. As the society grew, the increased attendance put pressure on the existing facilities, but it would be nearly thirty years

THE CHURCHMAN'S COMPANION  
1784



John Street Property - 1784  
The map illustrates the western portion of the property that was sold.



ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH

### THE CHRISTMAS CONFERENCE, 1784

before the congregation had to begin thinking about, as Francis Asbury put it, "a more commodious structure."

When New York reappears on the list of appointments it is with the appointment of Rev. John Dickens, "accompanied by his wife." She was the first Methodist preacher's wife New York had seen. Until this time the parsonage had been known as "Batchelors' Hall" because none of the travelling preachers who rotated through Wesley Chapel were married.

In late 1784, John Wesley sent Dr. Thomas Coke to the newly formed United States as superintendent of the Methodist Societies in America. Wesley did not look favorably on the colonies' struggle for independence but he accepted the situation, seeing it as a new and greater challenge. After his arrival in New York on November 3, 1784, Coke made his way to Baltimore. From there he sent emissaries asking all Methodist preachers to meet on the day before Christmas to formally organize the Methodist Episcopal Church (as it was to be named) separate from the Church of England.

The assembled clergy, "agreed to form a Methodist Episcopal Church in which the liturgy should be read and the sacraments be administered by a superintendent, elders, and deacons, who shall be ordained by a presbytery, using the Episcopal form as prescribed in the Rev. Mr. Wesley's Prayer Book."



The Wesley Chapel Museum, ca. 1910, still retains the Wesley Clock, the lecturn built by Philip Embury, and the alter rail purchased in 1785 after the Christmas Conference of 1784.

The silver communion service used at that first General Conference was provided by Wesley Chapel and remains in its possession today.

Prior to the Christmas Conference of 1784, Methodists in New York had received communion at Trinity, St. Paul's, or St. George's churches. Now they could receive the sacraments in Wesley Chapel from their own pastors. In the "Old Book" an entry is made on January 8, 1785 for payment of a little more than sixteen pounds for an "altar piece." This mahogany altar-rail is now installed in the Wesley Chapel Museum of Old John Street Church. It is even possible that Dr. Coke administered that first communion at Wesley Chapel since on that same date an entry in the "Old Book" indicates payment to him for officiating at a service.

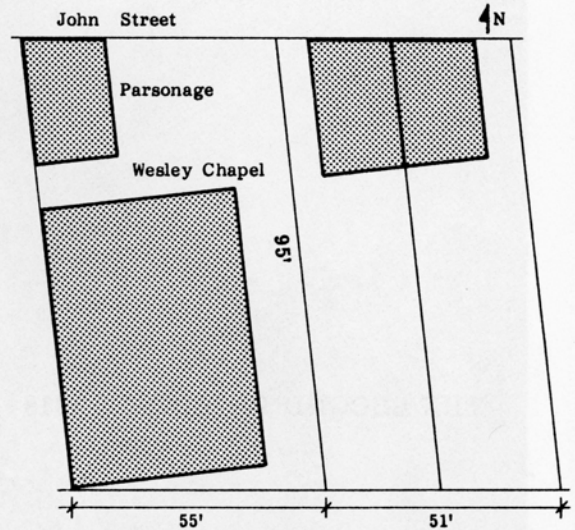
Several entries later, instead of referring to Wesley Chapel as a "chapel" or "preaching house", the entry for April 29, 1785 refers to the "church" — a big step for the congregation within the newly formed denomination.

To further strengthen their place in the city, the Trustees purchased from Leonard Lispenard and the Reformed Dutch Church on September 1, 1796, the two adjacent lots to the east of Wesley Chapel for 700 pounds. This acquisition, as described in the deed, has a frontage on John Street of 51 feet, giving the Society a one hundred six foot frontage. The purchase provided the Society with sufficient space for each subsequent modification of the building. There was a residence on each lot from which rental payments were received and carefully noted in the "Old Book".

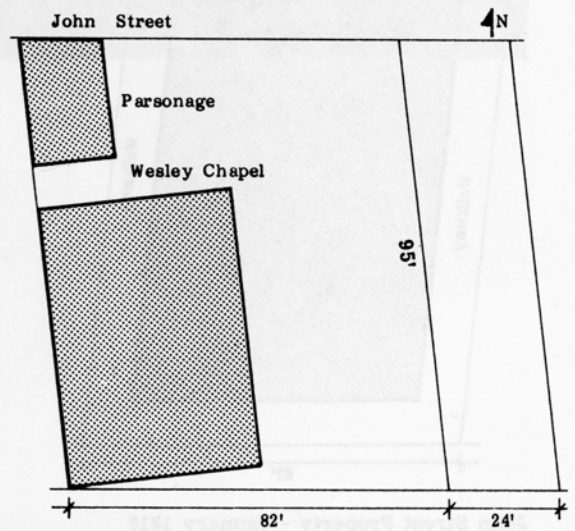
Several years later, in early 1798, the Trustees sold twenty-four feet of the eastern end of the property (later known as 50 John Street). After the sale, the Society retained an eighty-two foot frontage on John Street, which is still theirs today.

On September 13, 1788, the adoption of the Constitution of the United States had been declared. On April 30 1789, George Washington was inaugurated as President in New York, the capital city. Francis Asbury suggested to the Conference, meeting at John Street at that time, that the bishops should present a congratulatory message to the President. The Conference unanimously approved the measure and appointed Coke and Asbury to draw up the message and present it to President Washington. Washington graciously accepted the honor, the first such honor from any religious denomination in the young nation.

On May 11, 1810 Asbury placed this entry in his Journal:



**John Street Property - October 1786**  
This map indicates the boundaries of the property after the purchase of two additional lots to the east from Leonard Lispenard



**John Street Property - 1798**  
This map indicates the eastern portion of the property that was sold.

"I preached at old John Street; this is the thirty-ninth year I have officiated within the walls; this house must come down and something larger and better occupy its place."

It would be seven years before plans would be completed for the new structure on John Street.

During the post-Revolutionary period New York City grew rapidly and the Methodist Church was constantly welcoming new members. By the turn of the century John Street Church was one of six congregations constituting the first Methodist circuit in New York. The six church properties were held and financially managed by one board of trustees incorporated under the laws of New York State. The five other churches grown from John Street were: Forsyth Street (1790), Duane Street (1797), Seventh Street (1800), Allen Street and Bedford Street (1810).

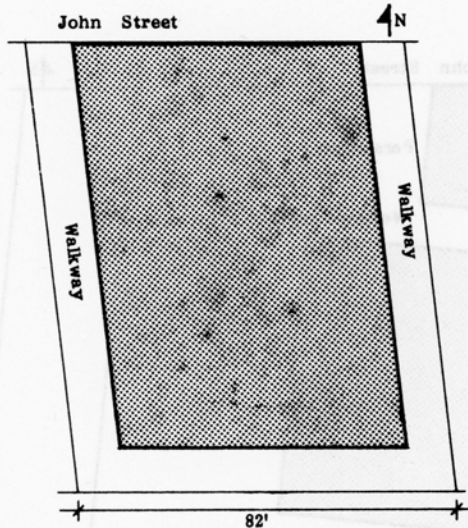
#### THE SECOND BUILDING, 1818

When the idea was first proposed to rebuild Wesley Chapel in early 1817, it was necessary to secure the approval of the Trustees representing the other churches. It was slow in coming. The delay in approval can be laid to opposition to the use of general Trustee funds for the rebuilding of a single building. That opposition came primarily from the congregations in the eastern part of the city. The opposition finally agreed to the approval of funds for the proposed reconstruction under the condition that if the Rev. W. Thacher, one of the stationed preachers who had been very successful in raising the necessary funds for the Allen and Bedford Street churches, could obtain a sufficient subscription in five days the work could be done. At the end of five days Mr. Thacher produced a list indicating pledges totaling \$5,000.00. This settled the question and rebuilding began.

The last service in the old building was a Love Feast held on May 12, 1817. The walls were demolished on May 13, 1817 and on the 22nd, the corner stone of the new building was laid. On January 4, 1818 it was dedicated.

Although it is not known exactly where the congregation met during this construction period, it is probable that the society shared facilities with other churches in the Methodist circuit. This new building would be the sixth place of worship for the Old John Street congregation and would cost about \$30,000.

The facade of the second building contained windows very similar to those of the present John Street Church. There were three equally spaced



**John Street Property - January 1818**  
This map indicates how the second building, upon completion, occupied the site.





The John Street Church, upon completion in 1818, the second panel of the triptich drawn by Joseph Beekman Smith in 1844.

windows across the second (balcony) floor and three equally spaced double doors at the entry level, the middle door leading directly to the galleries, the two side doors opening directly onto the sanctuary. The 62 foot by 87 foot structure was centered on the property allowing walkways on either side that led to the rear of the church where a large entrance was placed. The front came very close to the street line. The structure itself was constructed of stone covered with a light colored stucco with many of the roof timbers from the original Wesley Chapel reused in the roof.

An arrangement favored at the time, placed the pulpit between the doors that led from the street.



METHODIST CHURCH, JOHN STREET.



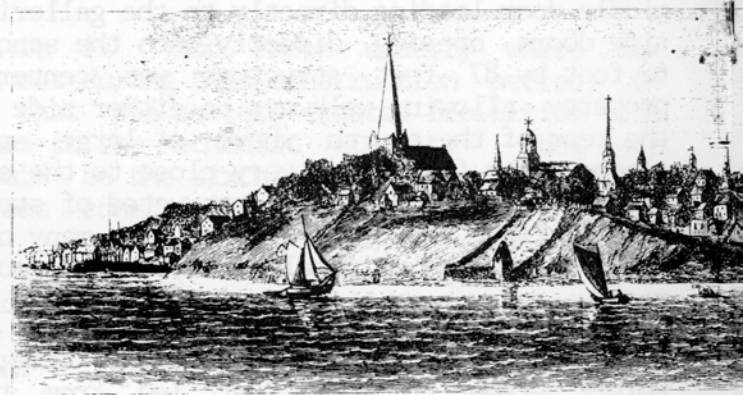
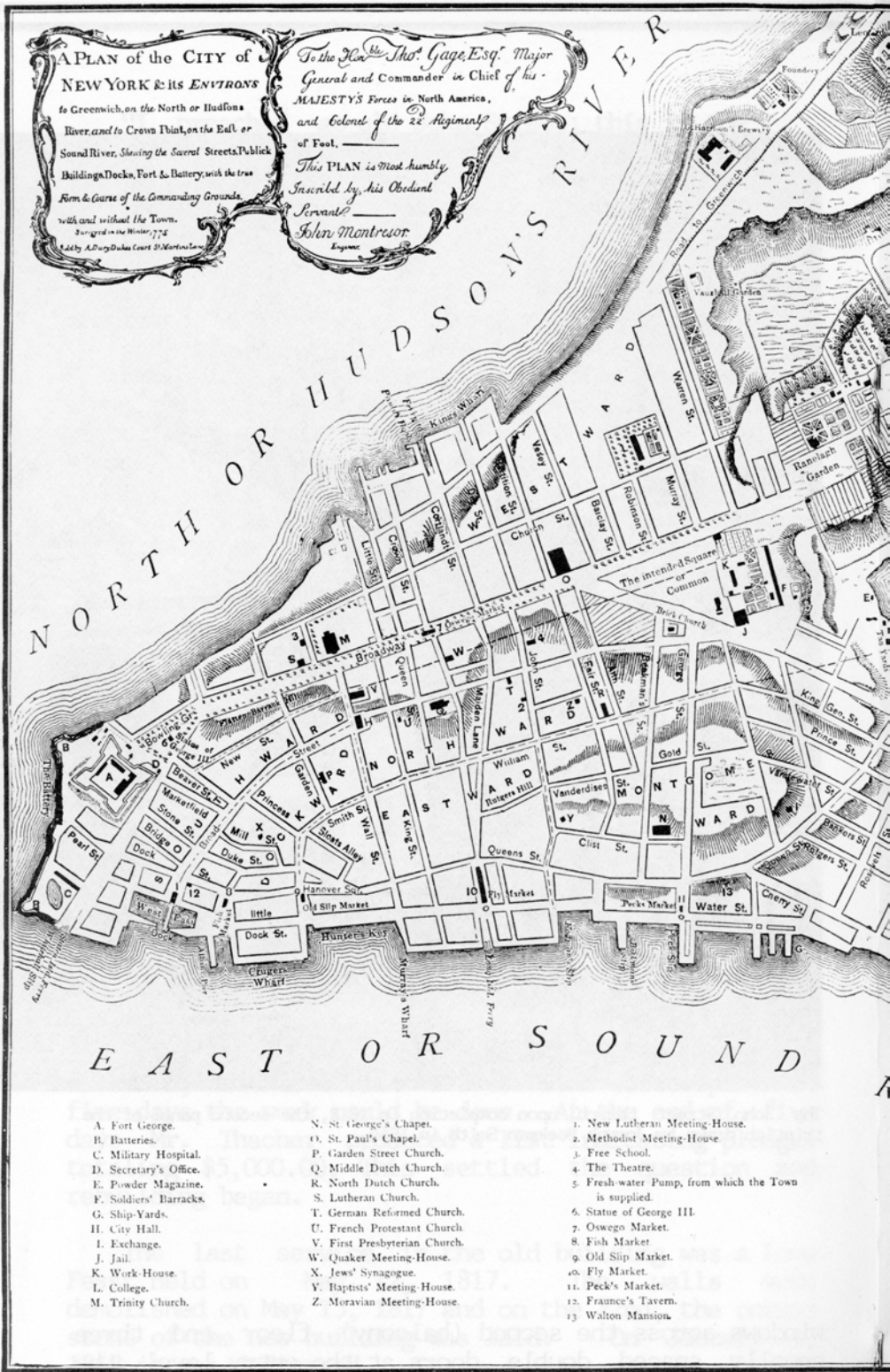
THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, WALL STREET.



THE ROYAL EXCHANGE, BROAD STREET



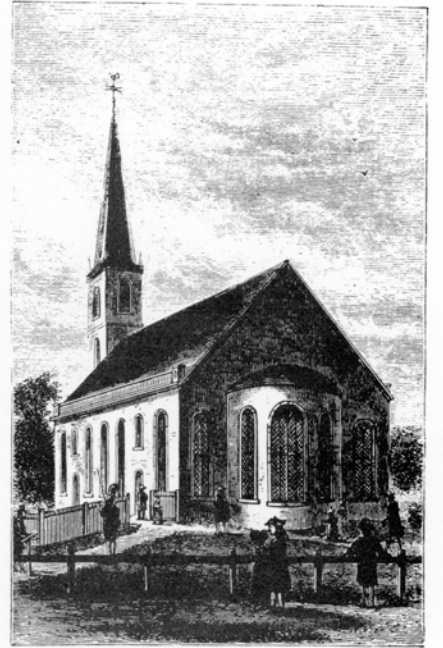
THE CITY HALL, WALL STREET, WHERE THE TREASURY BUILDING NOW STANDS.



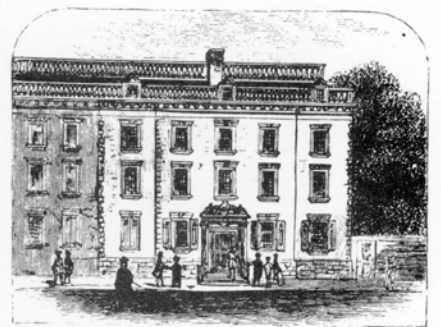
NEW YORK



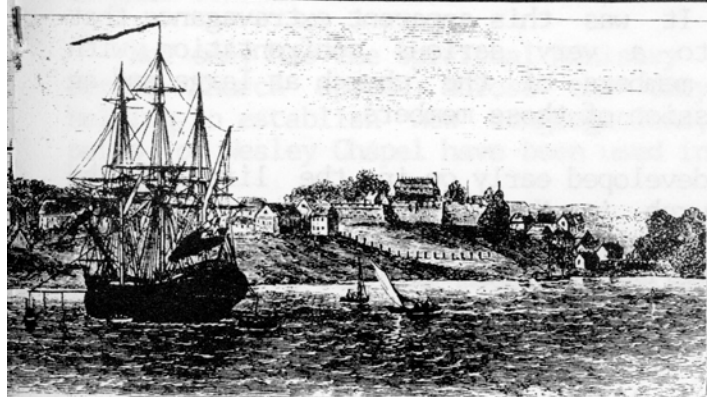
MIDDLE DUTCH CHURCH, LATE POST OFFICE.



TRINITY CHURCH IN 1776.



THE WALTON HOUSE IN 1776.



IN 1776.



THE BRICK CHURCH AND ST. PAUL'S CHAPEL

The walls and the woodwork in front of the galleries and surrounding the pulpit were white, as was the pulpit itself. The book-board and altar were mahogany. (They are now on display in the Wesley Chapel Museum of the present building.) The wainscot and the pews were green with mahogany-colored trimmings. The pulpit had a paneled elliptical front which rested on eight fluted Ionic Columns, leaving an open space beneath. It was entered on either side by six steps. Against the wall behind the pulpit were two pilasters which supported a neat frieze and cornice running nearly the whole length of the altar and meeting with the front of the gallery. The corners of the walls and gallery were circular with niches for stoves resting on marble slabs. There were ventilators in the ceiling, covered with green blinds. The gallery that went all around the building was shallow behind the pulpit, but in the rear was very deep, to accommodate the choir and Sunday School. At the rear of this deep balcony a double flight of stairs climbed to the ceiling and gave access to the loft above. When the building was crowded these stairs were often filled with members -- some even ascended to the loft and listened through the ventilators. In the basement there was a lecture room, class rooms and a water pump. On a tablet over the center door in front, in gilt letters on a black background, was the inscription:

This Church,  
The first erected by the  
Methodist Society in America,  
Was built 1768. Rebuilt 1817  
According to this time it shall be said,  
What hath  
God wrought? Num. XXIII

It was a beautiful, though simple building, well adapted to its purpose. It was easy for the pastor to speak from the pulpit and be heard by the congregation. The only complaint was that the basement was further below grade than necessary.

From the description of the new building, it could be considered a rather opulent place of worship for Methodists. It was this apparent extravagance that contributed to a very serious confrontation with conservative members of the church at large and an eventual secession of those members.

Problems developed early on in the life of the Methodist Church in New York with regard to the Trustees' financial affairs. Asbury even noted in his Journal in late 1772 that he didn't like the way money was collected and distributed by the Trustees. This situation continued to plague the church at large up to the time of the debate over the rebuilding of Wesley Chapel in 1817.

It was not surprising, therefore, that there was strenuous opposition to the rebuilding of John Street Church. There was already a heavy debt, which had increased during the preceding year and the quarterly and class collections had fallen considerably short of paying the expenses of the preachers.

Even with the continuing problems and the ensuing opposition, the Trustees voted to rebuild the old Wesley Chapel. It was expected that the new house would be superior to any of the others and better furnished. But when the conservative membership saw its attractive appearance and carpeted altar, a most uncommon sight, they had had enough. With this opulence being paid out of the common treasury, the breach between the factions widened.

A letter by Mrs. Bishop Clark explains how the secession, led by Reverend William Stilwell in 1820, was precipitated by the erection of the second John Street Church:

"We have a tree of Methodism, the tiny branch representing the Stilwellites has the record, Organized by Wm. Stilwell in 1820, in New York; cause: the difference of opinion in regard to the furnishing of the Old John Street Church'."

The Rev. William Stilwell secured legal incorporation for his group, so that by August, 1820 the dissenting members, 300 in all from the six Methodist Churches of the circuit, officially created a new branch of Methodism -- The Stilwellites.

The group flourished, eventually having several separate congregations, but the organization died upon the death of Rev. Stilwell in 1851.

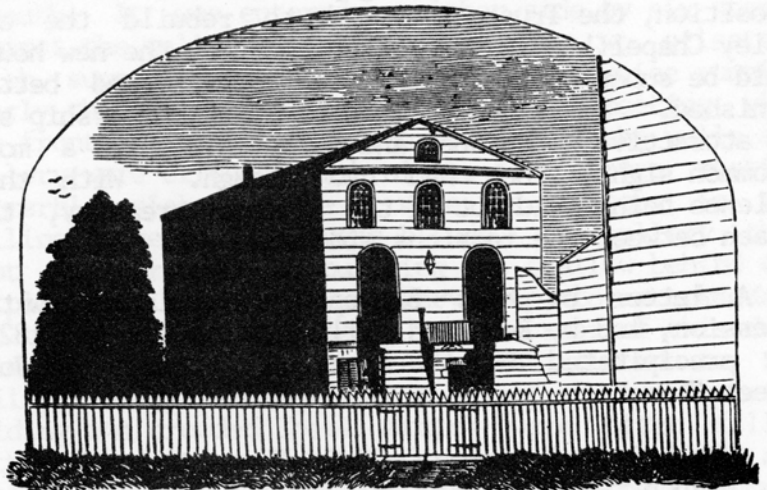
It cannot be said that the rebuilt John Street Church of 1817 was the only cause of the secession, since problems had been occurring for some time, but it contributed to bringing the issues to the forefront and causing them to be dealt with the only way people of good conscience could.

Not only has the spiritual ministry of the John Street Church spread across the City of New York helping to establish new congregations, but actual parts of Wesley Chapel have been used in other church edifices.

When Wesley Chapel was dismantled in 1817, much of the unused building material was sold and used in the building of the Bowery Village Methodist Church at Seventh Street and the Bowery..

It was necessary to remove the Bowery Village

Church and congregation from this site in the late 1830's. The building was sold to a fledgling Methodist congregation in Yorkville (today's upper East Side in Manhattan) founded in early 1837. The structure was dismantled and erected on East 86th Street, "near the railroad", as Park Avenue was then known. This new church was dedicated in 1838.



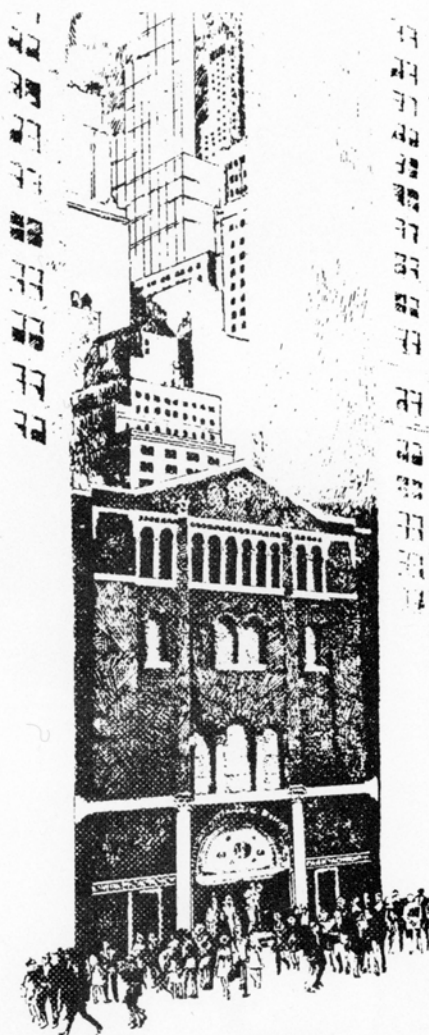
The original building completed in Yorkville in 1838 from pieces of the 1768 Wesley Chapel.

Continuing growth of the congregation forced the replacement of the first Yorkville building in 1850. In 1884, the society built a huge Romanesque style Church on the southeast corner of Park Avenue and East 86th Street. At the end of the building's description in Kings Handbook of 1893, it states, "under the place where the preacher stands are several of the great timbers shaped by Philip Embury." The present building which replaced the 1884 structure, was dedicated in 1927 with the original Wesley Chapel beams safely supporting the pulpit in the Byzantine style sanctuary.

This era in the city's history was one of great growth and expansion. The war of 1812 had recently been concluded and trade routes closed to the United States by the British were once again open with a corresponding flood of imports, capital and immigrants.

The physical size of the city was rapidly changing. The master street plan of 1811, the grid system that exists today, was laid out across Manhattan Island creating an entire city of 25' x 100' building lots.

As population and commerce grew, pressure was placed upon the existing downtown residential districts to accommodate new and expanding businesses. The only direction for the residents to move was uptown. As the downtown businesses expanded, the



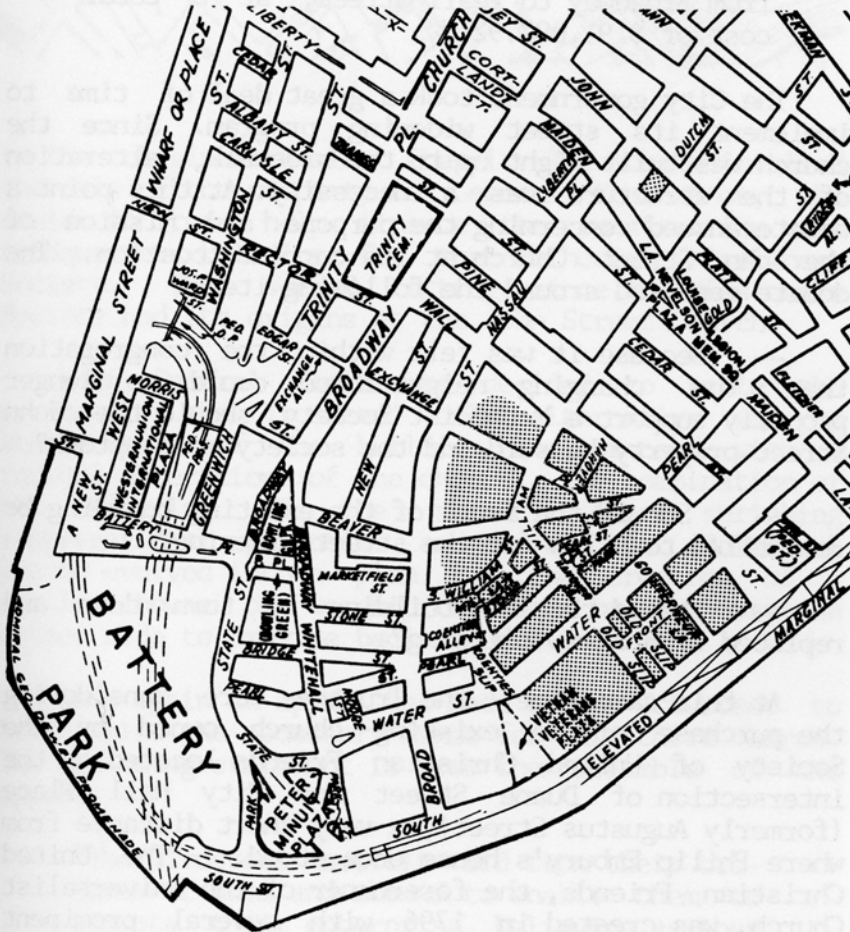
THE PARK AVENUE METHODIST CHURCH as it stands today on the south side of 86th street between Park and Lexington Avenues, erected in 1927.

residential areas became virtually non-existent. Suppliers of household services and the great shopping districts continued to move uptown to be closer to their customers.

It was in this continuous migration that the local churches found themselves. Every year another denomination would sell its property and move closer to its parishioners.

On December 17, 1835 another catastrophic fire struck the city. The 700 buildings destroyed covered less area than the fire of 1776, but in terms of property damage this was the worst fire in the city's history.

The fire began in the store of Comstock and Adams in Merchant Street and quickly spread to other drygoods merchants crowding the area surrounding



**FIRE of 1835**  
 Superimposed on a current map of lower Manhattan is the extent of that devastating fire. The John Street Church is indicated to the north.

Hanover Square. Firebreaks were created by the careful dynamiting of several buildings, but it was two days later before the city finally brought the fire under control with the help of fire brigades from Philadelphia and New Jersey. John Street Church was fortunate to be on the uptown side of the firebreaks and was saved from destruction.

Six months later in July 1836 the church fell victim to an unsuccessful arson attempt.

Mr. John P. Kelly, a deranged printer from Philadelphia, was caught kneeling and mumbling prayers over a small fire he had started under a bench in the basement of the church. He carried a mahogany crucifix and several Catholic pamphlets, but no explanation of his conduct was ever given.

### THE THIRD BUILDING, 1841

In 1836, probably in response to the City's efforts to rebuild following the fire of 1835 and its seemingly never ending growth, it was necessary to widen a large portion of the streets in lower Manhattan. John Street was among those thoroughfares listed for alteration. In the 1857 edition of D.T. Valentine's "Manual of the Common Council of New York", the following excerpt is found:

"February 16, 1836 - John Street widened from Broadway to Pearl Street, at a total cost of \$191,097.92."

The City government took a great deal of time to implement its street widening program. Since the church was built right up to the sidewalk, alteration of the structure was a necessity. At this point a debate ensued concerning the purpose and mission of the John Street Church at its current location. The debate centered around the following items:

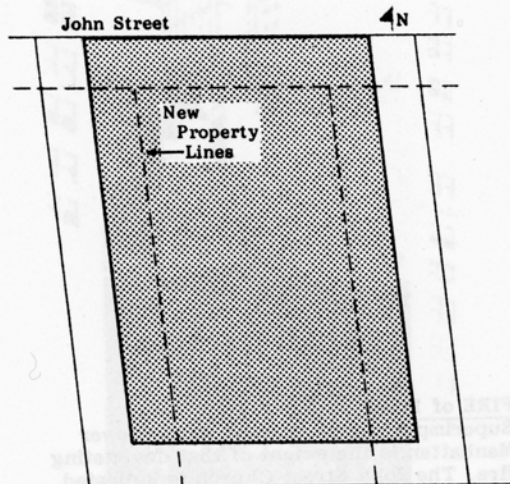
-- Because it was felt within the congregation that the changing neighborhood could no longer properly support a Methodist Society, should the John Street property be sold and the society move uptown?

-- Should the front of the existing building be remodelled to allow for the street widening?

-- Should the 1817 building be torn down and replaced with a new building?

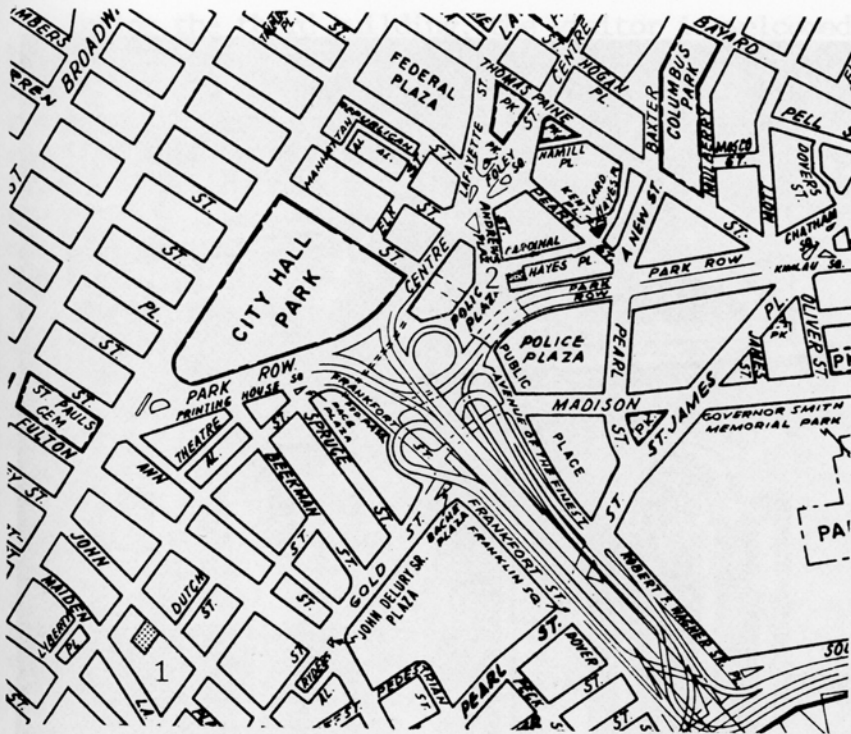
At this same time, the Trustees were considering the purchase of an existing church owned by the Society of United Christian Friends located at the intersection of Duane Street and City Hall Place (formerly Augustus Street), a very short distance from where Philip Embury's house once stood. (The United Christian Friends, the forerunner of the Universalist Church, was created in 1796 with several prominent members from the John Street society. The group had built a church on Vandewater Street in 1797 and by 1818 built the large brick church on Duane Street.)

With all these questions unresolved, the Trustees devised a plan to present to the General Conference of 1840 that would enable the congregation to move uptown and yet allow the John Street site to become a shrine



**John Street Property - 1836**  
This map indicates the new street boundaries and their intrusion on the second building.





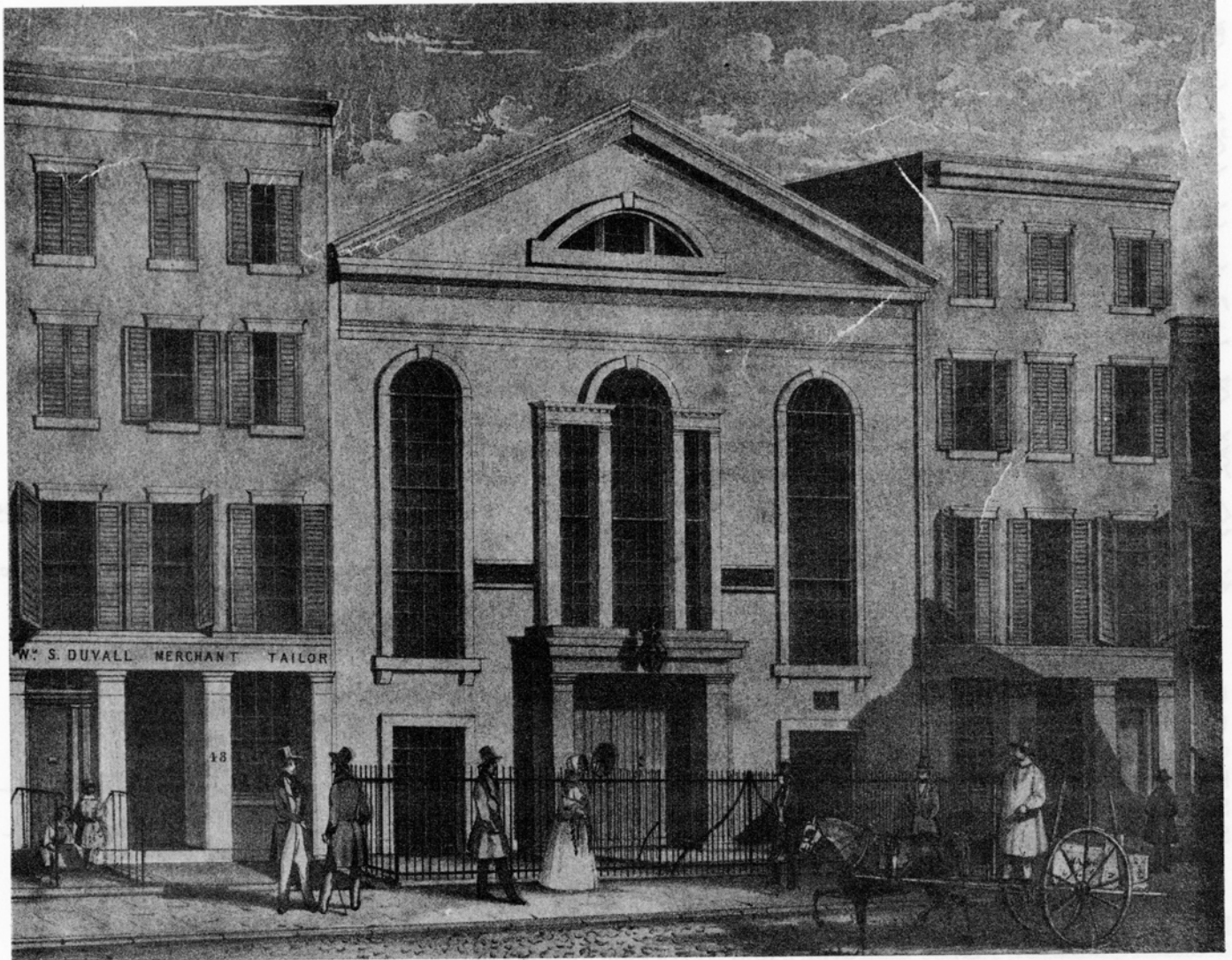
**SOCIETY of UNITED CHRISTIAN FRIENDS - 1840**  
 1 - John Steet Church  
 2 - Society of United Christian Friends  
 This present day map indicates where the church occupied by the Society of United Christian Friends was located.

to the original Wesley Chapel. The scheme involved the sale of the property to General Conference, who would in turn help finance the construction of a headquarters building for the Methodist Missionary Society. This seemed fitting since the Missionary Society had its origins at the John Street Church.

When General Conference decided to table the proposal, the Trustees' only alternative was to abandon sale of the building and proceed with a radical alteration of the church. The combination of the widening of the street, the shrinking congregational potential and the need for additional income evolved into a plan for the erection of a smaller house of worship flanked by row houses on either side to provide badly needed income.

Once again an appeal was made by the trustees to help raise the necessary funds for this third church. The following statement is from the preamble of the appeal:

"The Trustees solicit aid from their brethren at home and abroad to enable them to promote their enterprise, believing as they do that, by perpetuating to other and distant generations the privilege of worshipping their fathers' God where they first erected the standard of the cross and proclaim what the voice of the whole Methodist Episcopal Church would demand at their hand."



The third and present John Street Church upon completion in 1841, the last panel of the Joseph Beekman Smith triptich. The two adjacent four story buildings, constructed at the same time to provide additional sources of income, were demolished in 1975.

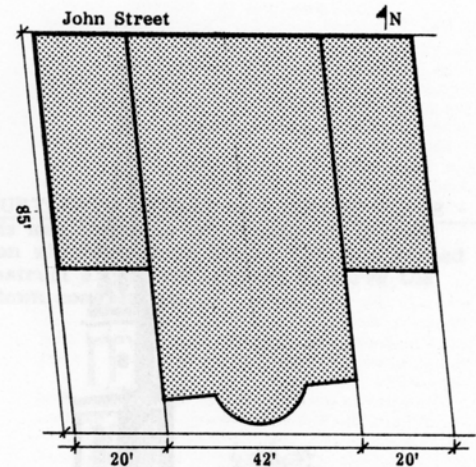
The third John Street Church, built on the two inner lots, 44 and 46 John Street, although smaller than the 1817 building, today remains virtually unchanged since its construction in 1841.

The style of the 42' x 85' building, combined with the two, four story row houses constructed on the two outer lots (42 and 48 John Street) can best be described as Italianate. Even though it is contemporary with Greek Revival Churches, the use on the front of a roundheaded window, flanked by two narrow, squareheaded ones, reflects the Palladian motif, a popular northern Italian style during the Renaissance. After having been popular in England, the Italianate style finally came to America in the early nineteenth century.

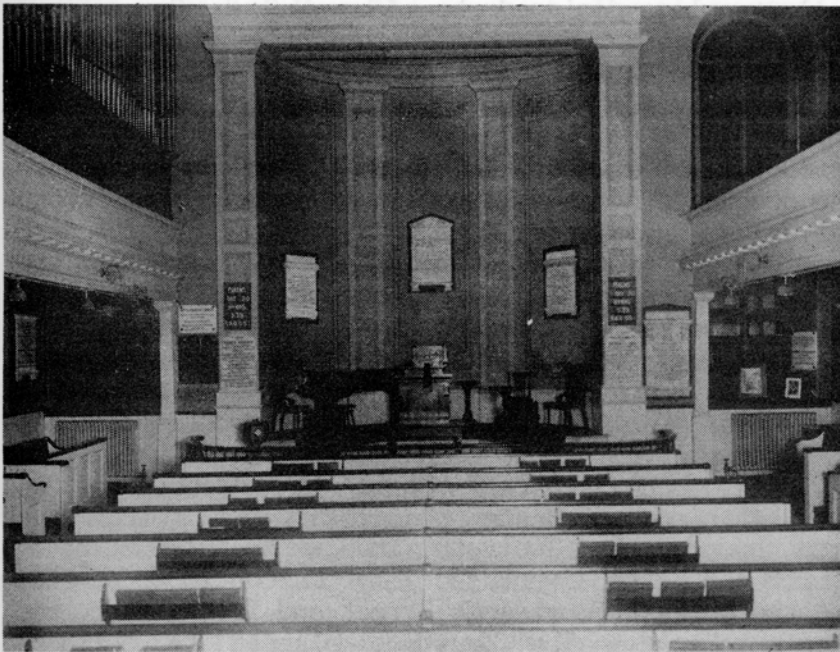
Inside the third building, the visitor is welcomed by a spacious sanctuary with the pulpit at the rear, located within an apse framed by two pilasters that reach to the cornice above. A balcony runs along the east and west walls, joining a deeper balcony at the front. The balcony remained open until sometime in the 1880's when a need for additional space necessitated the creation of offices in the rear. They remained intact until after World War II, when in 1946 a new pipe organ was installed. The new organ loft required a slight reduction in the size of the offices. An eight foot diameter ventilator is located in the center of the ceiling and is lit from above by a skylight in the roof.

One enters the church through double doors, two steps above the sidewalk. From the vestibule a wide single stair leads down to the basement and on either side of the vestibule two stairs lead up to smaller vestibules that serve the sanctuary. From each small vestibule, there is a long flight of stairs to serve the balconies and offices above.

The pews, some of the railings and newal posts of the stairways are from the second building. The brass light fixtures, also from the second building, mounted along the edge of the balcony, were originally supplied by gas. The second building was one of the first structures in the city to be supplied with gas for purposes of illumination. Eventually, the fixtures were converted to electricity.



**John Street Property - October 1841**  
This map indicates how the third building, and its two adjacent row houses, upon completion, occupied the site.



Interior view of John Street, ca 1910. The interior has remained virtually unchanged since 1841.

The faint outlines of flue openings in the southeast and southwest corners of the sanctuary and basement are visible. Here wood burning stoves were installed to provide heat for the building. The original chimneys remain within the walls.

The roof truss system dates from the first Wesley Chapel. Methodists, being frugal people, salvaged construction material for reuse from each previous building. The notches in the timbers clearly show how they were used in the earlier structures. Even the fieldstones in the foundation can be traced to ships' ballast used in the first building.

In the basement level a large hall, now the Wesley Chapel Museum, small classroom space, a kitchen, bathrooms, utility room and some storage were provided. This area has been modified several times over the years.

On a print depicting all three churches and the Rigging Loft issued in 1844, the following quote gives a clue to where the society worshipped during the construction of the third John Street Church:

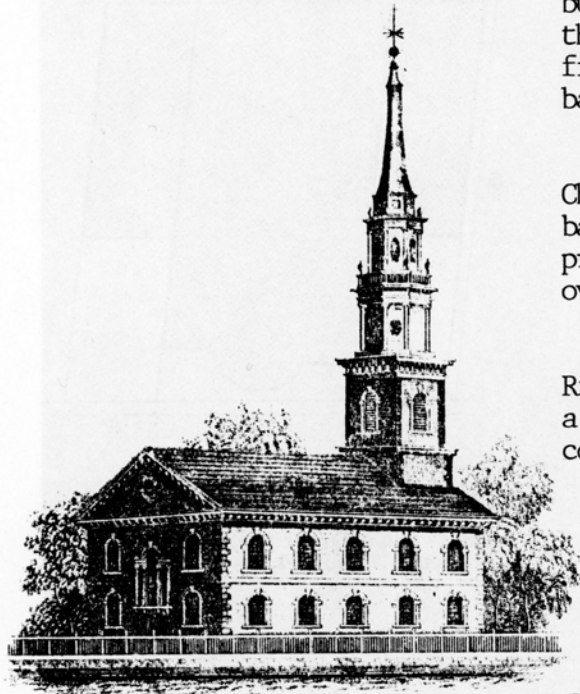
"During the rebuilding of the Church (1841) the society worshipped in the Lecture room of Dr. Springs Church, Junction of Nassau Street and Park Row."

Dr. Springs Church was the Brick Presbyterian Church, built in 1767, that had been there since the time of Wesley Chapel. The beautiful church with a tall steeple, designed by John McComb Sr., faced Beekman Street and occupied the entire block between Park Row and Nassau Street. "The Old Brick Church" became the seventh place the congregation worshipped.

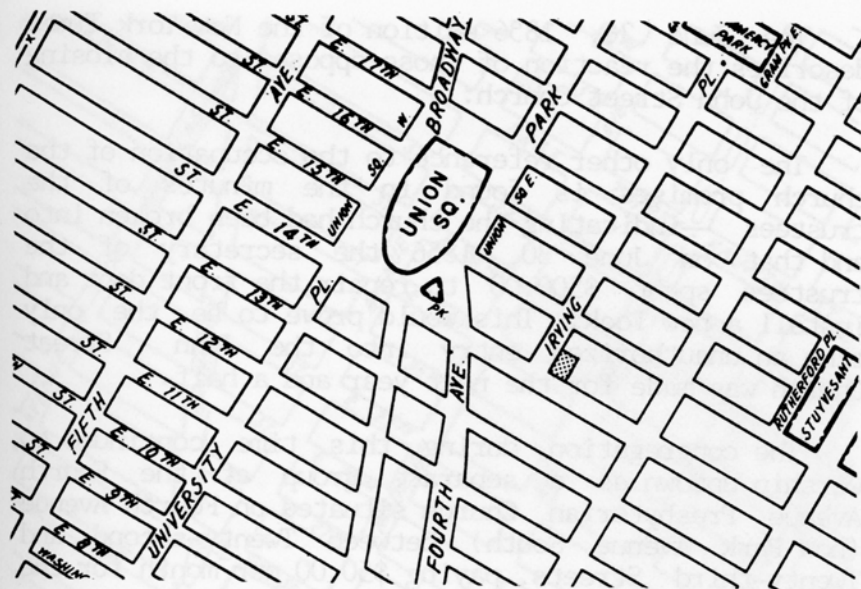
During the years 1856-1858 there occurred across the country a great religious awakening, the "Great Revival". One outgrowth of this revival was a request from a local group of businessmen for permission to start a noon-time prayer meeting to be held in John Street Church. Early in 1858 the "Businessmen's Noonday Prayer Meeting" was established and continued until the Second World War.

#### THE GREAT UPHEAVAL

Within a few years of the dedication of the third building, the Trustees began to investigate the possibility of purchasing property uptown within an area bounded by Twelveth and Twenty-third Streets, Fourth and Sixth Avenues. By March 1850 a site located on East Fourteenth Street and Irving Place had been purchased. The Trustees planned to build a "branch" Church to serve the uptown members, while maintaining the John Street Church at its historic site. Unfortunately, the Trustees sold the property in May 1852 without any improvements.



THE BRICK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, erected in 1767.



**FOURTEENTH STREET and IRVING PLACE - 1850**  
 This map indicates the location of the site upon which the John Street Trustees wished to construct a "branch" church to serve the uptown congregants.

The desire to move uptown was expressed again in 1855. The Trustees used the recurring argument that the membership had continued to decline, each Sunday's congregation was small due to the distance people had to travel and the members could be better served elsewhere in the city. With current expenses becoming more and more difficult to control, it was felt that money from the sale of the valuable downtown site could be better utilized.

The "downtown" membership, those opposed to the sale, argued that a protestant church was needed downtown and John Street Church was one of the few churches remaining from the constant migration uptown. The 1841 church had been erected using funds raised from the Methodist Episcopal Church at large with the understanding that the site would be preserved perpetually as a place of worship. Such a sale would be a breach of faith. In truth, it could be said that the current property is not where the congregation first worshipped eighty-eight years before, but it is the site where the fledgling congregation erected the first Methodist preaching house in America.

It wasn't surprising then, when the Trustees in 1855, with the approval of a majority of the male members of the congregation, began another search for an uptown site upon which to build a new church and parsonage. Even with support from the congregation, the opposing members filed an injunction against several members of the Trustees in an attempt to prevent any sale or move of the John Street Church.

By July 1856, though, the Trustees succeeded in purchasing a 56' x 120' parcel of land located on Twenty-sixth Street between Fifth Avenue and Broadway. The John Street Church had been sold by this time to the Methodist Missionary Society and had been closed.

The June 26, 1856 edition of the New York Times describes the reaction of those opposed to the closing of the John Street Church:

## New-York Daily Times

### NEW-YORK CITY.

**The John Street Methodist Church. The Fight gets into the Streets.**

The John-street Methodist Church still continues to be the scene of great excitement. Yesterday, from noon to midnight there was a crowd outside endeavoring to get possession, and two separate parties inside, struggling each to possess for themselves and dispossess their neighbors.

The parties interested in keeping the church open for the use of down-town worshippers having possession, have for some time maintained some female members of the congregation inside. The up-towners, consequently, to overcome these persons in possession, employed the services of WILLIAM THOMPSON, the constable of the Ward, as is said, on agreeing to pay him \$500, to hold on over the services of Sunday. He accordingly hired fifteen men, well known in Water-street, whom he deputized as deputy constables, and put them in the house, under the injunction of the Supreme Court issued some days since.

The up-town party, headed by the trustees, then called upon His Honor the Mayor, and represented, as we are informed, that the Church had been given over to persons whose character would not stand the test of inquiry. The Mayor notified the Chief, and he sent the note to Captain LEONARD, in whose Ward the Church is.

Captain LEONARD at once put an officer to preserve the peace inside the building, with instructions to arrest any one creating a disturbance. Meantime the down-town party entered a complaint against the up-town folks, similar to the one made against them, and added the count of insults offered to the females, who are said to be actual members of the congregation. Several policemen were then detailed to keep order outside.

Constable THOMPSON, leaving the Church on business, found himself locked out, and to prevent a breach of the peace, which would have ended his reign, he took the wisest course and trusted to his followers, as was the case with several of the men he had employed who left the Church.

At 10 o'clock, last night, there were inside ten of the up-town hired men, and four female and three male members of the down-town congregation, while outside were stationed large numbers of persons, male and female, of both parties.

At 10½ o'clock matters were brought to a crisis. The door was surrounded by friends of both parties, when Constable THOMPSON with some fifteen men, hustled in and made an attempt to force a passage and thus reinforce his posse inside. Their attack was resisted for some time by the down-town men headed by Mr. COOPER, one of the Trustees.

Not succeeding in effecting an entrance, THOMPSON's party drew some sticks and rushed on those holding the door, whereupon the police, of whom a platoon was on the ground, ran to the rescue, and by the indiscriminate use of the locust, they drove them off. At this stage of the proceedings, THOMPSON's men seeing from the window that their party was being worsted, opened the door, and headed by one EUGENE SULLIVAN, came out and ran off, closely pursued by the police. The down-towners, to the number of 27, then took possession of the church and made a thorough search of the premises, when they found several clubs, and sundry bottles which had once contained schnapps and retort of several qualities and kinds. Several policemen were struck, but their fellows amply revenged the wrong. The church is now in the hands of the down-town worshippers, and service is announced for Sunday. A dozen or so of policemen were stationed round the doors during the fight, and prevented any further breach of the peace.

The only other reference to the occupation of the church premises is found in the minutes of the trustees —indicating the church had been broken into and that on June 30, 1856 the secretary of the trustees spent \$500.00 to repair the front door and install a new lock. This would prove to be the only time an unauthorized entry into the John Street Church was made for the next year and a half.

The congregation during this time continued to worship uptown as a separate group at the Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Church situated on Fourth Avenue (now Park Avenue South) between Twenty-second and Twenty-third Streets, paying \$50.00 per month for the privilege.

Even though the Trustees had retained the services of an architect for the new church, by March 1857, the decision was made to put the Twenty-sixth Street property up for sale (it would not be sold until May 1858) and purchase an existing "church edifice and grounds" at Thirty-fifth Street and Fifth Avenue. The church on that site, the northwest corner of the block now occupied by B. Altman and Company, was owned by the Baptist Church. Apparently, the John Street Trustees were not the only ones interested in the property and it was purchased by the Episcopal Church to house the congregation of Christ Church. A small guide book published in 1887, "How to know New York" contains a brief description of the building:

"The fashionable Christ Church (Episcopal), famous for its fine music and beautiful frescos..."

The "downtown" membership continued their opposition to the sale of the John Street property. Led by those trustees also opposed to the sale, the "downtown" membership continued to place several injunctions against the "uptown" trustees to prevent their plans from taking effect. It wasn't until January 1858 that the two sides met and were able to settle their differences and save the John Street Church for future generations.

This episode was more painful than the Stillwellite succession. Unfortunately, the situation left the church in an embarrassingly poor condition in terms of membership and finances.

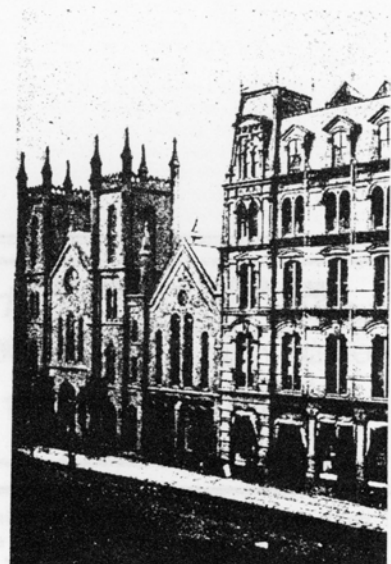
Several years after that unfortunate situation, Bishop Janes led a movement that would place the historic John Street Property in the care of General Conference and the State of New York. To



**THE MOVE - 1856 through 1858**

- 1 - Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Church
- 2 - The site at Twentysixth Street, between Broadway and Fifth Avenue
- 3 - The Baptist Church at Thirtyfifth Street and Fifth Avenue

accomplish this Bishop Janes succeeded in having the legislature of the State of New York pass a special act - Chapter 218 of the Laws of the State of New York, 1866. It provided for the incorporation of the church and the naming of nine corporate trustees to serve until their successors were elected. This election would be held at the next meeting of the Methodist General Conference and at each succeeding session. Such trustees must be members of the Methodist Church and citizens of the State of New York (a later amendment required only a majority to be citizens of this state). These trustees shall constitute the corporation, and all property rights were to be transferred to this corporation, which was obligated to maintain the church as a Methodist place of worship. No sale or mortgage of the property can be made without the consent of the General Conference or by order of the Supreme Court of the first judicial district of the State of New York. This act is sometimes called "The Charter".



The Fourth Avenue Presbyterian Church - 1856

1878 Annual Excursion 1878  
 OF THE  
**Old John Street M. E. Sunday School.** ★  
 FRIDAY, JUNE 28th, 1878.  
 By Steamer "LEVY," and Barge "WARREN."  
 To HUDSON GROVE, NEW ROCHELLE.  
*Boats leave Pier No. 18, foot of Cortlandt Street, at 8 o'clock.*  
**TICKETS, FIFTY CENTS.**

Passage of that legislation on March 24, 1866, thus made it possible for the John Street Church to have its trustees elected in a different way from that specified in the Methodist Book of Discipline. They are elected by the General Conference, not by the local church members, and all nine are to be elected at the same time for a term of four years, instead of in groups of three for three-year terms. This plan was not binding however until it had been accepted by the local church and by the General Conference. Bishop Janes met with the existing trustees of John Street on March 31, 1866 to report on the success of his efforts and probably with the hope that the plan would be accepted at once. Instead of accepting the plan, the trustees wanted to investigate the plan's ramifications on their authority. After several meetings among themselves and with Bishop Janes, the act was accepted on September 7, 1866:

JOHN STREET M. E. CHURCH.  
 (Cot. Nassau and William Streets.)  
 Thursday Even'g, Oct. 9, 1884, at 8 o'clk.  
**MUSICAL AND LITERARY**  
 ENTERTAINMENT  
 FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CHURCH.  
 TICKETS, - - - 25 CENTS.

"providing that the deed of conveyance shall contain the following conditions:— that the church be preserved for all time to come as a place of religious services according to the discipline and order of the Methodist Episcopal Church and that... "the General Conference shall select trustees upon recommendation of the quarterly conference (now the Charge Conference) of the John Street Church and from members of said Society so long as persons competent to execute the office of Trustee shall be found therein."

This acceptance, with the amendments noted above, was set forth in the deed of conveyance, known as the Deed of Trust, and on September 24, 1866 all legal voters of the church met and approved this document. It was legally executed on December 11, 1866.

• OLD JOHN STREET M. E. SUNDAY SCHOOL •  
 EXCURSION  
 TO  
 Atlantic Highlands, N. J.  
 ON  
**TUESDAY, JUNE 21st, 1887.**  
*The Boat John Levox will leave Pier 15, E. R. at 8:30 a. m.*  
**TICKETS, 50 CENTS.**

From this record it seems clear that the trustees and members in 1866 were not willing to accept the protection made possible by Chapter 218 until they had found a way to maintain their own active involvement in the governance of the church, by directing that the trustees who were to be elected by the General Conference must be nominated by their own leaders in the local Quarterly Conference and chosen from among their own members as far as possible.

The General Conference of 1868 accepted this plan and was the first to elect John Street trustees. The State act had directed the General Conference to determine how vacancies should be filled between its sessions, and it ruled that "the remaining members of the Board (of trustees) may fill such vacancies by an election at any regular meeting of said Board."

Several common misconceptions regarding this



unique situation are voiced from time to time and must be clarified:

1) The General Conference does not own the John Street Church. Ownership is therefore in the hands of the Board of Trustees. The only involvement of the General Conference is to elect those trustees.

2) The General Conference has no jurisdiction over the make-up of the Board of Trustees.

Seven years after the reorganization of the Trustees of the John Street Church, Bishop Janes and several members decided to establish a separate endowment for the benefit of the church and its congregation.

The group was incorporated under the laws of the State of New York on March 24, 1873 taking the name of "The John Street Methodist Episcopal Church Trust Fund Society." Today it is known simply as "The Trust Fund Society."

As stated in its certificate of incorporation, this benevolent organization has several stated objectives:

"1) to take and hold by gift, devise or bequest real or personal estate and apply the income and proceeds for the benefit of a religious society now worshipping in their edifice in John Street, in the City of New York...

2) to use such portion of the funds of this Society as may be acquired by gift, devise or bequest in the purchase of a parsonage, to be occupied by the Pastor and in the purchase of furniture for the same.

3) If the income and proceeds of the funds of this Society shall be more sufficient for the purposes aforesaid, then to use the surplus in the establishment of local mission, and parochial schools, or either, connected with said church."

Although the continued existence of the John Street Church was firmly established by General Conference, with the Trust Fund Society assisting it financially, pressures from within and without to alter or even move the church continued to plague the congregation for the next hundred years.

Several years later the General Conference of 1880 was presented a petition by the Board of Trustees of John Street Church, requesting permission to raise

THE SECOND SILVER MEDAL  
**Bleuettery Contest**  
AT  
JOHN ST. M. E. CHURCH, 44 JOHN ST.  
REV. J. L. PECK, PASTOR.  
Will be held on Monday March 28th, 1887 at 7.45 P. M.  
UNDER THE DIRECTION OF  
MRS. T. G. ELLSWORTH, GRAND VICE TEMPLAR OF N. Y.  
THE SUCCESSFUL CONTESTANT FOR THE SILVER MEDAL WILL BE ENTITLED TO  
COMPLETE FOR A GOLD MEDAL.  
**Admit Bearer and Friends.**

REV. E. MATHEWS.  
RECENTLY FROM STANLEY POOL, AFRICA, WILL  
**EXHIBIT CURIOS AND LECTURE**  
AT  
Old John Street Methodist Church.  
Thursday Evening, December 3th, 1888.  
7.30 P. M.  
ADMISSION, FIFTEEN CENTS.

1833 - - - - 1901.  
JOHN ST. SUNDAY SCHOOL ANNUAL EXCURSION  
OF THE  
JOHN ST. M. E. SUNDAY SCHOOL,  
On Saturday, July 13th, 1901,  
To LOCUST POINT, Long Island.  
Boat Leaves Pier 19, East River at 9 a. m. SHARP.  
CHILDREN'S TICKET, 25 CENTS.

These six tickets give an interesting insight into the programs offered by John Street Church towards the close of the 19th century.

funds to increase the church's endowment and radically alter the building. After acknowledging the important place the John Street Methodist Church occupies in the history of the Methodist Church, the Board requested that the Conference help John Street raise sufficient funds to establish an endowment. That endowment would enable the Trustees to carry out the work intended for the Church based upon The Conference's wishes when the John Street property became the Conference's responsibility in 1868.

The congregation then set out on an ambitious project to raise the funds to establish the endowment and construct additional space for church activities. Plans called for the construction of a large room, almost the size of the sanctuary, atop John Street. Within it would be housed a new fellowship hall, classroom space for the establishment of a religious school, and new church offices. Unfortunately, the Bishops of the Conference would not provide the necessary support and the plan was soon abandoned.

In early July 1888 another great revival was started at John Street Church. At this great event, the Rev. Thomas Harrison, affectionately known to his friends and the local daily newspapers as the "boy preacher", decided that after his success at saving 1,600 souls at a revival at the Jane Street Methodist Church uptown, he would take on the salvation of the Wall Street speculators. Even with Trinity Church at the head of Wall Street, Rev. Harrison, assisted by the Pastor at John Street, Rev. W. W. Bowdish, said that the sinners were going to need a stronger religious influence.

## THE FAMOUS FISHER OF MEN.

### HOW THE BOY PREACHER IS MANAGING HIS LATEST REVIVAL.

**Crowds Still Fill the Old John Street Methodist Church and Converts Are Daily Led to the Altar—Sketches of the People Interested in the Great Religious Awakening—Nearly 2,000 Souls Saved.**



EAT or cold, rain or shine, it is all the same to Brother Harrison. The saving of souls awaits not on the weather.

The palm-leaf fans were plying vigorously in the old John Street Methodist Episcopal Church, when the boy preacher, grown to manhood's estate now, opened the second week of his downtown campaign against the powers of sin. The little church, caught in a pocket of brick walls, among business houses, and getting the benefit of their refraction, was hot almost to the point of discomfort. But the crowd swept in until the seats were nearly all taken. Women led the van. Old and young, pretty and plain-faced, but for the most part showing by their dress that they belonged to the humbler walks of life, they mounted the crooked stairs leading to the audience room and swarmed to the front seats.

The photograph to the right shows the sanctuary decorated for Mr. Harrison. Note the gas fixtures, which remain, and the wood window shutters.



Interior of John Street Church, July, 1888.

For ten days following July 8, John Street was to experience three daily revival meetings that excited thousands and were eventually credited with saving almost 2,000 people. The thirty-four year old evangelist from Boston even boasted of attempts to hold revival meetings in the stock exchanges. The tremendous response to the revival meetings provided inspiration for Rev. Bowdish to hold interdenominational services every day in the month of January from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. These services, extensively reported on in the daily press, lasted for three years (1889-1891), until Rev. Bowdish left the service of John Street.

JULY 9, 1888.

**THE GOSPEL IN WALL ST.**

*W. J. Harrison*  
That Rumored Raid of Harrison,  
the Boy Preacher.

**BULL AND BEAR OPINIONS.**

Wormser Said To Be Fireproof--  
Russell Sage Talks.

**JOHN STREET DON'T WANT IT.**

There was a panic in Wall street this morning. Old weatherbeaten brokers, who had stood calm and unruffled above every crisis of the last half century, shook in their shoes and cowered in remote corners of the big downtown buildings. Men with audacity enough to corner wheat on a bluff and a \$50 bank account wore scared and pallid faces. Chaos reigned supreme on every side.

It was all on account of a statement in a morning paper that the boy preacher, Harrison, was going to wipe out sin from the Street.

**A Grand Midsummer Camp Meeting**

AT

**OLD JOHN STREET**

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH,

W. W. BOWDISH, D. D., Pastor.

**COMMENCING JULY 8th, 1888,**

UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE

REV.  
**THOMAS  
HARRISON,**



The  
Eminent  
Evangelist

**MEETINGS FOR THE SABBATH:**

9:30 A. M.—Prayer Meeting.  
10:30 A. M.—Camp Meeting Sermon

BY

**MR. HARRISON.**

3 P. M.—An Old Fashioned Love Feast.  
7:30 P. M.—Camp Meeting Revival Services.

Meetings every day during the week at 3:30  
and 8 o'clock P. M.

All Christian people in this City, and Cities adjoining, are cordially invited to attend these Meetings and make them a great blessing to the business portion of New York City.

E. L. Hamilton & Co., Printers, 12 Barclay Street, N. Y.

A poster announcing Mr. Harrison's arrival.

The coming of the skyscraper age to New York City brought tens of thousands of people within a short walk of the church. The noon-time prayer meetings continued to grow, as well as requests for further religious services. This increasing need for weekday services combined with a dwindling congregation, continued the pressures to alter the building.

## Church Atop Skyscraper for Wall Street District Proposed

Methodists Have Tentative Plans Drawn for Structure on Old John Street Site.

If a campaign begun recently among Methodists all over the country is carried to a successful issue New York will have a church perched on top of a thirty story building at No. 44 John street, where stands the oldest Methodist church in this country.

Tentative plans for the building, a giant structure with a frontage of 160 feet in John street, and a church on top of it of cruciform shape, have been drawn by McKenzie, Voorhees & Gmelin, of No. 1,123 Broadway, at the request of Dr. F. B. Upham, superintendent of one of the Long Island districts of the New York East Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

These plans include a giant cross stretched along the side of the building, which would face the ocean, so that it could be seen miles at sea. The spire, light tipped, would loom up, 800 feet above the earth, with a cross at its apex. About the base of the cruciform church structure provision has been made for the installation of hidden lights, so that the gabled form of the house of worship would gleam out of the night. The bulk of the building it is proposed to have darkened, so that the church structure, with its illuminated cross, colored windows and Gothic lines would appear to float in the air.

The present John Street Church is a little structure which is practically buried in the mass of great buildings. The site is valued at between \$300,000 and \$400,000. The first church was erected there in 1778, two years after Methodism obtained its first foothold in this country, when the congregation met in a loft in what is now William street. Twice the church has been rebuilt, once in 1817 and again in 1841. A clock presented to the congregation by John Wesley when he



ARCHITECT'S SKETCH OF PROPOSED SKYSCRAPER ON SITE OF OLD JOHN STREET METHODIST CHURCH.

preached in the old John Street Church is still there.

The Rev. Lewis R. Streeter is now the pastor. He is heartily in favor of the proposed place of worship on the skyscraper. In the office section of the proposed building the authors of the movement want the headquarters of the various Methodist organizations, although the building would be open to all types of tenants.

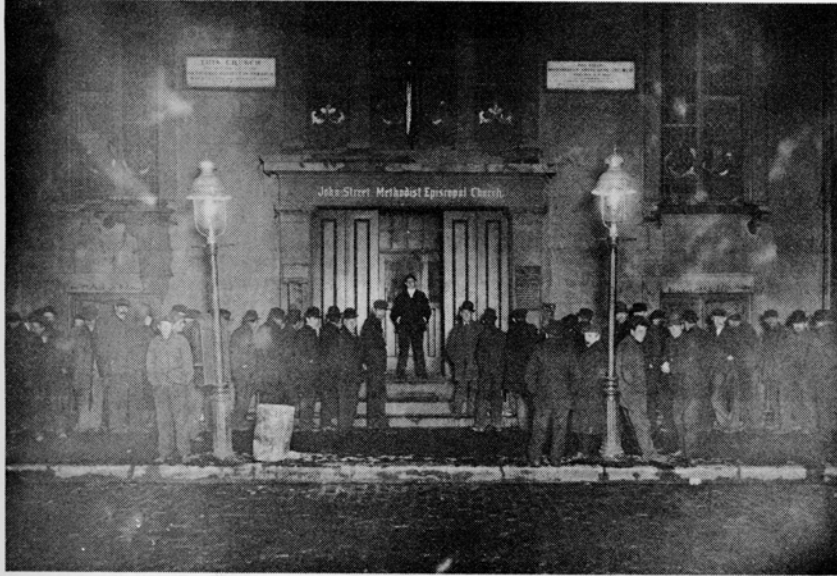
John Street Church reaches towards Heaven.

An article in the January 12, 1915 edition of the New York Herald showed a rendering of a thirty story office building with a rebuilt John Street Church of cruciform shape perched on top. The office building itself would be used to house offices of the various Methodist organizations with the remaining space

*[Faint, mirrored text from the reverse side of the page, including phrases like 'THE CORPUS IN WALL ST.', 'WILL AND BEAR OPINIONS', and 'JOHN STREET DON'T WANT IT']*



*[Faint text at the bottom left corner, possibly a caption or note related to the portrait or the main article.]*



Men lining up to enjoy a hot meal and listen to a sermon. This was part of the service offered to the community by John Street at the turn of the 19th century. Photo ca. 1910.

leased to other businesses. The following excerpt reveals what a grandiose building it would be:

"These plans include a giant cross stretched along the side of the building which would face the ocean so that it could be seen miles at sea. The spire, light tipped, would loom up 800 feet above the earth, with a cross at its apex. About the base of the cruciform church structure provision has been made for the installation of hidden lights, so that the gabled form of the house of worship would gleam out of the night. The bulk of the building is proposed to be darkened so that the church structure, with its illuminated cross, colored windows and Gothic lines would appear to float in the air."

This grand scheme for the perpetuation of John Street Church was apparently intended to coincide with the upcoming sesquicentennial in 1916 of the founding of the congregation. In a pamphlet issued for the celebration, the Rev. Lewis R. Streeter outlined the reasons for the implementation of such a plan. He begins by saying,

"...time is now at hand when a supreme effort should be made to replace the present John Street Memorial Building..."

The three reasons given for the new structure are as follows: the existing building is seventy-five years old and costly to maintain; a commercial building with the church as part of it would generate

# METHODISTS PLAN SKYSCRAPER UPON 1ST CHURCH SITE

*N.Y. World Nov 2, 1924*  
30-Story Building in John  
Street if North and South  
Branches Unite, Is the Idea.

SUBSCRIPTIONS WILL BE  
LIMITED TO ONLY \$1.

Will Rent for Business Pur-  
poses All the Space Not Used  
for Ecclesiastical Affairs.

Tentative plans have been made for the building of a skyscraper church to be the headquarters of the Methodist Episcopal Church if the North and South Methodists consolidate, J. Fletcher Shera of No. 33 Pine Street, trustee and treasurer of the John Street Methodist Episcopal Church told a reporter of *The World* yesterday.

The Methodists see in the future a great central church on the site of the first Methodist Church, built in 1841, still standing at No. 44 John Street, holding the relics of the old building and of John Wesley, founder of the sect. Suspended over it and built around it will be a 30-story building, headquarters for the 1,000,000 Methodists in America.

sufficient income to maintain and expand current programs; what better time than the 150th anniversary to do the work?

This anniversary pamphlet also provides a glimpse into the type of work being done at John Street Church. Even then, the church provided a place of rest for weary office workers. Eminent preachers were called upon to officiate at the worship service offered each day between the hours of one and two o'clock following the Businessmen's Noon-day Prayer Meeting. A general call had been issued requesting additional donations to alleviate the church's financial burden and to assist in providing continued week-day services. The rebuilding plan was soon abandoned due to lack of funds and the advent of World War I.

During the 150th Anniversary Celebration, the congregation and friends of John Street wrote and performed a pageant portraying the birth and subsequent role John Street played in the development of the Methodist Church in America. Vignettes included Barbara Heck, Philip Embury, Captain Webb, John Wesley and Francis Asbury. Fanny Crosby, the famous Methodist hymn writer and member of John Street in the nineteenth century, was also featured.

Nine years later, in the November 1, 1924 edition of the *New York World*, another skyscraper plan is unveiled, only this time the new thirty story building would be constructed over the 1841 John Street building. Again headquarters for the Methodist Church, it was planned to raise the necessary funds by asking every Methodist to contribute one dollar.

The article continues by saying that one suggestion would have a "replica of the original church on the top story of the skyscraper, with a lighted cross in its windows that could be seen from upper New York and across the harbor." This sounds like a variation of the 1915 scheme. The one unusual statement claims that the church has an "extraordinarily large weekday congregation", but that due to its financial district location, "does not offer Sunday Services."

The last phrase of the previous statement is certainly untrue, but points out the problems John Street continued to have due to a small permanent congregation. However, the congregation continued to worship and John Street was offering a wider variety of week-day services between the world wars.

The trustees report to the General Conference of 1936, submitted during the pastorate of the Rev. Robert H. Dolliver, highlights the complexity and variety of the week-day services, an expansion of the



Women attending a service offered by the Friendly League of Christian Service. The service was followed by a luncheon downstairs. Photo ca. 1936.

Sunday program, and the perennial desire to rebuild John Street Church.

"Many have found a new, vital life and Christian experience through the John Street noonday meetings, which have been continued from three to five times a week for over half a century. On Monday the meetings are under the auspices of a committee of business men. Tuesday is in charge of a Youth Council'. On Wednesday the pastor presents a weekly message to the people. Thursday has been designated National Methodist Pulpit Day." when prominent Methodist leaders from both at home and abroad are present to speak. Friday is under the direction of the Friendly League for Christian Service,' an interdenominational group of women...

A churchschool session and morning worship are held every Sunday morning. Many visitors worship at John Street, especially in the summer. The new housing developments on the lower East Side of the city and the improved new subway and transit lines are making John Street Church more accessible to a larger constituency and enlarging its responsibilities as an active church....

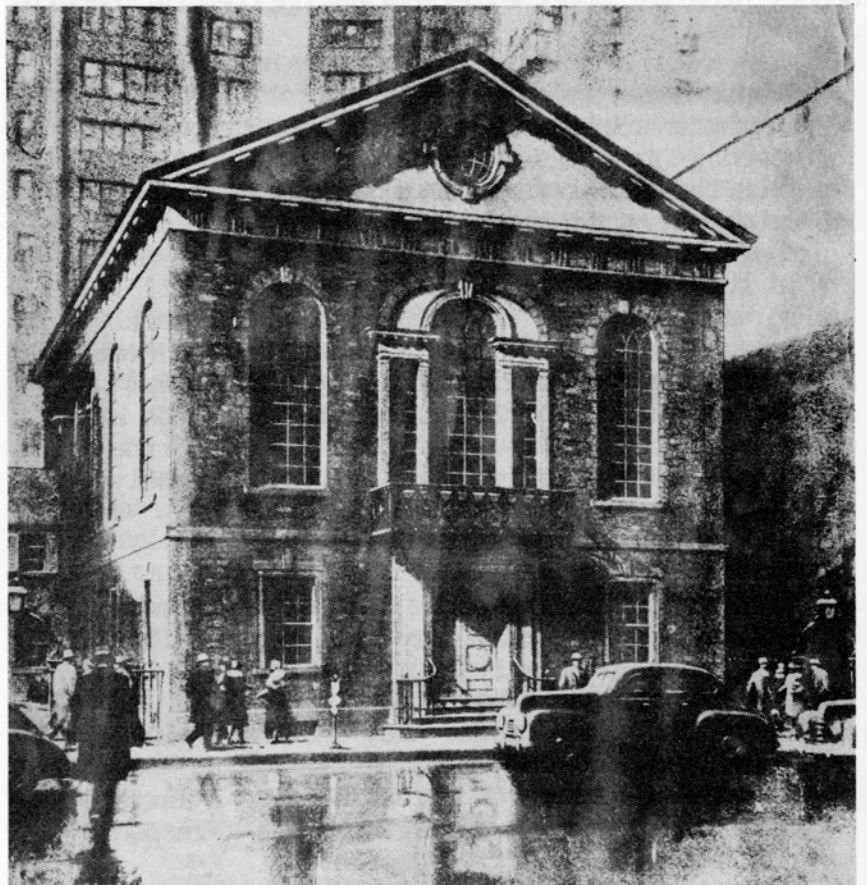
There is now great need for a more adequate, fireproof place in which to safely house the valuable collection of books belonging to the church, original paintings of John Wesley,



A vignette from the 150th Anniversary Pageant. Here Barbara Heck asks Philip Embury to start preaching.

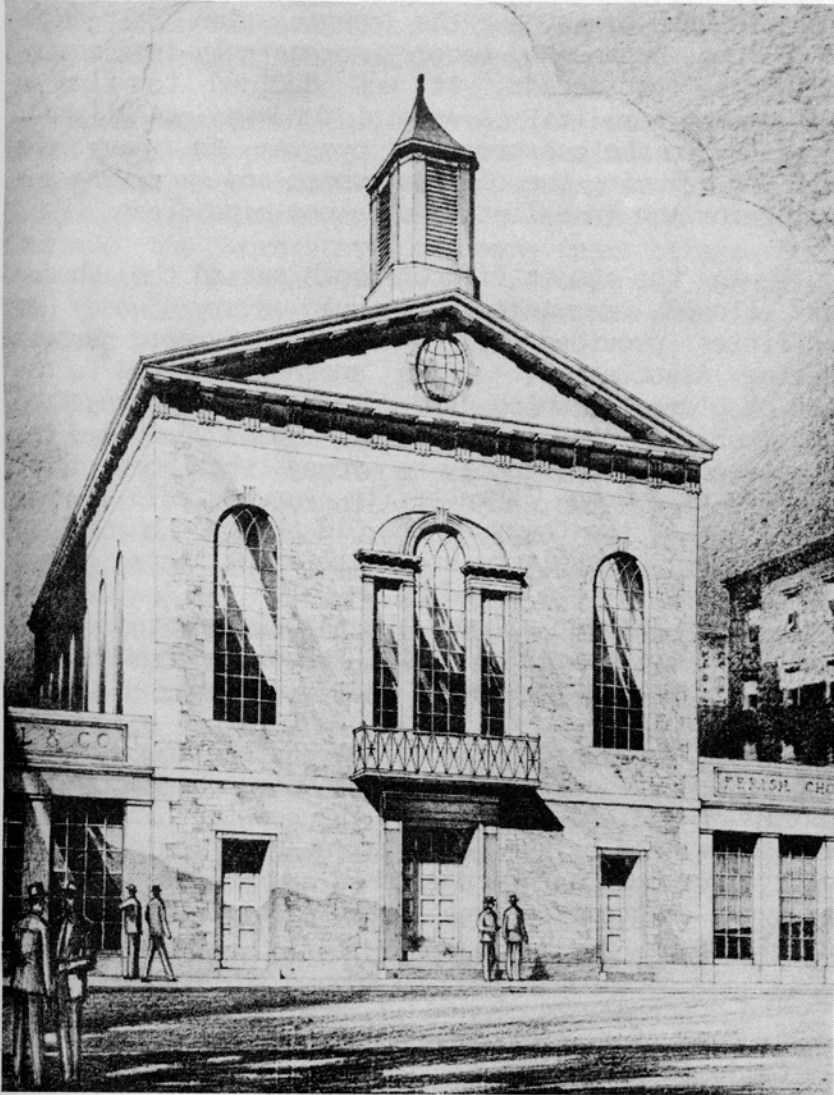
Whitefield, Embury, and others, and many valuable etchings, manuscripts, and furniture that have heretofore been acquired.... It is also hoped that this work of reconstruction of the John Street Church property can be so done as to provide facilities attractive and useful to other historical societies and organizations.... All this priceless material of past generations should be enshrined in a fireproof structure in such manner and form as to ensure its safety and greater usability."

The outcome of this desire for better facilities was a dramatic departure from previously touted plans; from skyscrapers to a single new church edifice. Two different schemes, both modelled on the 1841 structure, were presented to the trustees and the congregation by architect Aymar Embury II in 1941, the one hundredth anniversary of the existing structure. Aymar Embury II was an architect working for the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority of New York City and had designed both the Central Park Zoo in Manhattan and the Prospect Park Zoo in Brooklyn.



Proposed John Street Church of 1941, number one. Note the two adjoining parks and the similarity to the 1841 building.





Proposed John Street Church of 1941, number two. Note the two adjacent commercial spaces. The design is very similar to the 1841 building.

These great plans were apparently cut short due to the outbreak of World War II and the safeguards written in the 1866 Charter for there is no mention of the proposed construction in a pamphlet published by Rev. Dolliver in 1943 describing the church and its activities.

Although it was apparent prior to the 1944 General Conference that basic and extensive structural repairs of the one hundred and three year old building were necessary, it was not until the appointment of the Rev. Arthur B. Moss in that year, that careful plans were prepared and the church closed to make the repairs.

The structural problems were due in part to the lack of proper maintenance, the age of the structure itself, and the severe strain placed on the southeast corner of the building by the installation of a large pipe organ in the balcony during the 1890's. The

original reconstruction plans did not include replacing the organ, but the congregation felt that since the organ had become increasingly ineffective during the last decade, it was decided to find a replacement for it. A special fund was established, unrelated to the construction program to carry the cost of removing the old instrument and receiving and paying for the installation of a new pipe organ.

During the almost fifteen month period the Church was closed, services were held every Sunday at facilities provided by the Fulton Street Prayer Meeting Association, adding another address to the list of places in which the John Street congregation has worshiped over the years. This provided the Association an opportunity to repay the hospitality extended by John Street in August, 1875. The demolition of the tower of the Old Dutch Church, at the corner of Fulton and William streets, caused severe damage to the building in which the Association met. John Street allowed the Association to use its facilities for sometime until other accommodations could be arranged.

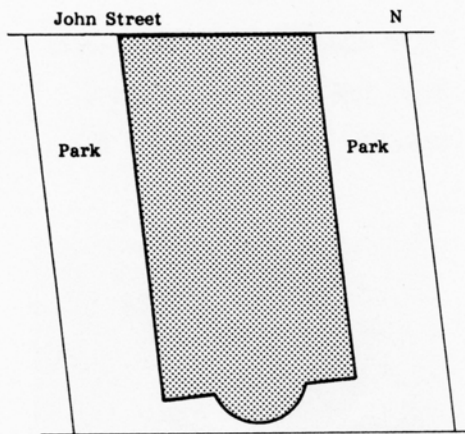
During the construction to strengthen the existing foundations, several bones were discovered in the cellar; an ancient reminder of the cemetery and vaults once maintained by the Church. These unidentified relics from our past were exhumed and re-interred in a new vault constructed beneath the altar in the Wesley Chapel Museum.

The sanctuary took on a new look. The loft constructed for the donated pipe organ took up virtually the entire rear balcony between the existing offices and the rail. The glass wall with its pediment was removed and new doors to the offices were installed on either side of the loft. With all these repairs completed, John Street was prepared to continue its service to the community.

In the early 1960's John Street Church prepared for the 1966 national Bicentennial celebration of Methodism's beginnings in America by doing some repairs on the building.

The congregation launched a drive to raise the necessary capital to make the repairs. Money was received from numerous sources, including the Park Avenue Methodist Church, where the wooden beam from Wesley Chapel gives us a direct tie to the uptown congregation.

This project prepared the church to receive the attention of Methodism worldwide in its two hundredth year. A large banquet was held on the evening of October 31, 1966 at the Biltmore Hotel in New York City, enabling the congregation to celebrate the work



**John Street Property - 1984**  
This map indicates the third building and its two adjacent parks.

done at John Street over the years with many of its friends. This Bicentennial celebration ushered in a new era in the long history of the society.

Since that time, the congregation has continued to offer a weekday program for the business community during the noon hour. Hymn sings once a week on Wednesdays and luncheons once a month on Tuesdays continue the work started so many years before. But, once again, the stability John Street was enjoying was threatened by a new development plan for the adjacent property.

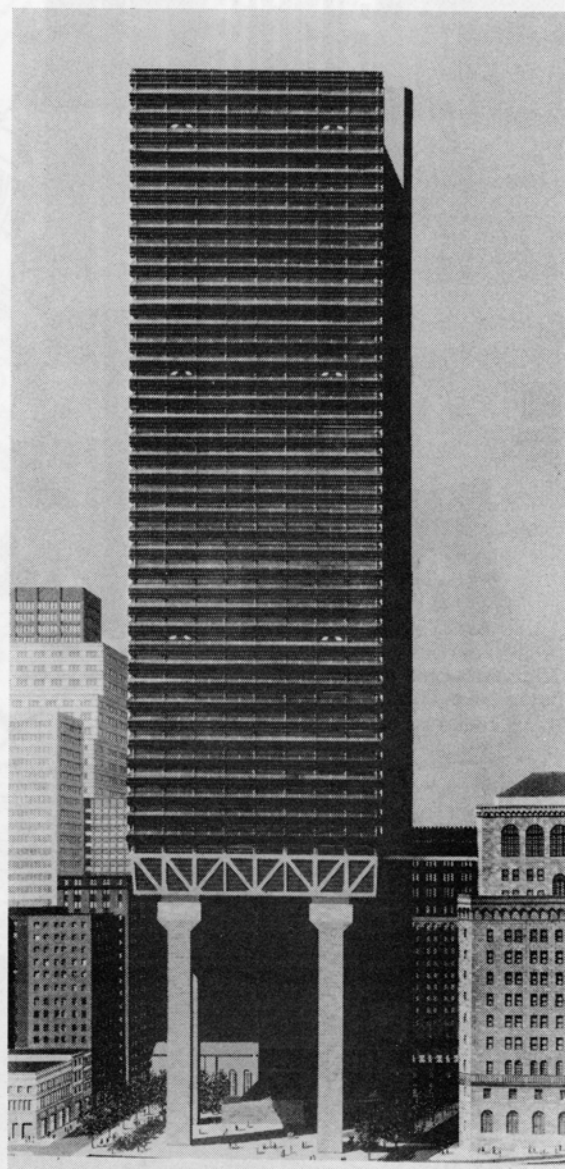
The John Street Church became a landmark of the City of New York, when in 1964, the Municipal Art Society added its name to a growing list of buildings worthy of preservation. This was the first of other designations intended to prevent the removal or alteration of the church. The designations were unnecessary since the church had firmly established safeguards and was dedicated to its perpetuation as a landmark to all of Methodism, in this country and in England, that go back over two hundred years.

The church's neighbor to the south, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, on Maiden Lane had need for additional office space. Through a representative the bank started to assemble the properties to the West of the Church bounded by John and Nassau streets and Maiden Lane in 1974. The Trust Fund Society sold 48 John Street, The United Methodist City Society sold 42 John Street having purchased the lot in 1964 to help in the funds needed for the restoration work at that time, and the Board of Trustees sold the air rights over the church itself. The Bank had desired to purchase the building, but due to the safeguards enacted in 1866 to prevent any sale of the church, the plan was quickly abandoned.

The proceeds from the sale of the air rights helped strengthen the church's endowment and enabled the congregation to remodel the basement and rename it the Wesley Chapel Museum. The work included a new library, better accommodations for speakers during the frequent luncheons held in the museum and the modernization of the bathrooms and kitchen.

The architectural firm of Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo and Associates were retained to design the proposed office building. The final design revealed a forty-story skyscraper resting upon four thirteen-story legs that created an open plaza at street level. The John Street Church and the two adjacent lots were to be part of the plaza, sitting in a park-like setting.

Unfortunately, due to the economic realities at the time, and the possible acquisition of a nearby



Roche/Dinkeloo scheme, 1974. Note John Street Church nestled behind the columns to the left.

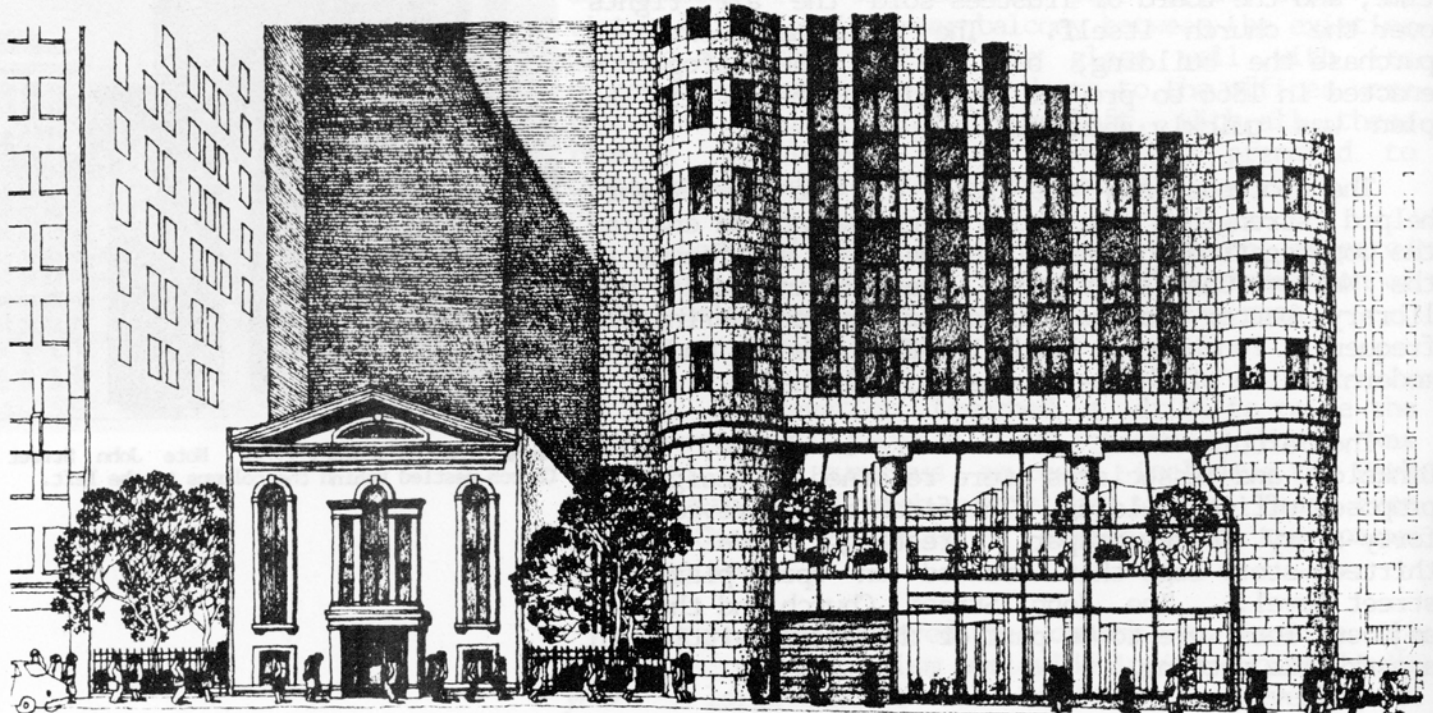


Johnson/Burgee scheme, 1980. The two adjacent parks have finally been realized.  
 Photo courtesy of Mr. Nathaniel Lieberman

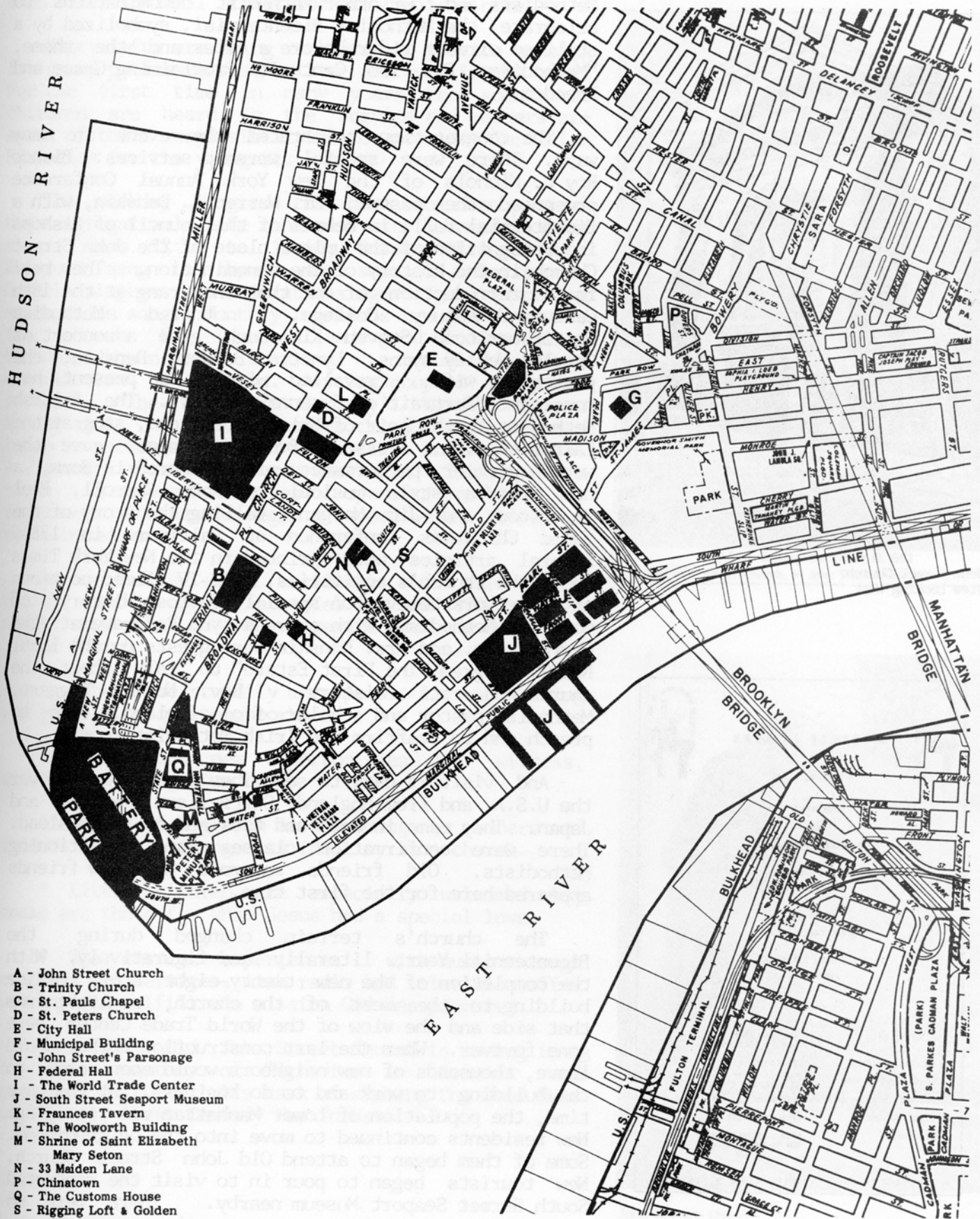
office building to satisfy their special requirements, the Federal Reserve Bank decided not to build. The Bank remained responsible however, to provide vest pocket parks on the former church parcels. Roche Dinkeloo designed a permanent park for the east lot (48 John Street) and a temporary one for the west, 42 John Street lot. The west lot received the temporary park due to the unknown plans for the full development of the site to the west.

The property remained undeveloped until 1979 when it was purchased by Park Tower Development. This organization retained the architectural firm of Johnson/Burgee Architects to design a suitable structure to occupy the site. A twenty-eight story brick, granite, and limestone office building with an arcade retail space was conceived and has been erected on the site. The building is unique, taking a portion of its design from the Federal Reserve Bank by incorporating medieval turrets in its design.

During construction, the temporary west park was removed. This park will be restored when 33 Maiden Lane is completed. Plans call for the east and west parks to be connected across the rear of the church. This will enable the building to eventually sit in a park-like setting, smaller than originally planned several years earlier, but enough to allow the church to stand out from the neighboring congestion and continue to welcome people into its quiet and relaxing atmosphere.

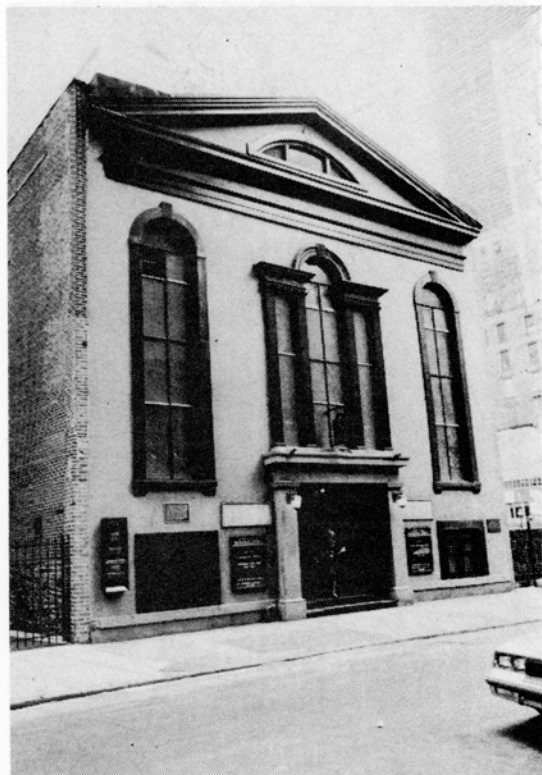


The above rendering illustrates John Street Church and the adjacent parks and their relationship with the new neighbor. This is how John Street Church will enter Methodism's third century.



- A - John Street Church
- B - Trinity Church
- C - St. Pauls Chapel
- D - St. Peters Church
- E - City Hall
- F - Municipal Building
- G - John Street's Parsonage
- H - Federal Hall
- I - The World Trade Center
- J - South Street Seaport Museum
- K - Fraunces Tavern
- L - The Woolworth Building
- M - Shrine of Saint Elizabeth  
Mary Seton
- N - 33 Maiden Lane
- P - Chinatown
- Q - The Customs House
- S - Rigging Loft & Golden  
Hill Plaques
- T - The New York Stock  
Exchange

## THE FUTURE OF JOHN STREET CHURCH





John Street Church  
View Looking West

During 1984 this congregation joined other United Methodists and four other Methodist denominations to celebrate the Methodist Bicentennial, symbolized by a stylized circuit rider before a cross and the theme, "Methodism: For Two Centuries Proclaiming Grace and Freedom."

The congregation celebrated the event in many ways. There were special worship services: Bishop Roy C. Nichols of the New York Annual Conference presented the pastor, Dr. Warren L. Danskin, with a Bicentennial Bell, in behalf of the Council of Bishops in recognition of the unique place of the John Street Church in the history of the denomination. The bell is a reproduction of one that once rang at the 18th Century Cokesbury College. United Methodist Pastor-baritone Steven Kimbrough gave a concert of Charles Wesley hymns. Lynette Bennett Danskin, the pastor's wife, travelled widely to present her monologue "Portrait of Susanna"(Wesley). The British Methodist Youth Choir of Bristol, England, sang at the Easter service. A cast of Broadway singers gave the world premier performance of "A Church is Born," a new Broadway-style musical by Ronn Carroll, Paul Trueblood and Jim Morgan, telling the story of the famed Christmas Conference at Baltimore in 1784. Several articles were printed in the New York Times about the church's activities. NBC-TV filmed portions of a network television special, "A Lost History" (of women in Methodism) with actress Lynn Redgrave at the church. Dr. and Mrs. Danskin were guests on the local NBC-TV program "The First Estate" to talk about the church and its history. Rev. Norman Taggart, Methodist pastor and scholar from Ireland, came to preach and to reaffirm the Irish Methodist roots.

And visitors came to see! They came from all over the U.S.A. and from England, Switzerland, Germany and Japan. They came in ones and twos and by the busload. There were confirmation classes and vacationing Methodists. Old friends returned and new friends appeared here for the first time.

The church's terrain changed during the Bicentennial Year, literally and figuratively. With the completion of the new twenty-eight story office building to the west of the church, sunlight from that side and the view of the World Trade Center were gone forever. When the last construction worker would leave, thousands of new neighbors would soon come to the building to work and to do business. At the same time, the population of Lower Manhattan was changing. New residents continued to move into the neighborhood. Some of them began to attend Old John Street Church. New tourists began to pour in to visit the renovated South Street Seaport Museum nearby. There were no more unlimited parking spots on the streets on the weekends and seldom were the streets deserted, as in

**A CHURCH IS BORN**

A MUSICAL PLAY

PRODUCED  
BY  
DR. WARREN L. DANSKIN

BOOK AND LYRICS BY  
RONN CARROLL

MUSIC BY  
PAUL TRUEBLOOD

ADDITIONAL LYRICS BY  
JIM MORGAN

DIRECTED BY:	JACK EDDLEMAN AND CHARLES KAKATSAKIS
MUSICAL DIRECTOR:	TED KOCIOLEK
AT THE TWO PIANOS:	PATRICK BRADY AND TED KOCIOLEK
COSTUME COORDINATOR:	STEPHANIE EDWARDS CARROLL
STAGE MANAGER:	CASANDRA SCOTT
LIGHTING:	LISA GROSSMAN AND DON THOMAS

Recorded in New York City--June 9, 1984

bygone days. Lower Manhattan had become a busy place, even after the Wall Street workers had gone home.

Empty lofts are being renovated to provide housing for young professionals who live and work in the area. For the first time in many years the sounds of children are heard in the service and members are aware of their responsibilities to provide Christian Education for the youngest.

The weekday programs that have long been part of the congregation's life continued with Wednesday hymn sings, from 12:10 to 12:40, October through June. Everyone sang the hymns and sopranos, baritones, Gospel singers and operatic singers, gave inspiring messages in song. Monthly luncheons brought women to the church for lectures and good food. United Methodist Women more than doubled their contributions to mission. A young couples' group was formed -- "The New Loft Society". Worship every Sunday at 11 A.M. provides the focus. The church began to get more involved in the arts and the media. A videotape about the church was begun. This book was begun. A successful series of operetta concerts was continued. The pastor began a second weekly religious radio broadcast.

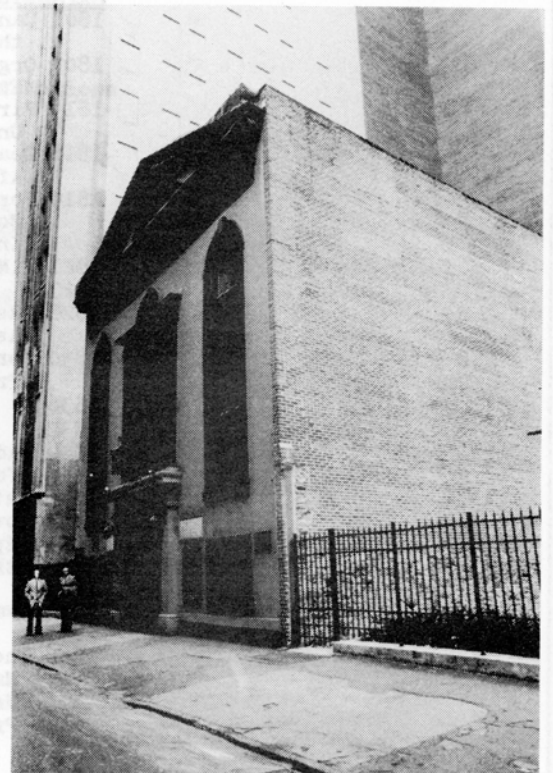
No one can say with certainty what the future holds. But in the Bicentennial Year of 1984, several things were clear to the congregation of the Old John Street Church:

- \* There are steadily more people living, working and playing in our neighborhood.
- \* There are new opportunities for witness, service and evangelism here.
- \* The congregation is welcoming new members and friends who will change its identity as a church.
- \* Little children are especially welcomed for these are those for whom Jesus had a special love.
- \* The current experiences with music through concerts and services, with radio and television offer new ways to fulfill the mission God has prepared.

The "NEW" Old John Street Church is moving into the third century of Methodism in America and preparing to fulfill its task of sharing the Good News with Twenty-first Century New Yorkers.



3:00 P.M., Sunday, December 12, 1982  
Old John Street Church, 44 John Street, New York City



John Street Church  
View Looking East

## TIME LINE

This time line follows the history of the United Methodist Church

	<u>INFORMAL BEGINNINGS</u>	<u>THE AMERICAN COLONIES</u>
1729	Wesley attends Oxford University	King George I
1735	Wesley serves as chaplain to the Georgia Colony	
1738	Wesley's conversion in London	
	<u>RENEWAL MOVEMENT WITHIN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND</u>	
1739	Formation of Methodist Societies in and around London	
1744	Wesley's first conference of preachers	
1754	Otterbein's conversion	French & Indian War
1760	Methodist colonists arrive in America	
1766	The first Methodist Society, New York City	
1770		
1770		<u>THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION</u>
1770		The Boston Massacre
1771	Asbury arrives in America	
1773	First Conference of American Methodist Preachers	
1775		Revolutionary War
1776		Declaration of Independence
1783		Treaty of Paris
	<u>ORGANIZATION OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH</u>	
1784	Ordination of Preachers	
1787	Black congregations formed	Constitution drafted
1789	Bishops Asbury & Coke visit President Washington	George Washington inaugurated
1790	Albright's conversion	
1792	First General Conference of American Methodists	
1800	Organization of United Brethren in Christ	Jefferson elected
	<u>EXPANSION, REVIVALS, REFORMS AND SCHISMS</u>	
1801	Cane Ridge Camp Meeting, begins the Great Revival in the West	
1807	Organization of the Evangelical Association	Embargo Act
1815	First General Conference of United Brethren in Christ	Battle of New Orleans
1816	Death of Asbury; formation of African Methodist Episcopal Church	
1819	Formation of Methodist Missionary Society; Mission to Wyandot Indians in Ohio established	
1821	A.M.E. Zion Church founded	
1823		The Monroe Doctrine
1828	"Reformers" exit to form the Associated Methodist Churches	
1830	Formation of the Methodist Protestant Church	
1836		Texas gains independence
1837		Depression
1842	Radical Abolitionists exit to form Wesleyan Methodist Church	Massachusetts Labor Union
1844	Methodists North & South split over twin issues of slavery & Episcopacy; Indian Mission to the Oklahoma Territory	
1861		The Civil War
1862		The Emancipation Proclamation
1865		Lincoln assassinated
1866	Theological seminaries established; Maggie VanCott is the first Methodist woman to get a local Preachers license	National Labor Union



1868 Otis Gibson begins work with Chinese in California 14th Amendment - Citizens Rights  
 1869 Independent Women's Mission Society Trans-Continental Railroad  
 1870 Colored Methodist Episcopal Church organized 15th Amendment - Right to Vote  
 1871 Alejo Hernandez - first Spanish reformer and pastor  
 1872 Lay representation won in Methodist Episcopal Church  
 1880 First test case - ordination of women New wave of immigrants  
 1881 First Ecumenical Methodist Conference in London Beginning of Civil Service reform  
 1885 First Denominational Historical Society formed - United Brethren in Christ  
 1898 The Spanish-American War  
 1900 Full laity rights for woman in the Methodist Episcopal Church

INDUSTRIALIZATION  
 Wright Brothers fly

1903  
 1905 Joint Methodist hymnbook, North & South  
 1908 First Methodist Social Creed adopted  
 1914 World War I  
 1920 First black Bishop & woman as local preacher 19th Amendment - Woman's Suffrage  
 1922 Evangelical Church formed, Methodist Episcopal South gives women full laity rights  
 1924 Local ordination of women in the Methodist Episcopal Church Teapot Dome Scandal

FORMATION OF THE METHODIST CHURCH

1939 Formation of the Methodist Church, union of the Methodist Episcopal Churches North & South and the Methodist Protestant Church World War II  
 1941 Pearl Harbor  
 1945 Formation of the United Nations  
 1946 Formation of the Evangelical United Brethren Church  
 1956 Full clergy rights for women in the Methodist Church Suez Canal crisis  
 1960 John F. Kennedy elected  
 1961 First manned space flight  
 1964 Beginning of the end of all-black central jurisdiction  
 1967 Margaret Henrichsen - first woman District Superintendent Summer of urban rioting

FORMATION OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

1968 Union of Methodist Church and Evangelical United Brethren Church; Commission on Religion & Race and General Commission on Archives & History formed  
 1969 Moon landing  
 1972 Commission on the Status & Role of Women; first General Conference of the United Methodist Church Nixon re-elected; Watergate scandal  
 1973 End of all-black conferences Vietnam cease-fire  
 1976 Ethnic minority local church emphasis United States' Bicentennial  
 1980 Marjorie Matthews - first woman elected Bishop Ronald Reagan elected  
 1984 Bicentennial of American Methodism

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