

THE INDEPENDENT PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH, SAVANNAH, GEORGIA.



EARLY AMERICAN CHVRCHES

PART VII



THE INDEPENDENT PRESBYTERIAN,
SAVANNAH, GA.—FIRST PRESBYTERIAN,
NEWARK, N. J.—TRINITY,
NEWPORT, R. I.—PARK STREET,
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS.



BY AYMAR EMBURY II

WE WERE NATURALLY ACCUSTOMED to think of Savannah as being a very old city but it was in fact settled only in 1733, and for many years developed slowly, and the very interesting old houses for which Savannah is like Charlestown, famous, date from the early part of the nineteenth century. The excellence of much of the work in Savannah may be attributed to the fact that a well trained English architect named Jay was in practice there from about the year 1800, and was the designer not only of a number of most interesting houses, but also of the Telfair Art Gallery and possibly of the Independent Presbyterian Church. The building illustrated in this article is a reproduction to measurement of the original building which was burned some years since, and though this building is of white marble the spirit and proportions are very clearly those of the older wood building. The spire is of wood above the tower, and seems one of the best designed of all the older ones; both in the method of transition from the square to the octagon and also in the proportions of each story. The window treatment is distinctly not the

usual type of Colonial work, but suggests rather the Gothic method of subdivision. Judged from the photograph the structure would appear to be of the ordinary plan with the relations of the length to breadth about as three to two; but the building is actually a square with the porch and tower added; and the interior is covered by a flat dome carried on four columns, with galleries around three sides and the pulpit on the fourth. Certain of the details of the interior are a departure from what was then recognized practice, notably the full entablature between the capitols of the columns and the cornice forming the lower part of the dome; and the placing of the pulpit directly against a window. The treatment of the pulpit is itself a most agreeable piece of work, and the window against which it is placed is framed by a light column on either side, again with full entablature and a well designed architrave against the wall. The church is to Georgia what St. Michaels is to South Carolina, and St. Pauls Chapel to New York, and its architecture is certainly worthy of its reputation.

THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Newark, N. J.

WHILE THERE WERE RELIGIOUS SERVICES held in the state of New Jersey before the congregation of the First Presbyterian Church was organized, this was

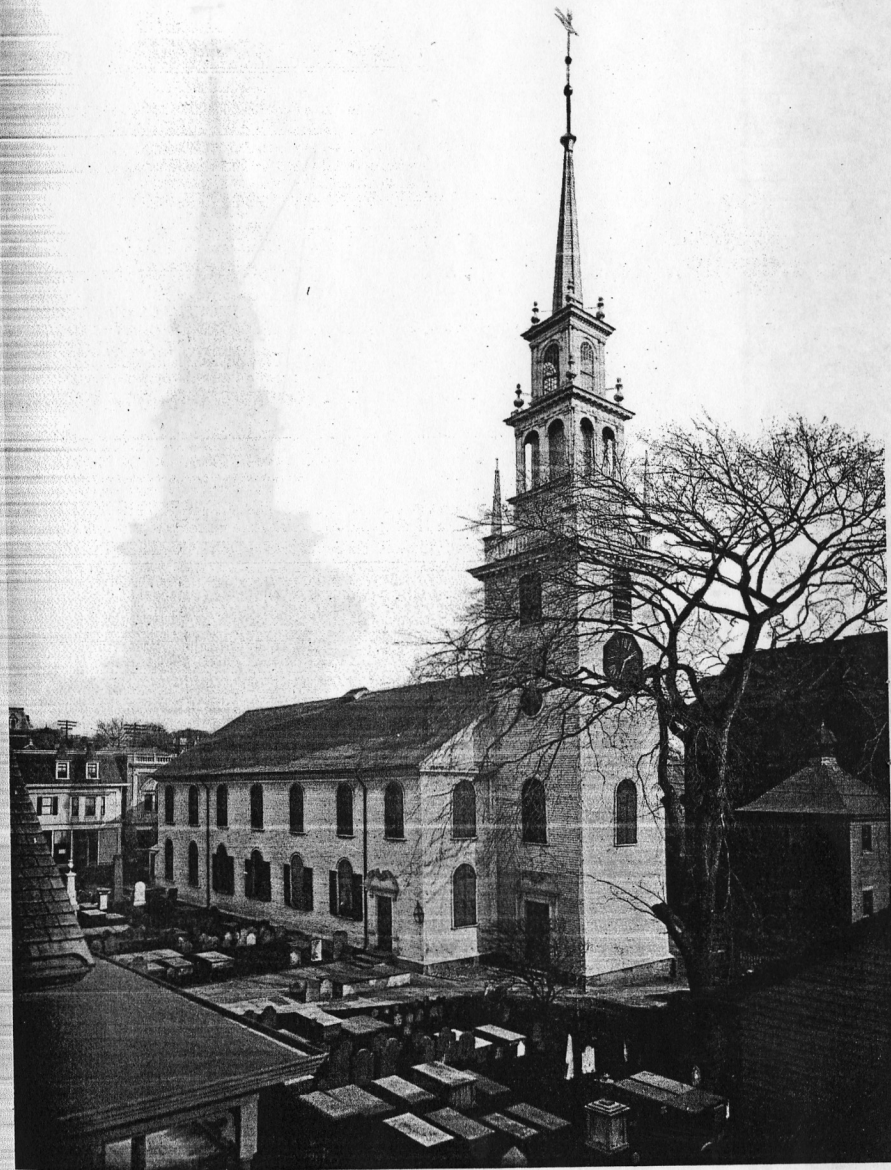
the first definite and fixed religious organization in the state. The early members of the congregation were New Englanders, coming. I believe from Bran-



THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH, NEWARK, N. J.



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TRINITY CHURCH,
NEWPORT, R. I.


 INTERIOR TRINITY CHURCH,
 NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND.

ford, Conn. The first minister was one Abraham Pierson, a Scotchman, and the first of these successive church edifices for the congregation was built in the years 1663-1665. This original church was stockaded and was used as a sort of fort for defense against Indian attacks. The second building was erected in 1746, and the third and present building in 1787. As was the case with many of the churches built about this time, some of the timbers of the earlier edifice were incorporated into the later structure, and with the natural tendency to exaggerate the date of construction of the earlier church is occasionally given as being that of the present building. The best data at hand however gives 1787 as

the year in which the building was begun although the "Georgian Period" in a footnote gives it as 1774. While the church records are very full as to the ministers throughout the church history, and give in detail the contributions received, they are absolutely silent as to the designer and I have been unable to find any light on the subject. Its history has been uneventful, the principal occurrence being the foundation of Princeton University within the walls of the former building. The present structure is a plain stone building with a stone tower and a wooden spire, with an interior more than usually elaborate, and some very excellent architecture injured by too much painting of the decorated portions.

THE PARK STREET CHURCH

Boston, Mass.

THE MOST IMPRESSIVE of all the old Boston Churches is unquestionably the Park Street Church, both by reason of its size, and of its location on a plot somewhat elevated above the general level and at a very conspicuous point. The present structure was built in 1809, and was designed by one Peter Banner, and is so far as I know the only piece of work attributed to him. Its design is not that of the classic revival which we would naturally expect at that time, but was very strongly reminiscent of the earlier Colonial work, especially in the slimness of the orders, and the lightness of the detail. In spite of the delicacy of its several parts, the building is as a whole rather clumsy and confused, the problem of dropping the façade below the main level of the church being evidently too much for the designer. One does not feel either that the scale of the quarter circle porches or whatever they may be, between the tower and the body of the building is correct; they should have been either much larger or much smaller. The façade is certainly unique among American churches both in the interpo-

sitions of the members just spoken of, and in the treatment of the intersection of the main ridge with the tower, which is very crudely handled, the main cornice returning into a window. The best features of the exterior are without doubt the entrance doorway and the Palladian windows above which are charming pieces of detail and together constitute an admirable architectural motif. Unlike the exterior, the interior is very strongly tinged with Greek color, but it is only half understood and distinctly amateurish. While the building is both too important and too well known to be omitted from any series which endeavors to cover the general field of early American Churches, it is perhaps one of the least excellent of them all because the unpretentious and straightforward design characteristic of most of our early work has here been superseded by an attempt at display beyond the ability of the designer; and even so it is far better designed than nine-tenths of the modern churches in which their architects have endeavored to instill the Colonial feeling.

TRINITY CHURCH

Newport, R. I.

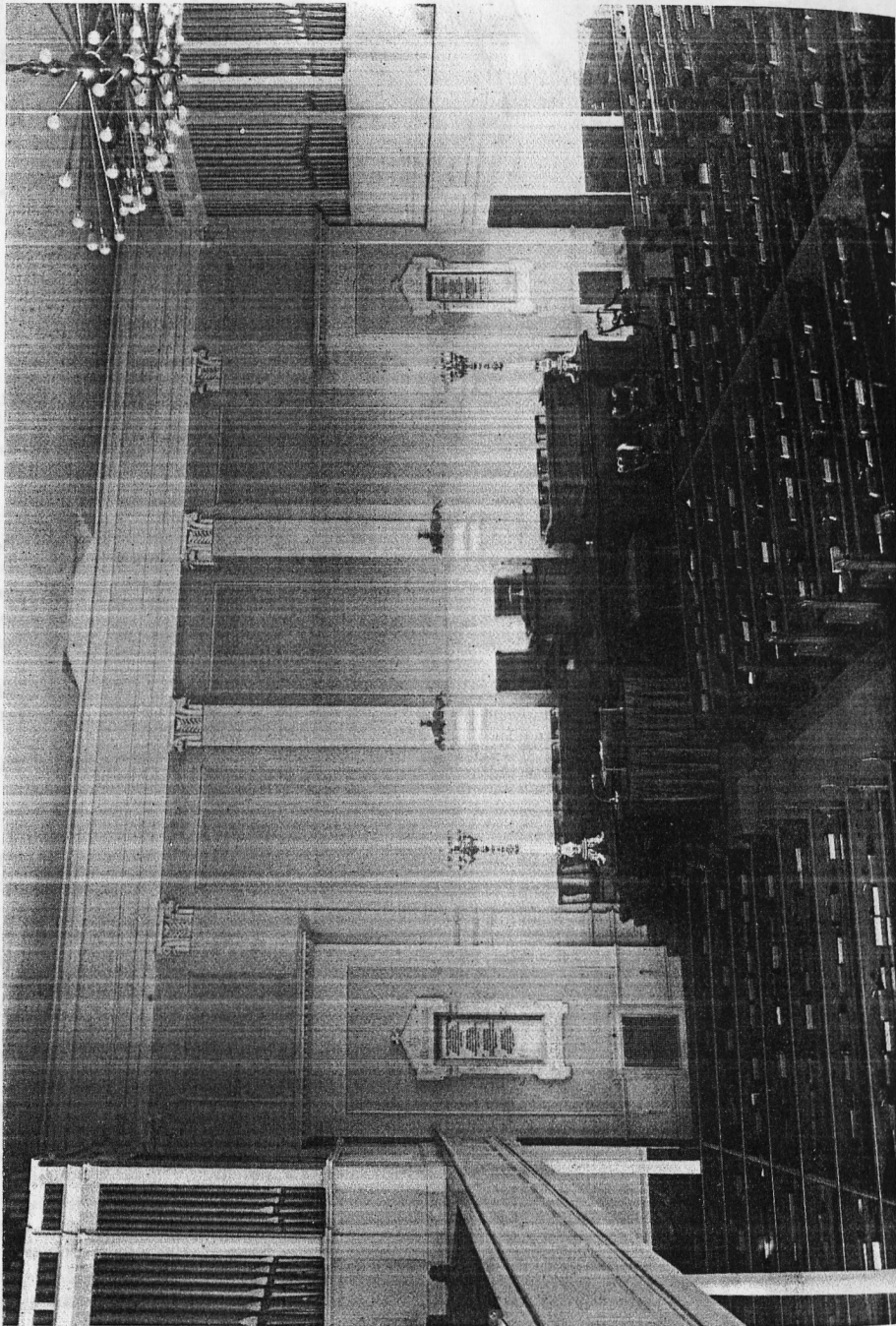
OF THE DOZEN BEST KNOWN CHURCHES in America, Trinity Church, Newport, is certainly one, and its congregation has a long and honored history. The tower is a most excellent piece of architecture, but the balance of the building is plain—almost barnlike—and the interior is not entirely agreeable. It was erected in 1726, and was sawn in two, the back moved out and the space between filled in to conform with the older portions in 1762, but there has otherwise been no change in its construction; and as long as Newport continues to be a fashionable watering place it will probably be conserved as a sort of monumental bric-a-brac by its congregation. Its design often is attributed to Sir Christopher Wren, but without apparent reason; and certainly the building is itself evidence that this was not the case, the tower, (the only piece of design) being extremely different from any of Wren's

work. The tower is of a type not uncommon in New England and is perhaps the loveliest example of the square stepped variety extant, its only rival being the North Church in Boston. The interior is one of the few cases in which two orders are superimposed and the only one in which square columns were used.

The general effect is interesting although not very dignified, and the superfluity of vaulting in the ceiling is restless and disturbed, especially when one considers the fact that the building is so obviously frame; our Colonial architects did a good many things that we would never dare to do; and got away with them, but this is not one of the successful innovations. Of the different portions of the interior the pulpit canopy and the candelabra are perhaps the most interesting and the old square pews still remain in position.



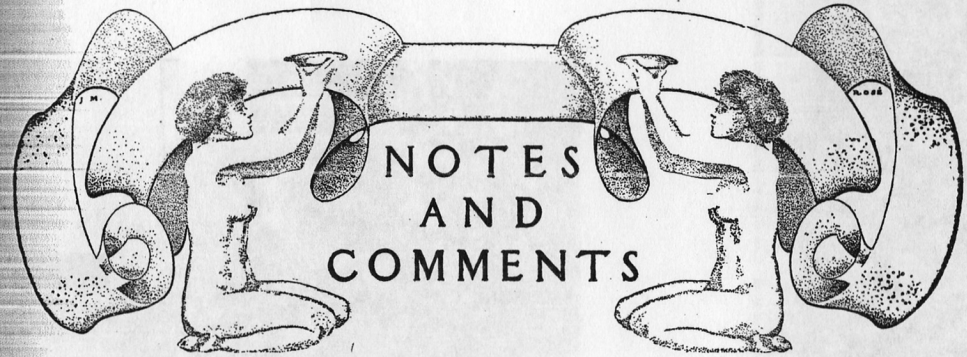
PARK STREET CHURCH,
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS.



INTERIOR, PARK STREET CHURCH, BOSTON, MASS.

IMPROVING FIFTH AVENUE.

Some papers have referred to the committee as having for its purpose the preparation of plans which would make Fifth Avenue the handsomest street in the world. The committee at once disclaims any such expectation. It says that below Fifty-ninth Street the time has already passed when there can be a hope of making it the equal of splendid avenues in Europe. It believes, however, that the avenue's present dignity can be maintained, and even increased, and that it may be saved from becoming "another and cheaper Broadway." To this end, one of the most important suggestions, and perhaps the one of most widespread interest, is that with reference to a restriction of building height. The committee suggests that legislation be asked to give the Board of Estimate authority to limit the cornice line of all buildings on the avenue, and even a certain distance off the avenue on the side streets, to a height of one hundred and twenty-five feet from the curb, the buildings being then allowed to go up twenty-five additional feet in a receding mansard. This would make the building height limit one hundred and fifty feet. The University Club now rises one hundred and twenty-eight feet; Sherry's rises one hundred and sixty-



NOTES AND COMMENTS

The report of the committee, appointed by Borough President McAneny, to suggest means of improving Fifth Avenue, New York, is of much more than local interest.

two feet. Thus the suggestion, though not considered ideal by the committee, is believed to be a satisfactory and practical compromise which, while fair to the property owners, will prevent the avenue from becoming a canyon. The committee suggests that after this restriction has been secured, a requirement of "uniformity in the skyline and perhaps the façades" might follow. Other recommendations of very general interest are that the Board of Estimate shall pass a resolution forbidding the establishment on the avenue of any "sweatshop, or manufactory of dry goods or wearing apparel;" that isles of safety shall be constructed at the crossings of the busiest streets, and that stands for waiting cabs shall be established in connection with these isles of safety. These cab stands the committee believes will do much to lessen the congestion of traffic on the streets, and should even result in a reduction of cab fares. Local suggestions of special interest are that the avenue be widened between Fourteenth Street and Twenty-third; that Madison Square be replanned; that trees be planted on both sides of the street in front of the Public Library and of the Cathedral; and on the east side of the avenue the entire length of Central Park; that the Plaza be replanned, both for appearance sake and for convenience, and that ultimately a monument of some kind be erected at 110th Street. fittingly to close the vista. The members of the committee are: Arnold W. Brunner, Joseph S. Auerbach, Edward Holdbrook, George F. Kunz, Nelson P. Lewis, George T. Mortimer and Robert Grier Cooke.