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# Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian

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No. 14

REV. DR. FRANCIS S. DUNHAM 1843 - 1920

"Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth. -- Psalm 26:8

Rev. Francis S. Dunham was born in the city of Lockport, N.Y. He attended DeVeaux College at Niagara Falls. After receiving his seminary training in this country he attended the University of Heidelberg in Germany where he earned the degree of Ph.D. He later attended Oxford University and from there received his D.D. Dr. Dunham then served several years as Curate of Grace Church in New York City before being called as rector of St. Stephens Parish in Terre Haute, Indiana.

On Sept. 15, 1883 Rev. Dunham became Rector of Christ Episcopal Church in Albion. where he served until his retirement on St. Andrews Day, November 30, 1908. However, he continued to serve Christ Church until April 10, 1910 when the Rev. Glenn White formally began his duties as Rector. To this day Rev. Dunham's pastorate is the longest in the history of Christ Church since it began in 1844.

Upon his retirement he had the distinguished title of Rector Emeritus conferred upon him by the Wardens and Vestrymen of the church. For many years he had served on the Albion Board of Education and was a Trustee of DeVeaux college.

It was during Rev. Dunham's twenty-five years as an active priest at Christ Church that the greatest expansion took place. In 1884 the bell tower was remodeled along with other exterior improvements. In 1885 a sacristy and parish house were erected to the back of the church and dedicated as Bruen Memorial Chapel. In 1888 the plastered ceiling in the church was removed and replaced with one which remains today as an exquisite example of wood working of that era. In 1897 Rev. Dunham reported that Christ Church had 215 communicants and 100 pupils in the Sunday School.

By 1898 the church had outgrown its kitchen and dining room which were housed in the basement. It was then that the present kitchen and dining room were added to the chapel-parish house, greatly expanding that space. In that area dance classes are now conducted.

When Rev. Dunham died in 1920 he left his own home to the parish. The vestry of Christ Church in 1923 sold the Liberty Street rectory and used the Dunham house located on Platt



Street for a rectory until 1937. From 1937-39 the vestry rented the former Liberty Street property for a rectory and repurchased it in 1939. The Dunham house was then rented to the Orleans County Farm and Home Bureau until 1946 when Christ Church sold it to the Knights of Columbus for a hall. In 1959 the Knights of Columbus sold the old Dunham property to New York Telephone. At that time the house was razed and the site was used for the present telephone building.

Rev. Dunham was a man who was quite financially secure aside from his church salary. His own home was filled with art objects, he being a connoisseur of fine furnishings and antiques. Along with the house he also willed the church his collection of jewels which were highly valued at the time.

He was one of the most prominent, esteemed and revered citizens of the community. Monsignor Francis Sullivan wrote of him, "Rev. Dr. Dunham was, most ideal, a warm, kindly and generous nature...the cases are countless in which gloom was changed into sunshine, sorrow into joy, despair into hope and want into sufficiency by the sympathy of his soul and the bounty of his hand...impressively emulating the example of that Holy One whose love went out to all..."

And finally, a lasting testimony stands today in his memory on the main altar of Christ Church. It is a bronze and marble tabernacle in which is kept a ciborium also in recognition of his outstanding labor, both placed there in 1923 by the parishoners.