

Christ Episcopal Church  
Middletown, Monmouth County, New Jersey

HABS-NJ-325

HABS  
NJ  
13-MIDT0  
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Seymour Williams, A.I.A., District Officer  
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

HABS  
NJ.  
13. MIDTOW.  
2

Christ Episcopal Church  
Middletown, Monmouth County, New Jersey

Owner: Rector, Wardens, and Vestry of Christ  
Episcopal Church

Date of Erection: First building about 1746, for  
years uncompleted; used until  
1835 when the present building  
was erected around the old  
frame

Architect:

Builder:

Present Condition: Good

Number of Stories: One with tower

Materials of Construction: Foundation - Jersey  
sandstone and brick

Exterior walls - frame  
construction, clapboards

Interior walls - wains-  
coting and plaster on  
sides, wood ceiling

Inside brick chimney

Roof - pitch, wood  
shingles

### Historical Data:

In 1700 Colonel Lewis Morris writing to the Bishop of London described the people of Middletown as perhaps the most ignorant and wicked in the world. Consequently, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, and other dignitaries assembled at Lambeth Palace where the matter was discussed.

The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts was the outcome, and the first missionary Reverend George Keith was sent to Middletown. He arrived in Middletown 1701-1702; Christ Church was founded. This date is usually given making this parish one of the oldest in the State of New Jersey; Mandeville claims it to be the oldest or the second oldest.

According to the old records the Reverend Alexander Innes, a priest of the church of England, came to Middletown in 1680 and held services in the house of John Stout. If the origin of the parish is dated back to these early services which are believed to have been continued until the official recording of the church on June 17, 1702, then the parish of Middletown is the oldest in New Jersey.

In the earliest days, a block house for protection against the Indians was situated on the present site of Christ Church. This block house in 1684 was used for a jail and for court sessions; Middletown at that time was the county seat.

The Reverend Thomas Thompson came as missionary in 1745. He tells us that the church building was much out of condition at that time, that nothing had been done on the inside of Christ Church, not even the floor laid. He further states that there was no place to hold divine service except an old building which had been a meeting house. We find that in 1746 the building was made fit for worship; therefore, the building must have been started before 1746. The exact date is not known. It was situated on property willed to Christ Church by the Reverend Alexander Innes.

This old building was used until 1835 when the present building was erected around the old frame. This building was consecrated on June 19, 1836 by Bishop Doane. It seats three hundred people and cost a little over twelve hundred dollars.

In 1751 the Reverend Samuel Cook became the minister. He served Christ Church until the Revolution; remaining a Tory he joined the British in New York. His property was later confiscated. The survey history of Christ Church, Shrewsbury, NJ-37, should be consulted in connection with this since Shrewsbury and Middletown were considered as one parish for many years.

William Leeds, who was Captain Kidd's financial backer, was a resident of Middletown and a memorial monument to this planter now stands besides Christ Church which was founded and is supported mainly by his gifts. The Reverend George Keith baptized William Leeds

and his sister Mary into the church of England on January 3, 1703. Leeds and his sister had been Quakers.

Bibliography:

Mandeville, E.W. The Story of Middletown the Oldest Settlement in New Jersey Middletown, Christ Church n.d. (1927)

Delatash, George Survey Historian for Monmouth County

Walter C. Rutt  
Supervising Historian

Approved:

Seymour Williams  
SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, A.I.A.  
District Officer

Rev. Jan. 25, '37 W