

Old John Street Methodist-Episcopal Church,  
John Street, New York City.

New York Co.

HABS No. 4-27

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NY,  
31-NEYO,  
23-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

District No. 4  
Southern New York State

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Wm. Dewey Foster, District Officer,  
25 West 45th Street, New York City.

OLD JOHN STREET METHODIST-EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
44-46 John Street, New York City.

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Historical Introduction

The present edifice is the 3rd of three churches built on this site. The first, built by Philip Embury and dedicated in 1768 was known as the Wesley Chapel, until in 1784 the Wesley Society founded by Philip Embury became known as the Methodist-Episcopal Church.

This first church was a building 42 feet by 60 feet inside, constructed of rough stone covered with blue-tinted stucco. It had one floor, and a gallery that was reached by ladders; a sanded floor and seats without any backs for pews. It was lighted with candels and heated by a fireplace in the southeast corner, this latter also serving the purpose of making the building come under the classification of a dwelling, thereby conforming to a Colonial ordinance, effective during those times, which prohibited the construction of a church as such, by other than officially recognized denominations.

To this property in 1784 was added a parsonage, this being a small frame house of Dutch design situated to the west and north of the church proper and forming one side of a fenced-in forecourt. This has long since given way to more modern structures.

In 1818 a second stone church was erected here in place of the first at a cost of \$30,000 in order to accomodate a growing congregation in a less primitive type of building.

It employed as far as possible the materials of the older building and was approximately of the size and arrangement of

the present structure, having a large vestry with offices on the basement floor, an auditorium on the first floor, and a gallery above.

#### Architectural Description

Twenty years later, in 1841, it became necessary, due to widening the street and changing the grade, to remodel or rebuild the church and it was decided to build the present church.

This building, approximately 40 feet by 74 feet inside was like the preceeding one, built largely of salvaged materials. The stone and wood in its construction in some cases came from the original Wesley Chapel as did the vestry communion rail, which was built by Philip Embury himself. The stair handrails, newel posts, and pew trims were taken from the church of 1818, and the gate to the gallery stairs came from the "Rigging Loft," a rented place of worship in 1766.

Among the historical relics preserved here is the famous Breeches Bible of 1611.

The Church at present is substantially as built in 1841, except for minor changes in decoration and the addition of many memorial tablets of which there is a large collection.

Written, June 2, 1934, by,

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75 Willow Street,  
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Approved: *Am. Bruce Foster*  
*District Officer*

*Reviewed 1936, H.C.F.*