

*The Anglican Church in Colonial Monmouth County, New Jersey*

*Part I: Beginnings*

By Joseph W. Hammond

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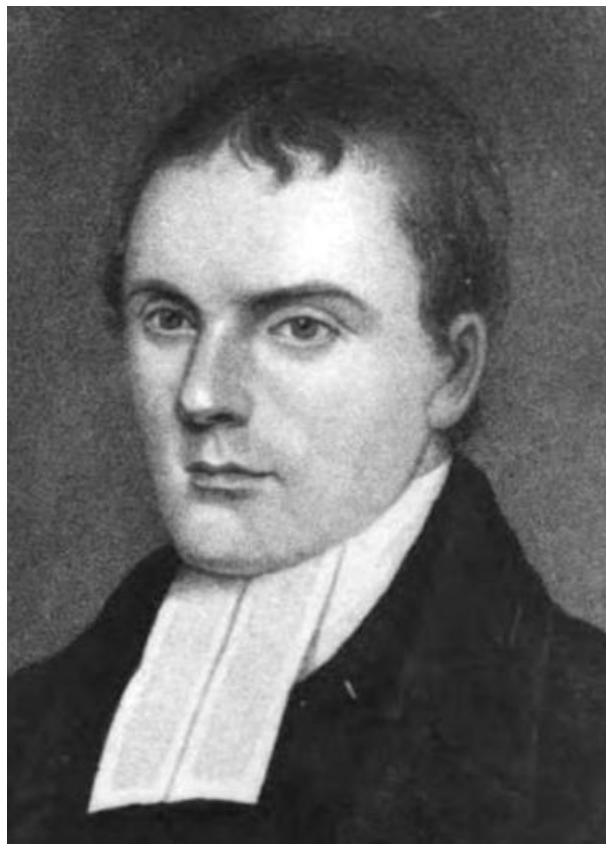
*Abstract: The Church of England, also known as the Anglican Church (and since 1789 in the United States as the Protestant Episcopal Church), made its entry into the area south of the Raritan River in New Jersey by 1700. Beginning in 1702, missionaries sent to America by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts served Monmouth County whenever possible in spite of the often-dangerous ferry crossing at Perth Amboy. The Society finally assigned missionaries full time to the area beginning in 1733. From then through the years of the American Revolution, the three Anglican congregations that evolved in Shrewsbury, Middletown, and Freehold depended on the Society for much of their support. This article, the first of three, tells the story of the Anglican Church in Monmouth County from its earliest fragile beginnings through 1751, a period of slow uncertain growth fraught at one point with intense internal controversy. The second article in this series will discuss the period of steady growth and increasing prosperity through 1774. The final article will focus on the depredations and difficulties faced by the Anglicans of Monmouth County and their churches during the years of the American Revolution when many (but not all) of them became Loyalists.*

Historians generally attribute the founding of the Anglican church in Monmouth County, New Jersey, to the Rev. George Keith (1638–1716), the first missionary sent to America by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG).<sup>1</sup> This organization had been formed the previous year to send Anglican clergymen and religious literature to Britain's colonies,

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<sup>1</sup> For a general biography of George Keith, see: Ethyn Williams Kirby, *George Keith (1638–1716)* (New York & London: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1942).

support schoolmasters and the establishment of new churches, and lobby for a more expansive place for the Church of England in Britain's burgeoning empire. Keith, a former Quaker who had come to America in 1685 as surveyor general of the province of East Jersey, returned to England after becoming disaffected from the Quakers, and was ordained to the Church of England ministry in May of 1700. He came back to the American colonies under SPG sponsorship, and from 1702 to 1704 traveled from New Hampshire to North Carolina in an attempt to bring Quakers and others over to the Church of England. Keith was accompanied on this journey by the Rev. John Talbot (1645–1727).<sup>2</sup> Keith's confrontational personality and often aggressive tactics at times led to physical violence when attacking Quakers and the "errors" of their beliefs.



**Portrait of George Keith (1638–1716), Anglican missionary to America from 1702 to 1704. From George Morgan Hills, *History of the Church in Burlington, New Jersey*, second edition, 1885, 18-19.**

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<sup>2</sup> For general biographies of John Talbot, see: Edgar Legare Pennington, *Apostle of New Jersey: John Talbot, 1645–1727* (Philadelphia: The Church Historical Society, 1938), and Cynthia McFarland, *Recovering John Talbot* (Printed Privately, 2011). This second work corrects errors made in the Pennington biography.

From October 1702 through January 1703, Keith and Talbot spent much of their time in Monmouth County.<sup>3</sup> They first appeared on October 10 and 11 when they attended the Yearly Meeting of the Friends at Topanemus near Freehold. Keith spoke on both days. The missionary team then went on to Middletown and finally to Shrewsbury, where on October 24, Keith attempted unsuccessfully to engage the Quakers there, who were also holding their Yearly Meeting, in a dialog to show them their theological errors with quotations from their own printed books. After preaching in Shrewsbury on October 26, Keith and Talbot left for Burlington and Philadelphia. In describing his time in Monmouth County, Keith recorded in his diary that:

In all these Meetings at *Shrewsbury, Middletown, and Toponemes* [sic], or where ever else, on *Nethersinks* [Navesink], Mr. *Lewis Moris* [sic], and diverse others of best Note in that Country, frequented the Congregations and Places where we preached, and did kindly entertain us at their Houses, where we lodged as we travelled too and again; particularly Mr. *Moris*, Mr. *Innes*, Mr. *Johnston*, Mr. *Boels*, and Mr. *Read* . . .<sup>4</sup>

These individuals were Lewis Morris of Tinton Falls and New York, the Rev. Alexander Inness of Middletown, Dr. John Johnstone of Middletown and Perth Amboy, Thomas Boels of Freehold, and John Reid of Marlboro, all supporters of the Anglican church. Two of them (Boels and Reid) had recently converted from Quakerism. First among this distinguished group was Lewis Morris (1671–1746), who had inherited a large manor and iron works in Tinton Falls from his namesake uncle.<sup>5</sup> He had long been an advocate in America for the Church of England. In 1700, he sent a lengthy memorial to the Bishop of London describing the poor state of religion in New Jersey. Morris became one of the very few American members or patrons of the SPG. He corresponded with its secretary off and on for his entire adult life. Morris was appointed to the

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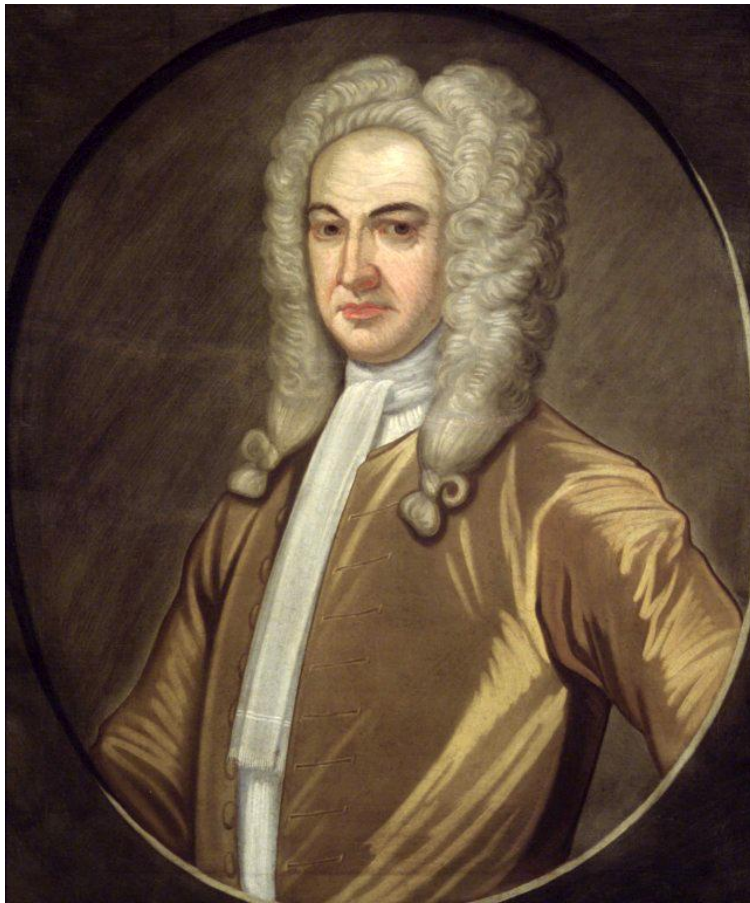
<sup>3</sup> George Keith, *A Journal of Travels from New-Hampshire to Caratuck on the Continent of North-America* (London: Printed by Joseph Downing for Brab. Aylmer, 1706), 51–59.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 53–54.

<sup>5</sup> For a general biography of Lewis Morris, see: Eugene R. Sheridan, *Lewis Morris, 1671–1746: A Study in Early American Politics* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981).

New Jersey Provincial Council in 1703. He remained a member of that body (with several suspensions) through the administrations of seven governors. For much of that time, Morris was the council's president. He also served as chief justice of New York from 1715 to 1733 and finally as the first governor of an independent province of New Jersey from 1738 to his death in 1746. As for his faith, Keith described Morris as follows, after his fall visit to Monmouth County:

Coll. Morris is a very good Friend to the Church and a Promoter of it, & was very kind & assistant to us, & is very regular in his family, & his Lady is a very pious and good Woman, his Family is a little Church, he useth the Common Prayer in his Family daily, and on Sunday his Neighbors come to his house, as to a Church; and at times Mr. Inness preacheth in his house. I suppose your Lordship remembereth Mr. Inness, a good man . . .<sup>6</sup>



**Portrait of Lewis Morris (1671–1746), painted by artist John Watson of Perth Amboy, circa 1726. Morris was long an advocate in America for the Church of England. Courtesy Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York.**

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<sup>6</sup> Letter, George Keith to the Bishop of London, February 26, 1702/3. Archives of the United Society Partners in Gospel [formerly Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts], A Series Letter Books, vol. 1, 184. Hereafter referred to as USPG Archives.

Dr. John Johnstone (1661–1732) owned a large estate on Hop Brook in Middletown, which he named Scotschester. He served in the New Jersey General Assembly for four years representing Perth Amboy and then as mayor of New York City from 1714 to 1716.<sup>7</sup> John Reid (1655–1723), a former estate gardener from Scotland, removed in 1686 to a large tract of land in what is now Marlboro, which he named Hortensia. In 1702, Reid was appointed surveyor general for the East Jersey Proprietors, a position he had held in a deputy capacity for some years beforehand. He also was elected to several terms in the General Assembly and served as a judge of the Monmouth Court of Pleas.<sup>8</sup> Thomas Boels (d. 1711) owned large tracts of land in the vicinity of Freehold and elsewhere. It should be noted that three of these individuals, namely Lewis Morris, Dr. John Johnstone, and John Reid, held shares in the East Jersey Proprietors, and Morris presided at times as president of their Council.

After spending time in Philadelphia and New York, the Revs. George Keith and John Talbot returned to Monmouth County. On December 20, Keith preached at the home of Dr. Johnstone. On Christmas Day, Keith again “preached at the House of Mr. *Morris*, on *Luke 2*, 10, 11. And after Sermon, diverse of the Auditory received with us the Holy Sacrament; both Mr. *Morris* and his Wife, and diverse others. Mr. *Talbot* did administer it.”<sup>9</sup> The missionaries then remained in Monmouth County until January 4, 1703, when they left again for Burlington and Philadelphia. Their last four days were spent in Freehold, where they preached and baptized 5 adults and 16 children. Among those who, at that time, converted to the Anglican church from Quakerism through baptism were William Leeds, who will figure later in this story, and his sister Mary. Keith

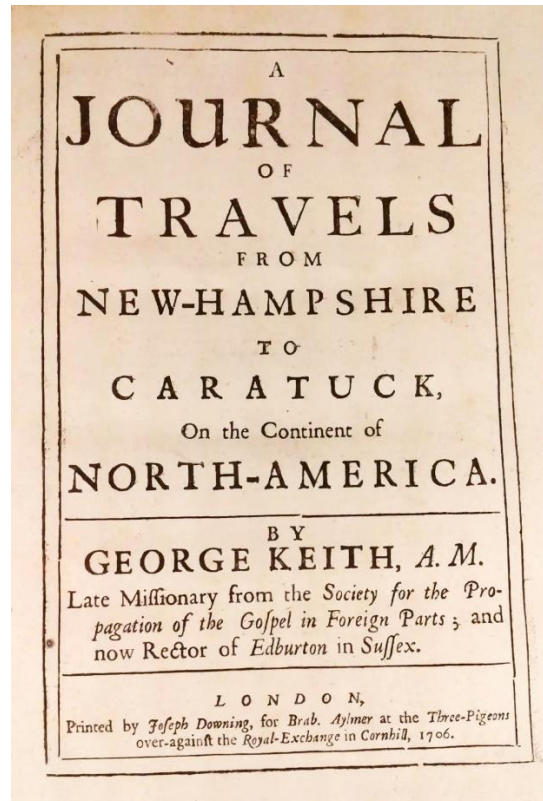
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<sup>7</sup> “John Johnstone (mayor),” accessed January 20, 2024, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Johnstone\\_\(mayor\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Johnstone_(mayor)).

<sup>8</sup> James Steen, *History of Christ Church, Shrewsbury, New Jersey, 1702–1903* (Red Bank: *The Standard*, 1903; bound 1972), 9.

<sup>9</sup> Keith, *op. cit.*, 58. Luke Chapter 2, Verses 10 and 11 contain the traditional words announcing the birth of Christ.

was well received in Freehold as he had been a founding settler of the community in 1686. While a resident there, he also took an active role in the affairs of the Quaker meeting at nearby Topanemus. Keith returned to England in 1694.



Title page to George Keith's *Journal of Travels from New-Hampshire to Caratuck on the Continent of North-America*, printed in London by Joseph Downing in 1706. Courtesy Joseph J. Felcone, Princeton, New Jersey.

While in Monmouth County, Keith and Talbot at some point lodged with the Rev. Alexander Inness (d. 1713). Keith described him as follows:

Mr. *Innes* [sic] being in Priest's Orders, has oft preached among them, and by Preaching, and Conferences frequently with Quakers and other sorts of People, as also by his pious Conversation, has done much good among them, and been very instrumental to draw them off from their Errors, and bring them over to the Church.<sup>10</sup>

Inness had come to Monmouth County by 1700, when he purchased 40 acres of land in Middletown from Dr. John Johnstone. He enlarged his property by acquiring another 110 acres in

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 54.

1701 from Lewis Morris. Inness probably arrived in New Jersey in 1685. On April 20, 1686, he was commissioned as chaplain to the British troops in New York. The position required him to swear allegiance to King James II, who was the last Catholic monarch of England. This led three years later to accusations of his being a “papist” and an enemy of the new protestant sovereigns, King William III and Queen Mary II. Other evidence indicates that Inness was at least a passive Jacobite or Non-Juror. Because of these allegations, he was not accepted by the SPG as a missionary supported by them even though highly recommended to the position by several of his clerical colleagues and others in America.<sup>11</sup>

After settling in Monmouth County, the Rev. Inness ministered to the local community without charge. Four years after his death in 1713, he was remembered as follows in a petition sent to the SPG by the county justices of the peace, high sheriff, and grand jury requesting that a missionary be sent to the area.

Mr. Alexander Innis [sic], by unwearied Pains and Industry, gathered three congregations in this County, tho’ much scattered in their Habitations; yet did he visit them, teach them, and instruct them all, once at least in three Weeks, in order to their eternal Happiness. But alas! Since his Death, we have been without a Means of Grace, unhappy in want of a Minister of the Establish’d Church, to officiate in that Office, and to instruct the Youth Church-Catechism.<sup>12</sup>

The three congregations, not yet named, were located at Middletown, Shrewsbury, and Freehold. They consisted of nearly 400 families combined according to the petition, a figure which may be somewhat exaggerated. Inness sold his Monmouth County real estate in 1709. He then spent the last years of his life among relatives in Perth Amboy, where he died in 1713. In his will, he left the following:

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<sup>11</sup> Nelson R. Burr, *The Anglican Church in New Jersey* (Philadelphia: The Church Historical Society, 1954), 615–616.

<sup>12</sup> David Humphreys, D. D., *An Historical Account of the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts* (London: Joseph Downing, 1730), 57-58.

Item I give to the Church of Shrewsbury five Pounds. Item I give to the Church of Middletown five Pounds. Item I give to the Church of Freehold ten Pounds & my will is that these several Sumes [sic] should be paid to Mr. Tho Bowles [Boels] to be laid out by him for ye use of the afore mentioned Churches.

Inness must have been referring to Thomas Boels Jr. as his father, Thomas Sr., had died by February of 1711. The good Reverend then continued:

Item I give all my Books with ye Books sent to me by my Lord Viscount Weymouth for ye use of the Minister of the Church of England for ye time Being in ye Towns of Middletown, Shrewsbury & Freehold to be kept accordingly in a great chest forever.<sup>13</sup>

This impressive library amounted to 179 titles, consisting of religious, controversial, and classical works in Latin and English.<sup>14</sup> Finally, Inness devised 50 shillings toward building a church in Piscataway, and 40 shillings toward furnishing the church in Elizabeth Town. His years of ministry in Monmouth County, plus his generosity in these several bequests, truly establish Inness as a founding leader of the Church of England in central New Jersey, irrespective of his political views.

The Rev. George Keith returned to Monmouth County twice more in his two-year missionary sojourn in America. From October 10 to 24, 1703, in the company of the Rev. Alexander Inness, he preached at Topanemus to “a considerable Auditory, diverse of them late Converts from Quakerism to the Church,” and near the Quaker meeting house at Shrewsbury. Then from January 9 to February 6, 1704, he preached at Middletown, Shrewsbury, and Freehold at the houses of his previous hosts, Dr. John Johnstone, Lewis Morris, Thomas Boels, and John Reid.<sup>15</sup> Keith sailed for England from Virginia on June 8, 1704. He was given the rectorship of a rural parish at Edburton, Sussex, where he died in 1716 at age 77.

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<sup>13</sup> John E. Stillwell, *Unrecorded Wills and Inventories of Monmouth County, New Jersey*, reprint (New Orleans: Polyanthos Press, 1975), 36

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 79-80.

<sup>15</sup> Keith, *op. cit.*, 76-79.

Since the nineteenth century, historians of the three Episcopal parishes of Monmouth County that were organized in the eighteenth century, namely Christ Church, Shrewsbury; Christ Church, Middletown; and St. Peter's Church, Freehold, all claim the Rev. George Keith as their founder, and their founding date as 1702. These should be viewed as arbitrary choices of convenience only. It is probable that Keith and Talbot would not have received such a welcome in the area, nor preached to such large gatherings, had it not been for the earlier and continuing missionary efforts of the Rev. Alexander Inness. Inness was acknowledged locally in his day and by the SPG as establishing the three congregations.<sup>16</sup> And second, their evolution into what could be recognized as functioning parishes took place slowly over several decades after 1702.

A first step taken toward permanence by the three Anglican congregations in Monmouth County was the acquisition of land on which to build a church and as a place to bury the dead. In 1705, the Rev. Mr. Inness persuaded Dr. John Johnstone to provide such a plot in Middletown. On November 12:

Surveyed for Alexander Innes Clerk in right of John Johnstone Esq for the use of the Church two ackers [sic] of land in Middletown bounded North by the high way or street East by land of William Wilkinson West by the path which goes downe by Richard Hartshornes house & South by land unappropriated / John Reid<sup>17</sup>

Johnstone and Reid were part of the Rev. Inness's close circle of Anglican supporters. William Wilkinson or Wilkins purchased several lots on the south side of King's Highway in Middletown from Richard Hartshorne in 1699. They abutted the church lot on the east. He sold them in 1716 to George Taylor.<sup>18</sup> The Rev. Alexander Inness was also involved the following year

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<sup>16</sup> This narrative is the third attempt over the past 120 years to recognize the Rev. Alexander Inness as the true founder of the Church of England in Monmouth County. The first was in James Steen's 1903 history of Christ Church, Shrewsbury, which first appeared serially in *The Standard* newspaper of Red Bank and later was printed separately. The second was by Nelson R. Burr in his monumental and well-researched book titled *The Anglican Church in New Jersey*, published in 1954.

<sup>17</sup> Survey for Alexander Inness in Right of John Johnstone, November 12, 1705. New Jersey State Archives, Trenton, New Jersey, East Jersey Deeds, Book I, 437.

<sup>18</sup> Franklin Ellis, *History of Monmouth County, New Jersey* (Philadelphia: R. T. Peck & Co., 1885), 522, 525.

in the purchase of a lot for church purposes in Shrewsbury. For five shillings, on May 20, 1706, Nicholas Brown conveyed to the SPG a prominent parcel of land bounded on the north and west by roads (now Sycamore Avenue and Broad Street respectively), and opposite the Quaker meeting house. The deed restricted use of the lot:

Forever to ye use intent and purpose hereinafter expressed and declared & to no other use intent or purpose whatsoever that is to say for ye service & worship of God according to ye way and manner of ye Church of England as it is now by law established.<sup>19</sup>

These two lots continue today as the sites of Christ Church, Middletown, and Christ Church, Shrewsbury. The Anglican congregation at Freehold was bequeathed a 1.5 acre lot at Topanemus in the will of Thomas Boels, Sr., along with £6 toward building a church. It read:

I give and bequeath all my Right title Claims and Demand of that acer and a halfe [sic] of land and meteing [sic] house at Topanemus to ye Episcopall [sic] Church of England as now Established for to build a Church on also I give Six pounds toward the building of a Church there.<sup>20</sup>



**Topanemus Cemetery marker in Marlboro, New Jersey, placed by the Marlboro Township Historic Commission. This was the site of the first Anglican church building in Monmouth County.**

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<sup>19</sup> Deed, Nicholas Brown to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, May 20, 1706. Monmouth Deeds, Book E, 68. Monmouth County Clerk's Office, Freehold, New Jersey [hereafter Monmouth Deeds].

<sup>20</sup> Will, Thomas Boell, March 20, 1709/10. New Jersey State Archives, Trenton, New Jersey, Unrecorded Wills, vol. 12, 65–68.

This document was proved on February 28, 1711. St. Peter's Church in Freehold still owns the property. Either the former Friends meeting house on the lot, or more likely a church built shortly after 1711 to replace it, was used until the outbreak of the American Revolution.<sup>21</sup> A number of gravestones from the cemetery around the building were moved in the 1970s for preservation purposes to the grounds of their later church on Throckmorton Street in Freehold Borough.

By 1711, only the Anglican congregation in Freehold was fortunate enough to own a building in which to gather and worship. This objective took much longer in Shrewsbury and Middletown. After Shrewsbury purchased their lot in 1706, rumors began to circulate that Lewis Morris would soon build and endow a church at that location or at the Falls of Shrewsbury, meaning near his manor in Tinton Falls. But the confrontational politics of the day kept him out of New Jersey. On February 22, 1710, Jeremiah Basse, then serving as provincial secretary for New Jersey, wrote to the SPG:

I doubt not that Your Hon<sup>ble</sup> Society long have expected to hear of a Church built & endow'd by one of your Members in these parts in Shrewsbury and perhaps may be surprised to hear there is no appearance of any such thing or any stick of Timber or Stone prepared for it, as I can learn after a diligent enquiry into that affair.<sup>22</sup>

It wasn't until 1730 that the Rev. William Skinner, SPG missionary at Perth Amboy, was able to report to the Society that the people at Shrewsbury "are erecting a very handsome Building of Brick for the Worship of Almighty God after the Manner of the Church of England . . . [and] are now the most hearty in Carrying on the Work, so that it will be covered by the fall . . ."<sup>23</sup> Two years later, he informed the Society that:

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<sup>21</sup> On December 20, 1693, Thomas Boels sold 160 acres near Wickatunk to Peter Canaan, "Excepting one acre and half an acre at Meeting-house here Included and by these presents reserved." This is the same 1.5 acres later devised by Boels to the Church. New Jersey State Archives, Trenton, New Jersey, East Jersey Deeds, Book E, 394–395.

<sup>22</sup> Letter, Jeremiah Basse to the SPG, February 22, 1710. USPG Archives, A Series Letter Books, vol. 6, 311.

<sup>23</sup> Letter, the Rev. William Skinner to the SPG, July 14, 1730. USPG Archives, A Series Letter Books, vol. 23, 64.

Their hearts seem<sup>d</sup> prepared to receive ye word, and their hands were open to provide a place, in which it might be preach'd, and accordingly for a house of worship, according to the manner & method of ye Church of England, they have of Brick and Lime erected the largest and best proportioned structure in this Country.<sup>24</sup>

In February of 1733, the Rev. Edward Vaughan, SPG missionary at Elizabethtown, confirmed that the Anglicans at Shrewsbury “have actually built a very decent & magnificent Structure of Brick . . .”<sup>25</sup> Little else is known about this church, except that sixteen pews of uniform construction were installed in it in 1751, and that it apparently had a gallery. A portion of the south foundation wall, built of brick, remains in place under the present sanctuary. Abraham Russell appears to have been the builder of this first church. He was admitted as a Freeman in New York City on July 10, 1722, as a bricklayer.<sup>26</sup> By about 1730, he had relocated to Shrewsbury, Monmouth County, when construction of the brick church commenced. Russell and his family remained in Shrewsbury, becoming members of the Anglican congregation. He died there on February 27, 1745, and was interred two days later in the yard of the church.<sup>27</sup>

Petitions for a local missionary had been made to the SPG repeatedly since 1702 by Lewis Morris, by the Anglican congregations in Monmouth County, and by the missionaries from Elizabeth and Perth Amboy who visited the area. Momentum for this appointment had reached a peak by the early 1730s. In addition to building an imposing church in Shrewsbury, the Rev. Mr. Skinner also reported in 1732 that:

There is a prospect of Severall [sic] donations in this Church, which in time may become a Sufficient support to the Minister, and there is one donation, about 3 months ago actually made namely, a farm of 200 acres of well Improv'd land, with a good house and Out houses,

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<sup>24</sup> Letter, the Rev. William Skinner to the SPG, November 15, 1732. USPG Archives, A Series Letter Books, vol. 24, 253. The term “Country” in this quotation means Monmouth County.

<sup>25</sup> Letter, the Rev. Edward Vaughan to the SPG, February 27, 1733. The original of this letter could not be found in the online archives of the USPG. The text is therefore drawn from transcripts of SPG records made by Nelson R. Burr, now located at Rutgers University Special Collections & University Archives, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

<sup>26</sup> *The Burghers of New Amsterdam and the Freeman of New York, 1675–1866*. Collections of the New-York Historical Society for the Year 1885 (New York: Printed for the Society, 1886), 102.

<sup>27</sup> John E. Stillwell, *Historical and Genealogical Miscellany*, vol. I (New York: Privately printed, 1903), 163.

Barn and Orchard upon the Premises at a small distance from ye Church, with reserve only of ye lives of 2 Old People (viz;) the man and his wife.<sup>28</sup>

This refers to the bequest made by William Leeds (1676–1739) of his property in Middletown that became a glebe to be shared by the churches in Shrewsbury and Middletown. Skinner’s announcement was actually made prematurely. It may have been based on an earlier commitment. The will of William Leeds was dated June 20, 1735, and proved on November 20, 1739. After the decease of his wife, Rebecca Applegate, and his handicapped brother, Daniel Leeds, the will stated:

I give and bequeath my houses and lands and plantations and all my real estate in Middletown and County of Monmouth . . . to the venerable and honorable Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, and to their successors forever, to and for the use and purpose following; that is to say, for the use and purpose of a perpetual glebe for the use and habitation of a Minister or Clergyman of the Church of England, as it is now by law established, that shall be a Missionary of the said Society to preach the Gospel to the inhabitants of Middletown and Shrewsbury . . .<sup>29</sup>

This valuable property, located in what is now Lincroft and bordered on the south by Swimming River, was shared jointly by Christ Church, Shrewsbury, and Christ Church, Middletown, until it was divided between the two parishes in 1854. Middletown sold its piece of what became known as the Church Farm in 1888. Shrewsbury retained theirs until 1906, at which time the skeletal remains of William Leeds, who had been interred on the property, were removed to the graveyard of Christ Church in Shrewsbury. The Leeds real estate bequest provided important farm rental income in support of the parishes for over 160 years.

With property in hand, the promise of a glebe, and a substantial church erected in Shrewsbury, the SPG finally informed the inhabitants of Monmouth County on July 20, 1733, that:

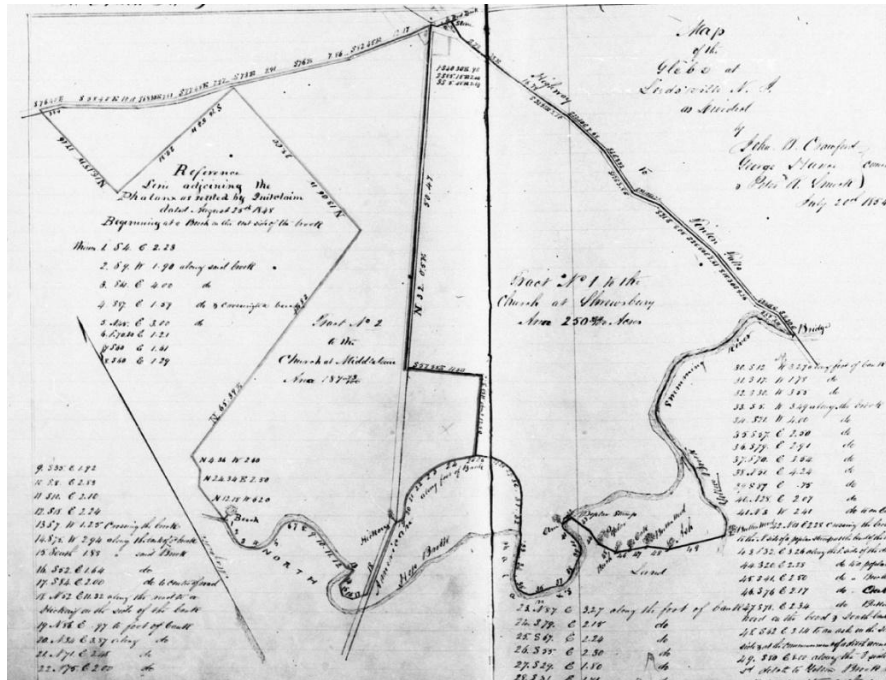
The Society have now in consideration of your representations agreed to send a Missionary to Monmouth County, and have appointed the Reverend Mr. Forbes to that mission, who will deliver this letter to you. The Society do hereby recommend him to your esteem and

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<sup>28</sup> Letter, the Rev. William Skinner to the SPG, November 15, 1732, *op. cit.*

<sup>29</sup> Steen, *op. cit.*, 16.

regard and hope he will behave himself in a manner worthy of that good character which hath been given of him to this Society. The Society order me also to acquaint you that they expect you will punctually make good your promise of contributing 50 pounds per year towards his support, otherwise they will think of removing him to some other place.<sup>30</sup>



**1854 Survey of the Church Farm when subdivided between Christ Church, Shrewsbury, and Christ Church Middletown. Newman Springs Road forms the northern border of the property, with Swimming River on the south. Phalanx Road divides the tract into two parcels. The westernmost section is now part of the Brookdale Community College campus. Courtesy Monmouth County Park System, Lincroft, New Jersey.**

The Rev. John Forbes arrived at his mission station in Monmouth County in December 1733. From that time until the close of the American Revolution, the SPG supported clergy to serve Shrewsbury, Middletown, and Freehold. Those ministers also traveled long distances to officiate at other locations throughout central New Jersey. In writing his first report to the SPG on October 20, 1734, Forbes described the condition of religion in Monmouth County as he found it.

The County, in which I am ye Only Missionary is Esteemed ye largest in ye Government, we have in it one very fair and handsome Building for a Church. But besides this there are 3 other places, where for the accommodation of people who live at a Distance, I am obliged to officiate . . .<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Letter, SPG to the Inhabitants of Monmouth County, July 20, 1733. USPG Archives, C Series Letters, box 12, 71.

<sup>31</sup> Letter, the Rev. John Forbes to the SPG, October 20, 1734. USPG Archives, A Series Letter Books, vol. 25, 37.

This included Middletown and Freehold. The latter congregation presumably still gathered in the former Quaker meeting house or a successor church at Topanemus. Or maybe use of a structure at that location had already ceased, at least intermittently. As early as August of 1717, the Rev. Thomas Halladay, SPG missionary for Woodbridge, Amboy, and Freehold, reported that:

In Freehold when I cross Amboy ferry I have twenty miles to ride ere I come to the County house the place they have appointed for meeting and the Houses are two or three miles distance.



Detail from a map titled *The Province of New Jersey Divided into East and West, commonly called The Jerseys*, William Faden and Bernard Ratzer, 1777. To provide a sense of scale, the distance from Shrewsbury to Freehold is 13 miles, from Perth Amboy to Freehold is 20 miles, and from Perth Amboy to Shrewsbury is 22 miles via Middletown. Courtesy Boston Public Library, Boston, Massachusetts.

Freehold had become the county seat by 1715 after construction of a courthouse there.

Halliday then continued later in the same letter:

Att [sic] Freehold there is no Church nor any proposal towards it that I know off [sic] so that for performing divine service we must creep into the Corner of some Cuntrey [sic] house there is no other conveniency . . .<sup>32</sup>

In 1733, the Rev. John Forbes began keeping a register or record book of baptisms, marriages, and burials. This volume survives in the archives of Christ Church, Shrewsbury. The letters that Forbes wrote to the SPG display zeal for his work as a missionary in spite of the long distances between his congregations. Sadly, he died only three years after arriving in Monmouth County, letters of administration being granted to his estate on November 9, 1736.<sup>33</sup>

The situation regarding a house of worship for the Anglican congregation in Freehold remained unchanged until the 1750s. And at Middletown, the lot obtained for a church by the Rev. Alexander Inness in 1705 stood empty for decades. Nonetheless, the missionaries who covered this district reported preaching to gatherings of 200 persons or more and giving communion to as many as 50 people at a time. Baptisms often involved 20 infants or more. It was not unusual for those not of the Anglican faith, including Quakers, to show up for the sermons, demonstrating the desire for ministers and preachers to settle among the residents in Monmouth County. The assignment of the Rev. John Forbes by the SPG to the congregations at Shrewsbury, Middletown, and Freehold did much to give the Church of England local visibility. He joined existing settled clergy of the Presbyterian, Reformed Dutch, and Baptist denominations in bringing organized religion, in his case according to Church of England practices, to the people of Monmouth County on a regular basis.

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<sup>32</sup> Letter, the Rev. Thomas Halliday to the SPG, August 1, 1717. USPG Archives, A Series Letter Books, vol. 12, 362.

<sup>33</sup> Burr, *op. cit.*, 603.

But up to the 1730s, the Anglican congregations in the area had not developed any formal structure. Nor apparently had they taken parish names. That's why the 1706 lot in Shrewsbury was put in the name of the SPG, along with the William Leeds farm as per his 1735 will. The situation changed under the administration of John Hamilton (c. 1681–1747), who served as acting governor of the Province of New Jersey from 1736 to 1738. On June 4, 1736, Hamilton issued a charter to the congregation in Freehold under the name of “the Minister, Church Wardens and Vestry of St. Peter’s Church.” The charter, equivalent to a certificate of incorporation today, allowed the congregation to accept gifts, hold property, and conduct all usual parochial business. The parish could have one minister, twelve vestrymen, and two wardens, one of the latter elected by the minister and vestry, and the other by a plurality of the seat-holders and subscribers. The wardens and vestrymen could nominate and appoint the minister and were required to pay an annual rent of one peppercorn, if lawfully demanded, to the receiver-general of New Jersey at Perth Amboy.<sup>34</sup>

In light of these new powers, St. Peter’s purchased on August 18, 1738, from James Robinson, “for & in Consideration of a Certain competent Sum of Money to him in hand Paid,” a lot in Freehold near the courthouse. It was bounded on the south by Burlington Road (now West Main Street) and on the west by the lane that separated Robinson’s land from that of William A. Covenhoven (now Throckmorton Street). The parcel measured 528 feet deep and 122 feet frontage along the Burlington Road.<sup>35</sup> This is the site of the present-day St. Peter’s Church in Freehold Borough. But the lot remained empty for more than thirty years.

Early in 1738, a group of fifteen individuals from Shrewsbury and Middletown petitioned acting New Jersey governor John Hamilton for a charter under the name of the “Minister,

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<sup>34</sup> Burr, *op. cit.*, 499.

<sup>35</sup> Release, James Robinson to the Minister, Church Wardens and Vestrymen of St. Peter’s Church, March 28, 1738. Monmouth Deeds, Book H, 233.

Churchwardens, and Vestry of Christ's Church in Shrewsbury." It was granted and dated June 3, 1738. The many provisions in the document varied somewhat from the charter issued to St. Peter's Church two years earlier. Among many rights and privileges, it called for four wardens and twelve vestrymen, two of the wardens to be chosen by the minister, and the remaining wardens and vestrymen to be elected annually by a plurality of votes by members of the two congregations. The charter also provided for the purchase or gift of land for use as a glebe; erection of a schoolhouse; solicitation of voluntary gifts; right to sue and be sued; prohibition on violating the intents of donors; appointment of sidesmen (what are called ushers today), church sexton, and bell ringer; and creation of a book to contain the acts, rules, and orders of the vestry. And finally, as with St. Peter's, the charter called for the payment of one peppercorn per year, if lawfully requested, to the receiver-general of the province at Perth Amboy.<sup>36</sup>

Importantly, the charter established the formal name of the parish as "Christ's Church in Shrewsbury," its earliest known official use. It would also appear from the terms of the charter that two wardens and six vestrymen each would represent Shrewsbury and Middletown on the vestry. And likewise, the restriction on violating the intent of donors might well have been in anticipation of the William Leeds farm bequest as a glebe, which the newly named parish finally received in 1743.

Lewis Morris, long an ardent supporter of the Church of England, obtained appointment in 1738 as the first governor of an independent Province of New Jersey no longer administratively tied to New York. He assumed his position at a joint session of the Council and Assembly held in Perth Amboy on November 13, at which he delivered his inaugural speech. As was the British custom since 1716 for newly appointed colonial governors in America, Morris was issued a set of

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<sup>36</sup> Steen, *op. cit.*, 22–24.

furnishings for a church as one of the perks or fringe benefits of his office. It was the intent that these items would be donated to a church of the governor's choosing as part of the patronage system of the day. Two warrants were issued by the Lord Chamberlain's office in August of 1738 "for Col<sup>l</sup> Lewis Morris Govern<sup>r</sup> of New Jersey in America for the use of his Majesty's Chapel there." The first, dated August 11, was sent to the Office of the Great Wardrobe. It included:

One large Bible, two large Common Prayer Books, twelve small common prayer books, two Cusheons [sic] for the reading Desk, a cushion and cloth for the pulpit, a carpet for the Altar, all of crimson damask, with silk ffringe [sic], two linnen [sic] Cloths for the altar, and two surplices of ffine [sic] Holand [sic] [linen].<sup>37</sup>

These items were valued at £106. The second warrant, also dated August 11 but not issued until six days later, was forwarded to the Jewel Office at the Tower of London. It read:

These are to signify unto your Lordship his Majesty's Pleasure that you provide & deliver to the Hon<sup>ble</sup> Col<sup>o</sup> Lewis Morris Governor of New Jersey in America, Two Flaggons [sic], one Chalice, a Patent [sic] and a Receiver to take the Offerings in, for the Use of his Majesty's Chapel there, not exceeding the Value of Eighty pounds . . .<sup>38</sup>

The document, signed by Charles FitzRoy, 2nd Duke of Grafton, in his role as Lord Chamberlain to King George II, was sent to the Right Honorable Charles Lord Viscount Townshend, Master of His Majesty's Jewel Office. These five solid silver items weighed a total of 180 ounces. The cost of fabrication, arranged through Thomas Minors, the Royal Goldsmith, came to £76:10:0.<sup>39</sup> An entry in the Jewel Office Delivery Book indicates that a copy of the receipt was delivered, along with the church silver, on September 5, 1738, "to M<sup>r</sup> [Daniel] Preveran to send to the Gov<sup>r</sup> to be signed abroad." The entry also stated that the items were "to be returned upon Demand . . ."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Warrant, Chapel Furniture for Col. Lewis Morris, Governor of New Jersey in America, August 11, 1738. Public Record Office, London, UK [hereafter PRO], Great Wardrobe Warrant Book, 1729–1742, LC5/75/121.

<sup>38</sup> Warrant for Chapel Plate provided to Col Lewis Morris, Governor of New Jersey, August 17, 1738. PRO, Jewel House Warrants, 1732–1762, LC5/110/100.

<sup>39</sup> Jewel Office Accounts from Thomas Minor, Royal Goldsmith, for the half year ending at Christmas, 1738. PRO, Jewel Office Warrants, 1732–1762, LC5/110/106.

<sup>40</sup> Jewel Office Delivery Book, September 5, 1738. PRO, LC9/45/65.

It was altogether fitting that Governor Morris should present these royal donations from King George II to Christ Church, Shrewsbury, given his decades-long advocacy for a church there, and now that, by the recent charter, the church could receive gifts and donations. The extended Morris family also remained very prominent in the affairs of the parish until the outbreak of the American Revolution. The silver was accompanied by a copy of the warrant, written in the same handwriting as the Jewel Office records and with the exact wording. Today, what may be the chalice and paten from the Morris donation can still be found among the many historical treasures of Christ Church. The warrant was discovered in the parish archives by James Steen when compiling his 1903 history of the church. It is now in the manuscripts collection of the Monmouth County Historical Association. An inscription on its twentieth century cardboard mount reads “17 Shrewsbury – Christ Church.”<sup>41</sup>

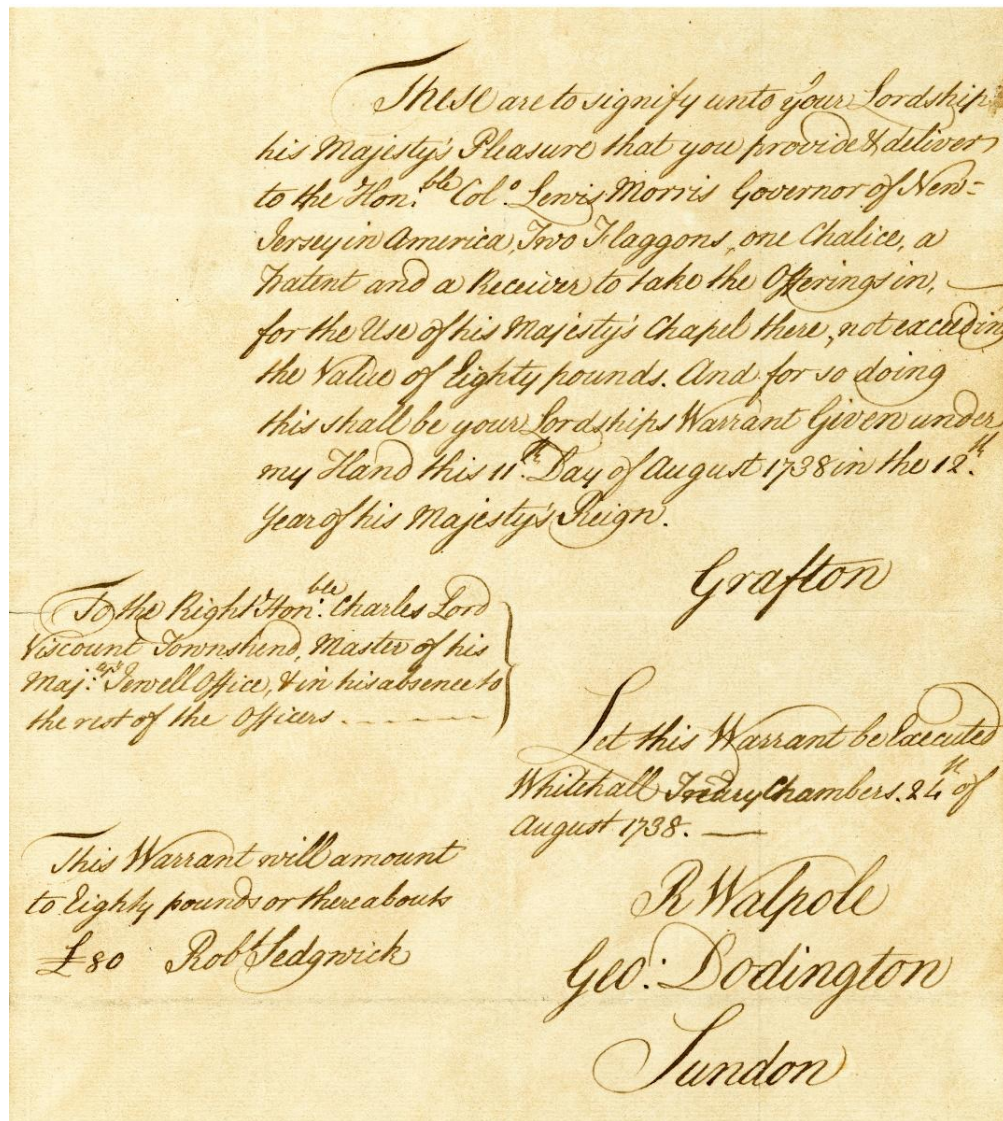
Both pieces of silver were altered in the nineteenth century. The chalice was cut down by approximately three-quarters of an inch. The four British hallmarks, including a maker’s mark and date letter, would have been struck just below the rim, so, unfortunately, they were lost in the process. Both chalice and paten then had their surfaces renewed by buffing. That obliterated the hallmarks on the surface of the paten and also the original engraved inscriptions on both pieces. They were replaced with “Christ Church / Shrewsbury” in script lettering. Only a few deep digs from the silversmith’s engraving tool remain of the original inscriptions.

It should be noted that Christ Church historians have claimed since the nineteenth century that the chalice and paten were given to the church by Queen Anne, who died in 1714 at age forty-nine. Thirteen known and/or documented sets of church silver were sent to the colonies in America

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<sup>41</sup> Warrant, Chapel Plate, Governor of New Jersey, August 11, 1738. Monmouth County Historical Association, Freehold, New Jersey, Manuscript SA203. There is no known evidence, either documentary or by surviving items, that any of the Lewis Morris church furnishings went to other Anglican churches in New Jersey.

by this monarch during her reign.<sup>42</sup> And two of them were in fact presented to New Jersey churches, one to St. Peter's Church in Perth Amboy and the other to St. Mary's Church in Burlington. Both sets, consisting of a chalice and paten, were made by London silversmith William Gibson, and both bear the date letter for 1705/6. They were also engraved with the inscription



Contemporary copy of a warrant sent to the Jewel Office at the Tower of London for Chapel Silver to be issued to Lewis Morris, Governor of New Jersey, dated August 11, 1738, and in the handwriting of the Jewel Office records. Found circa 1903 in the archives of Christ Church, Shrewsbury. Courtesy Monmouth County Historical Association, Freehold, New Jersey.

<sup>42</sup> This list was compiled from records at the Public Record Office at Kew in London, UK, the archives of the USPG, the Fulham Palace archives of the Bishop of London now housed at the Lambeth Palace library in London, and early church silver in America identified and described by noted silver historian E. Alfred Jones.

“Annae Reginae” in block letters.<sup>43</sup> By that time, the parishes at Perth Amboy and Burlington, located in the capital towns of East and West Jersey respectively, benefited from clergy supported by the SPG, and both possessed church buildings. Shrewsbury at that early date was just an idea not realized for years to come, as described in this essay. It is most unlikely that Queen Anne and her advisors would donate communion silver to a place with no clergy, no church, no name, and no governing vestry to take custody of such a valuable gift. So, this claim might be viewed as antiquarian wishful speculation based on the questionable belief that a communion set given by Queen Anne is more intrinsically and historically valuable perhaps than one from King George II. The issue would have been completely resolvable had the British hallmarks not been removed from the chalice and paten in the nineteenth century.



**Eighteenth century silver chalice and paten owned by Christ Church, Shrewsbury, as illustrated in *The Old Silver of American Churches* by E. Alfred Jones, published in 1913, plate LXXIV.**

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<sup>43</sup> E. Alfred Jones, *The Old Silver of American Churches* (Letchworth, UK: Arden Press for the National Society of Colonial Dames of America, 1913), 105, 363.

The chalice, at 6.75 inches tall after being cut down, does somewhat resemble those at Burlington and Perth Amboy, both of which measure 7.5 inches in unaltered full height. The Shrewsbury chalice stem, compressed knop, and base also reflect earlier eighteenth-century London chalice workmanship rather than those that are part of mid eighteenth-century royal church silver donations. The later chalices are generally several inches taller. Then again, it seems unlikely that “*Annae Reginae*” inscriptions would have been buffed away, even in the nineteenth century. Could the removal of the British hallmarks and the original inscriptions have been an attempt to obscure the true history of the Christ Church silver in favor of the Queen Anne legend?<sup>44</sup> The origins of the Shrewsbury chalice and paten may never be definitively proven, one way or the other. But at any rate, the two tall flagons, large offering plate, chalice, and paten, all made of gleaming solid silver, along with the rich silk-fringed crimson damask textile items to adorn the altar, pulpit, and reading desk, would have made a striking display in the small brick sanctuary in Shrewsbury, if all the Morris church furnishings were indeed given there. This was their intent—impressive donations of faith to his people in the colonies from a benevolent sovereign as head of the Church of England, awarded locally at the discretion of the provincial governor.<sup>45</sup>

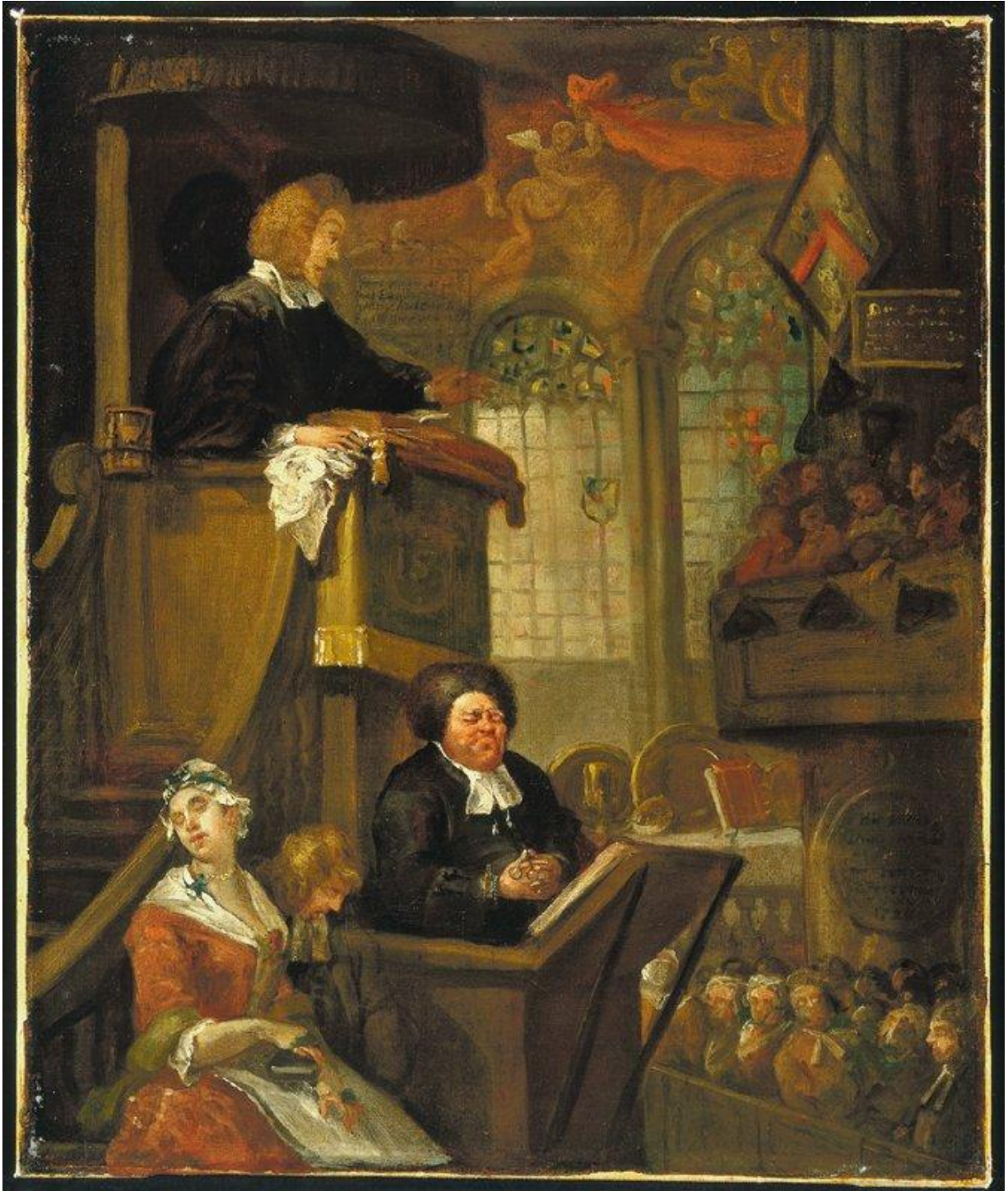
The Rev. Mr. Forbes had been succeeded in the Monmouth County mission station by the Rev. John Milne, who arrived in 1737 after spending ten years in the service of the SPG at Albany, New York. It was during his ministry that the Leeds property finally came into possession of the Society. As Milne wrote on June 18, 1744:

I have with this opportunity sent you an account of the Estate fallen to the Society by the Death of Rebecca Leeds, who lived three years after her husband and being ill affected to

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<sup>44</sup> See E. Alfred Jones. *op. cit.*, 448. Jones chose not to repeat the Queen Anne legend in his entry for the Christ Church silver. He merely described it as “English, early eighteenth century.”

<sup>45</sup> If the Morris church silver came to Shrewsbury, the flagons and offering plate apparently disappeared early on, perhaps during the Revolution. The latter was replaced about 1790 by two pewter plates still in possession of Christ Church. They bear the mark of John Townsend and his shop address of Fenchurch Street in London, its location by 1792. Townsend’s pewter products were exported in large quantity to America throughout the long life of his firm.



*The Sleeping Congregation* by William Hogarth, 1728. This satirical oil sketch shows the use of a red cushion on an Anglican church pulpit and a large bible on the clerk's reading desk, as well as a silver chalice, paten, and two offering plates on the altar, which is covered with a white linen cloth. The book on a stand displayed with the silver is undoubtedly a large Book of Common Prayer, ready for use by the minister. Hogarth turned this work into an engraving. Courtesy Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

the Church together with her children of a former marriage, have very much hurt it so that it can be of no value but rather an Expence for some years. Enclosed you have a copy of the Will and a Survey of the Land being about 300 acres.<sup>46</sup>

Milne was apparently a person of means. In November 1728, he had married in Albany to Maria Van Cortland as her second husband. She was the daughter of Stephanus Van Cortland, patroon of Van Cortland Manor in Westchester County, and Gertrude Schuyler of Albany. Maria's first husband was Kiliaen Van Rensselaer, a first cousin and patroon of the vast Manor of Rensselaerswyck in the upper Hudson Valley, who had died in 1719 and by whom she had ten children. Through this marriage, Milne was connected to the highest levels of society, wealth, and political power in New York. Maria Van Cortland Milne died at Albany in June of 1750 at the age of seventy. The death circumstances of the Rev. Mr. Milne are not known at this time.<sup>47</sup>

Charges against the Rev. John Milne were first made by the wardens and vestry of St. Peter's Church, Freehold, on December 18, 1741. They claimed that he was an open and notorious drunkard, that he lacked any zeal or enthusiasm when delivering prayers or sermons, and that he neglected his duties such as catechizing the young. Members of Christ Church, Shrewsbury, rallied to Milne's defense. The matter was handled by the Rev. William Vesey in New York, who served as commissary or administrator for the SPG in the area. The situation dragged on into 1745 with a flurry of letters, complaints, counter letters from Milne, and resolutions by the SPG. The Society finally discharged Milne from their service on April 10, 1744. But when his successor to the mission station, the Rev. Thomas Thompson, arrived in 1745, Milne refused to turn over the church glebe. He claimed that he was owed back salary as well as reimbursement for improvements he

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<sup>46</sup> Letter, the Rev. John Milne to the SPG, June 18, 1744. USPG Archives, B Series Letter Books, vol. 12, 52.

<sup>47</sup> Milne continued to spend time at Albany, even while serving as a missionary in Monmouth County. For example, in the summer of 1744, he traveled up the Hudson River in the company of his wife and Dr. Alexander Hamilton of Annapolis, Maryland. The two men then spent much time together in the Albany area. For details on their various explorations and social activities as recorded by Hamilton in his diary, see: Carl Bridenbaugh, ed., *Gentleman's Progress; The Itinerarium of Dr. Alexander Hamilton, 1744* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948), or any other edition of this highly interesting early travel diary.

had made to the property, amounting to several hundred pounds. A faction of the congregation in Shrewsbury continued to back Milne, refusing to admit the Rev. Thompson to their church. Milne finally left Monmouth County in October of 1746. But negotiations with him continued into the summer and fall of 1747. In the end, after involving a New York attorney on behalf of the SPG, Milne was allowed to have the crop in the ground and reimbursement for the lasting improvements he had made after an independent appraisal of them. A committee of five determined they were valued at £44:02:00. The Rev. Mr. Thompson finally informed the SPG on July 23, 1747, that “At last I have had possession of the Leed’s [sic] Farm delivered to me . . .”<sup>48</sup>

With the Milne controversy behind them, the vestries of the three Anglican congregations in Monmouth County agreed among themselves what proportion of the Rev. Thompson’s time each would receive. He was finally able to report to the SPG on May 12, 1748, that “My Churches, God be thanked, are all very well composed.”<sup>49</sup> As early as the summer of 1744, Milne had informed the SPG that “The People of Middletown in the County are building a handsome Church . . .”<sup>50</sup> In his memoirs printed in 1758, the Rev. Mr. Thompson commented that, when he arrived in Monmouth County in 1745, the Middletown church “had nothing done on the Inside, not even a Floor laid. So that we had no Place for the present, to assemble in for divine Worship, only an old House which had formerly been a Meeting House.”<sup>51</sup> Thompson sent the SPG an update in his letter of May 12, 1748:

at Middletown where I officiate once a Month I have generally a pretty numerous Congregation, though the bulk of the people in that quarter are Anabaptists. At my first coming I found a neat Church begun there, but at a Stand for want of money to compleat

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<sup>48</sup> Letter, the Rev. Thomas Thompson to the SPG, July 23, 1747. USPG Archives, B Series Letter Books, vol. 15, 214.

<sup>49</sup> Letter, the Rev. Thomas Thompson to the SPG, May 12, 1748. USPG Archives, B Series Letter Books, vol. 16, 162.

<sup>50</sup> Letter, the Rev. John Milne to the SPG, June 18, 1744, op. cit.

<sup>51</sup> Thomas Thompson, A. M., *An Account of Two Missionary Voyages by the Appointment of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. The one to New Jersey in North America, the other from America to the Coast of Guiney* (London: Printed for Benjamin Dod, 1758), 8-9.

[sic] the Building. It has since been made fit for Divine Service to be kept in it; and as the Congregation increases, I hope it may not be very long before we shall be able to finish it.<sup>52</sup>

That left Freehold to resolve the issue of providing a church building suitable for worship. The congregation still owned the former Friends meeting house property at Topanemus, a location considered inconvenient for many of its members. And they also owned the lot in the village of Freehold purchased in 1738. The decision was made to continue meeting at Topanemus. In April of 1750, Thompson noted in his report to the SPG that:

I think nothing very particular at this time occurs, only that we have finished one of our Churches – that of St. Peter in Freehold, which though built many years ago and in use, is completed [sic] but of late.<sup>53</sup>

Thompson's memoirs stated that "The situation of St. Peter's Church at *Topanemes* [sic], which is distant from any Town, is however convenient enough to the Congregation, and was resorted to by many Families in *Middlesex* County . . ."<sup>54</sup>

In 1750, the Rev. Mr. Thompson looked back over his ministry in the three years since the Milne controversy had been resolved.

I had now seen a great Change in the State of my Mission within the Space of three Years, through the Grace of *God*, rendering my Labours [sic] effectual to a good End; in particular, as to the Peace and Union which the Church Members, after having been much at Variance among themselves, were now returned to, and the ceasing of Animosities betwixt them and those of other Societies; for these I account the most valuable Successes that attend my Ministry. After this, the Churches continued to flourish . . .<sup>55</sup>

During his years in Monmouth County, Thompson had gained experience in ministering to the Black slaves in the area, both adults and children. He had worked with their masters and mistresses to teach them catechism at home in addition to what they received at church. Thompson

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<sup>52</sup> Letter, the Rev. Thomas Thompson to the SPG, May 12, 1748, op. cit.

<sup>53</sup> Letter, the Rev. Thomas Thompson to the SPG, April 30, 1750. USPG Archives, B Series Letter Books, vol. 18, 278.

<sup>54</sup> Thompson, op. cit., 16.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 22-23.

baptized a total of 20 Negroes and Mulattos, 12 adults and 8 children, according to the church register.<sup>56</sup> A few of these individuals were admitted to communion. He was especially gratified to have converted a Black male named John who had been convicted of rape and who was awaiting execution according to law. Thompson was given a fortnight (14 days) to bring this individual over to Christianity by having him repeat and memorize passages from the psalms, and by speaking to him at length about Christian principles.

Being thoroughly instructed and grounded in the Christian Faith, and there being no Room to doubt the Sincerity of his Repentance, three Days before his Execution I baptized him, and on that Day gave him the Communion.<sup>57</sup>

John, an African American enslaved Thomas Clayton of Upper Freehold, was executed on August 8, 1746. Thompson noted in the church register that he “dyed very penitent.”<sup>58</sup> This experience, among others in ministering to enslaved African Americans, inspired Thompson to request a new position with the SPG.

in the latter End of the Year 1750, having been above five Years in *America* upon this Mission, I wrote to the Venerable and Honourable [sic] *Society* a Letter, requesting of them to grant me a Mission to the Coast of *Guiney*, that I might go to make a Trial with the Natives, and see what Hopes there would be of introducing among them the Christian Religion.<sup>59</sup>

The SPG granted Thompson’s request, and the following year sent out a replacement missionary to succeed him in Monmouth County. After delivering his charge to the Rev. Samuel Cooke in September of 1751, Thompson left for New York. On November 25, he boarded a vessel bound for Guinea, thereby becoming the first Anglican missionary assigned to the West Coast of Africa. He remained there for four years before becoming broken in health. Thompson resigned his missionary position with the SPG and returned in 1756 to the United Kingdom. His memoirs

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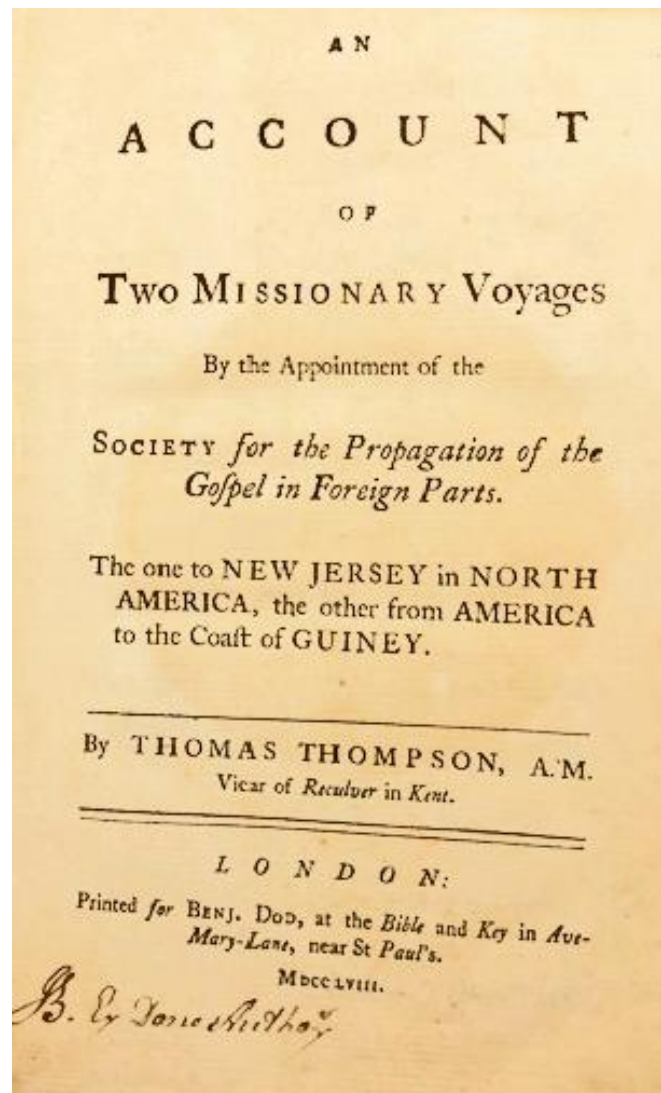
<sup>56</sup> Stillwell, op. cit., 163–175.

<sup>57</sup> Thompson, op. cit., 12–14.

<sup>58</sup> Stillwell, op. cit., 166. Thompson consistently referred to enslaved African Americans as servants.

<sup>59</sup> Thompson, op. cit., 23.

provide a remarkable narrative of his travels and experiences in the Guinea region, a center at the time for the slave trade.<sup>60</sup> With the arrival of the Rev. Mr. Cooke, the Anglican congregations in Monmouth County entered a period of steady growth and increasing prosperity. That story will be told in the second of three articles in this series.



Title page of *An Account of Two Missionary Voyages* by the Rev. Thomas Thompson, printed in London for Benjamin Dod in 1758. Courtesy Joseph J. Felcone, Princeton, New Jersey.

<sup>60</sup> It should be noted that Thompson's memoirs were written from the perspective of an eighteenth-century white male Christian missionary. Some of the approaches he used to bring Christianity to the African natives would not necessarily be deemed appropriate today.

**POSTSCRIPT**

This essay challenges some of the traditional historical assumptions made in the nineteenth century concerning the three early Episcopal churches at Freehold, Middletown, and Shrewsbury in Monmouth County, New Jersey. These include parish founding dates (1700, 1702, or later depending on the criteria used), founder (the Revs. Alexander Inness or George Keith), and donor of historic silver (Queen Anne or King George II). It also outlines the decades-long process by which these early congregations evolved into fully functioning named parishes. In addition, this narrative discusses the early Anglican ministry to enslaved African Americans in Monmouth County, and its influence on the career of one local missionary.

Historiography on these early years of an Anglican presence in Monmouth County is scant. Many of the nineteenth century legends and assumptions were put into print in 1885 in parochial entries that appeared in *The History of Monmouth County, New Jersey* by Franklin Ellis. At that time, access to the rich archives of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts in London was limited to short extracts from some of the colonial missionary correspondence transcribed beginning in 1835 by the Rev. Francis L. Hawks for the Episcopal Church in America. The pioneering Hawks transcripts are housed today at The Archives of the Episcopal Church in Austin, Texas. In 1903, James Steen, an attorney from Eatontown, published in serial form in *The Standard* newspaper of Red Bank a bicentennial history of Christ Church, Shrewsbury, which delved deeper into documentary sources and surviving parish records. Even though it lacked footnotes, this excellent history for its day was then printed in book form but not bound for limited distribution until 1972. In 1967, the Rev. Bernard McKean Garlick, rector of St. Peter's Church in Freehold, published a history of that parish, which largely repeated many of the historical assumptions of the nineteenth century. He did, however, put the Rev. Alexander Inness at the head

of a list of clergy who had served that church from the beginning. It remained for historian Nelson R. Burr to produce in 1954 the first major history of the Anglican Church in New Jersey that took full advantage of the SPG archives. Microfilm of the missionary correspondence and administrative journals became available in the United States by the end of World War II. Burr laboriously transcribed all the letters pertaining to New Jersey. He then arranged his typed copies in notebooks geographically by mission location. These notebooks are available today for research at Rutgers University Special Collections & University Archives in New Brunswick. Burr's outstanding comprehensive book remains an essential reference for anyone interested in the early history of the Episcopal Church in New Jersey. But because it addresses the entire state, entries on individual parishes and clergy are necessarily restricted to short summaries. Now, in the digital age of the twenty-first century, the entire archive of the SPG pertaining to America has been digitized from the microfilm and put on the internet by British Online Archives. This unparalleled historical resource, available by subscription, has formed the basis for this narrative.

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