

REMARKS

In Trinity Lime Rock's Author's Series

By Geoffrey Brown, Historian of the Parish, and author of *Trinity
Lime Rock in Context – a History* (2022)

July 10, 2022

NOTE: These remarks were delivered as Trinity approached its sesquicentennial, and are largely oriented to that point in the parish history.

Did you know that Trinity is either 147, 148, 149, or even 150 years old this year? That next year begins our 150th celebration – our Sesquicentennial for those who like big words – which, not surprisingly, we’ll recognize over three years! Why the multiple years? You ask – or perhaps you don’t ask -- but I will tell you anyway.

The answer is historical, of course.

Today – and going back to the days of the Apostles – most churches were founded according to what I like to call the “Paul Paradigm” – a missionary comes to town, proclaims the Gospel to anyone who will listen, gathers them wherever there was space to meet, and eventually the people decide that they want to be a congregation. They continue to grow, and eventually they are well-organized enough to obtain clergy. Years pass, and they decide that they don’t want to continue meeting in living rooms and storefronts – that they want a building of their own.

They start having fund drives, round up some major donors, and usually build a parish hall first because they are cheaper to build than churches and a lot more flexible too. Then in 10 or so years, they get around to undertaking the construction of a “real” church.

Well, Trinity definitely didn’t get the memo on that, because we did it almost exactly backwards. We built the building and had it consecrated; then we organized a parish; then we got admitted to the Diocese of CT; and finally we acquired our first priest!

I could spend this time recounting the history of the iron industry in northwest Connecticut, and the history of Barnum and Richardson, but you’ll find both in the book – that’s part of why the title includes the words “in context” -- and you can find a lot of information about both in some of the books by the late Ed Kirby as well, so I’ll omit both except as they bear directly upon Trinity.

To make iron, of course, you need iron ore, you need a “flux” (limestone or marble is the flux of choice here), you need fuel (and here we had forests for charcoal), and you need energy to power the blast in the blast furnace. We had all of them in the northwest corner. You also need people, and most of the older families around here had some hand in the iron industry at some point.

One family you don’t hear of often were the Burralls, who had the very early Burrall’s Forge in Amesville, near Burrall’s Bridge across the Housatonic. That family was also instrumental in creation of Christ Church, in Canaan, and a Burrall was their first representative to the Diocesan Convention.

The Barnum family came later, when Milo Barnum arrived as a storekeeper, diversified into the iron business, acquired a son in law, Leonard Richardson, who already had a background in ironmaking, and had a son of his own named William H. Barnum whose name you’ve no doubt heard. Both Milo Barnum and Leonard

Richardson are remembered by stained glass windows on the back wall of the church, by the way.

Their company, Barnum & Richardson, of course, became the dominant force in the area iron business and actually had a larger footprint than that, including a subsidiary in Chicago, and affiliates (via William H. Barnum investments) in the iron range of Northern Michigan and West Virginia among many others.

It's not for nothing that an earlier historian of Trinity referred to this place as "The Church that Iron Built" because, had it not been for the iron business, Trinity would not be here at all.

Instead of a missionary to start Trinity off, we had the wife of William Henry Barnum, son of Milo Barnum, whose name was Charlotte Ann Beach Burrall (remember that Burrall name?). Helpfully, the Beach family (her mom's family) was very well situated both economically and socially in the Hartford and Litchfield business and social communities.

From Trinity's point of view, it was even more helpful that Charlotte Burrall Barnum was a devout Episcopalian and was also very interested in the wellbeing of the workers at Barnum and Richardson.

But the Barnums (and Richardsons) lived in Lime Rock, and the nearest Episcopal church was five miles away in Salisbury village.

It was 150 years this year -- 2022 -- since Charlotte Burrall Barnum got through to her husband that they needed an Episcopal church in Lime Rock. In the process they managed to create Trinity, which, as noted, was actually a physical building before it was an Episcopal parish.

I need to do a little Barnum & Richardson history at this point.

William H. Barnum (we usually call him Senator Barnum, because he was at one time a United States Senator) was a very busy man, running Barnum & Richardson, amassing personal wealth, serving as president of several railroads, and slowly gaining control of the Democratic Party nationally at the same time.

He obviously developed some good connections in the process. And his wife had come equipped with connections as well.

Let's pick up some more context starting in 1866.

The Civil War had ended but the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was organized in Pulaski, Tennessee.

In 1866, William H. Barnum ran for Congress against P. T. Barnum, his third cousin once removed and defeated him, thus placing William H. Barnum in Congress, and ending P. T. Barnum's serious political ambitions (as you may know he concentrated

on show business). However, P. T. did not accept the defeat lightly, and investigations – a state-level “Stop the Steal” of that era -- ensued and stretched well into 1867.

Let’s jump to 1868.

President Andrew Johnson was impeached by the House of Representatives, tried by the Senate, and acquitted.

Business was good for Barnum & Richardson. In April, the Lime Rock plant shipped 1200 car wheels to California for the Pacific Railroad. That’s just the Lime Rock works; the Chicago works, also made castings and car wheels. Located in Chicago, right on the West Loop, their works covered more than an acre, they employed 75 men, and did an average yearly business of \$400,000. Barnum & Richardson was far from being just a Lime Rock business.

Since an art show is going on around us, I need to mention that art came to the area back then – and it never really left. It was in 1868 that Edward B. Gay, a noted Hudson River School artist, painted *Twin Lakes with Cattle*. Amd pioneering Litchfield County portrait artist Ammi Phillips, painted members of the Richardson family in Lime Rock.

In 1868 an “associate mission” was created linking Episcopal congregations in Salisbury, Canaan, Lime Rock, and Falls Village under the care of two clergymen. Although we clearly now officially had an Episcopal presence in Lime Rock large enough to be considered, the associate mission had been discontinued by the following year, according to the 1869 Journal of Convention. For some reason, cooperative ventures between the Northwest Corner parishes never seem to succeed.

Now move to 1869.

The Suez Canal opened, and the transcontinental railroad was completed.

The First Vatican Council began, convened by Pope Leo XIII. Among its outputs were the Doctrine of Papal Infallibility, which was negative about any form of cooperation with Protestants to say the least. William H. Barnum was on the ascendancy in the Democratic Party, which was largely Irish Catholic at that time, as were many of Barnum’s workers, so it created a bit of a challenge. We’ll not talk about it today, but Barnum’s approach was classically Episcopalian – taking the “Middle Way” between the Roman Catholic church on one side and the Protestant churches on the other.

Next 1870.

A New York City architect named Henry M. Congdon completed the Episcopal Church of the Holy Communion, in St. Peter, Minnesota. It was described in the press as “generally Gothic in style” and was considered an important church, as some churches are. Remember that name: Henry M. Congdon, the architect.

The newly built Connecticut Western Railroad held its annual meeting and elected President William H. Barnum. He was already President of the Housatonic.

John D. Rockefeller started a new business in Ohio called the Standard Oil Corporation.

As 1871 dawned, I get an opportunity to talk about something that people who write history really get excited about: finding historical error developing proof that things actually didn't happen the way people said that they did.

For several reasons, there have been a few of these at Trinity.

In this case, the history in question was the identity of the architect of Trinity Lime Rock.

According to the history of Trinity written in the 1950s, and several other places as well, Trinity's architect is identified as the famous Richard Upjohn, also the architect of Trinity Wall Street and the Connecticut state capital in Hartford.

His creation of the state capital building is key here, so we will talk a bit about it.

In the Connecticut State Assembly on August 15, 1871, William H. Barnum was named to a commission to build a new capital located in Hartford (previously Connecticut had capitals in New Haven and Hartford, and spent alternate years in each).

The money appropriated almost immediately became a million dollars. Barnum became the de facto head of the commission. He needed to hire an architect for the new capital.

Meanwhile, still in 1871, the promising young architect Henry Martyn Congdon was the architect for the new St. Thomas Episcopal Church in the North End of Hartford.

In November 1871, 151 years ago this year, the following appeared in the local paper under the heading of Lime Rock:

The Episcopalians of our village and vicinity, are agitating the question of church services here, with the ultimate design of erecting a house of worship. It is understood that the new rector of St. John's, is to officiate, here, at least occasionally.

With that, we are in 1872, it is a century and a half ago, and the REAL Birth of Trinity Lime Rock is about to begin.

Portentously, something else happened that would deeply affect Trinity in barely half a century: one Andrew Carnegie began a Bessemer steel plant near Pittsburgh. This was, in effect, the beginning of the end for Barnum & Richardson.

The first national park, Yellowstone, was founded by act of Congress.

William H. Barnum, representing Connecticut, was elected to the Executive Committee of the National Democratic Committee.

But back to events in Lime Rock....

People today think of Trinity as having been founded either in 1873 (the date on the cornerstone) or 1874 (when the building was consecrated) or in 1875 (when Trinity

actually became a parish of the Episcopal Church). Some think of it as 1876, when Trinity's first Rector arrived.

But it really started in 1872.

Remember: there was no congregation here. There was no parish organization here. There was no priest here.

But, during mud season in the spring of 1872 (likely in April), something momentous happened.

Here it is.

Both the Barnums and Richardsons had fine horses. William H. Barnum used to routinely race with others from Lime Rock in returning home after services at St. John's, and he regularly won. In fact, it might have been rather poor corporate politics to beat the boss, but we will set that aside. One of the Richardson boys might get away with it, but few others.

One Sunday, Senator Barnum did not win. The plight of horses following the winner in a horse race on a wet track is to be thoroughly splattered with mud. In those days that airborne road material would have included a generous percentage of horse and ox excrement.

After pulling up second in Lime Rock that day, Barnum is said to have remarked that "we need a church of our own." This line, echoing the statement attributed to Mrs. Barnum, is entirely plausible, and we suspect that there may have been an epithet or two uttered at that that time as well.

At any rate, Mrs. Barnum has also frequently been quoted as being concerned that some of the Lime Rock people were at loose ends spiritually.

So, In mud season 1872, likely April, the die was cast. There would be an Episcopal church in Lime Rock.

I need to point out that division of St. John's was amicable beyond doubt. Over the years stories have circulated about why Trinity broke away from St. John's -- I dissected all of them I could find in the book but the bottom line is this.

1. The parting was amicable – times were good, the Scoville family was in place at St. John's to make up the financial shortfall that the Barnums would leave, and planting a new missionary congregation was prestigious.
2. Travel every Sunday was a major hardship.
3. Mrs. Barnum wanted a church in Lime Rock for the workers and her husband would pay for one.

However, remember that state capital building underway in Hartford at precisely that time. On April 19 – mud season here -- the *Courant* announced that the plan submitted for the state capital by the Richard Upjohn architectural firm had been selected for the new capital – at the very moment that the new Lime Rock church moved from dream to plan status. This would be the largest commission that the Upjohn firm would ever undertake, and the project politics being politics -- was acrimonious from the very beginning – and furthermore the acrimony did not let up. A large faction had supported one Mr. Batterson, who was an amateur architect and the Chairman of Travelers Insurance, for the architectural assignment, and that faction fought Barnum and Richard Upjohn building tooth and nail every step of the way.

Even as construction was underway, they would force the Upjohn firm to be “all hands on deck” on that project due to ongoing architectural changes.

On July 24, 1872, the Commissioners published a solicitation for bids for the state capital based on the Upjohn plan. His firm had really been scrambling, continually under political fire, to complete plans that were ready to be bid upon, while Batterson and his allies sniped from the sidelines.

Almost certainly Barnum had steered the state capital contract to Upjohn for several reasons; one being that his wife’s family, the Burralls, had known the elder Upjohn for decades, ever since he had built their Christ Church, Canaan.

Wait! This talk is about the history of Trinity, right? Why does the fact that the Upjohn architectural firm was busy building the new state capital building matter?

The answer is that Upjohn was too busy at this point to take on any new work, even for a long-time friend.

It is a reasonable assumption that Barnum at some point as a courtesy asked Upjohn if he would do the Lime Rock church, knowing full well that the answer would necessarily be “thank you, but no” (today, it might be “you gotta be kidding!”). It follows then that Upjohn either would have proffered the name of an architect whom he knew would do a good job, or that Barnum would have requested such a recommendation. He would no doubt have received the best recommendation Upjohn could offer – after all, Barnum had very recently delivered to Upjohn the largest commission the Upjohn firm would ever undertake.

The architect selected to build Trinity, of course, was Henry Martyn Congdon of New York City, then a rising exponent of Episcopal church architecture who was firmly grounded in Gothic Revival principles, but considerably younger than Upjohn and – importantly -- not currently involved in a major political firestorm.

Wouldn’t it be convenient if all this had been spelled out in vestry minutes, or in correspondence in the parish archives!! – but since Trinity had no vestry because it wasn’t yet a parish, and certainly no parish archives, the proof of this was harder to obtain – but we found it.

Remember, not to belabor the point, that Trinity was not yet a parish or even a congregation, nor would it be for at least two more years. There was no building committee to seek out candidates, no Vestry to satisfy, and no Rector with connections of his own to recommend. This structure was funded by one man, William H. Barnum (likely there was considerable help from his wife), and no one was in a position to tell him whom he ought to hire to design the church he was paying to have built for him and his wife in Lime Rock.

Henry Martyn Congdon was already a prominent and popular ecclesiastical architect. And Congdon, too, was busy – but without the political warfare Upjohn was facing. Congdon was very much an architect in demand. He was building St. Andrew’s in Harlem, designing the furnishings for Holy Innocents in Hoboken, NJ, and had just finished his first church in the area, St. Thomas’ Episcopal Church, and was wrapping one up in Utica, NY (Congdon replicated one major detail from that one in his design for Trinity and would later use again in St. James, Cambridge, MA, the home parish of our retiring Diocesan Bishop. Congdon’s chapel for the Shattuck – St. Mary’s School in Faribault, MN was in progress (you can see the back wall of that church reflected in

Trinity's back wall). He was about to start on Grace Episcopal Church in Paducah, KY. Congdon was turning out Episcopal churches like flapjacks!

By the time 1872 ended, before the snow flew, Congdon clearly had drafted preliminary plans for Trinity. Well before year end 1872 the contract for the stonework had gone to Isaac Newton Bartram of Sharon, who did all the stonework for Barnum & Richardson.

In February 1873 an advertisement would appear in the *Connecticut Western News* soliciting proposals for the wood work of Trinity. Clearly the stonework was already under contract and likely in progress, at least in the quarry if not yet on site.

To recount the story, identifying the architect of Trinity Lime Rock was something of a fortunate accident. First off, I had no particular interest in who the architect of Trinity might have been – obviously there had been one, but there was no reason to doubt the attributions of Trinity to Upjohn.

However, back around 2000, my wife was doing some research in the original paper copies of the old Connecticut Western News that were stored in a vacant store in Falls Village at the time. She came home one day with the news that somebody she had never heard of was the architect of Trinity, and it was emphatically NOT Richard Upjohn. She had read it in one of the archived newspapers! As a newcomer at Trinity she was a bit reluctant to push her discovery and upset the applecart, and her health problems began soon after that discovery, so nothing further was done at that time.

However, when I began researching Trinity's history, sometime around 2010, her recollection was in the back of my mind, and I had my eyes open for any primary source evidence that might corroborate or contradict the traditional account that Richard Upjohn was Trinity's architect.

I went so far as to actually look in the Upjohn archives. There was absolutely nothing to be found.

However, by this time I was looking at old newspapers too, and the first mention of a Trinity architect I encountered may have been the very same one my wife had seen. It was in the *Western Connecticut News* of December 4, 1874, in a short article entitled "Trinity Church Builders" that included the following "The name of the architect, Henry M. Congdon of New York, has been mentioned...." and went on to identify the stonemason and the carpenter who had been involved. While Congdon's name was unfamiliar to me, I at least had contemporaneous documentation of an architect other than Richard Upjohn, and I now had a name to go on.

The next mention I saw was an undated parish history in the first Trinity Parish Register handwritten by the Rev. Millidge Pendril Walker, Trinity's first rector, who had arrived at Trinity in 1876 and clearly felt he should capture the founding of the parish. He wrote "The building, which was constructed of light brown stone from plans by Mr. _____ Congdon, Esq., Archt. of New York...."

If you're unfamiliar with parish registers, they are basically books of pre-printed forms, with sections set up for baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and deaths, along with supplementary sections where a parish history can be written in, and where lists of the parish membership can be maintained. Trinity's first parish register is like that, and when our first Rector arrived, he took it upon himself to fill in as much of the parish history as he was able. Fortunately, someone remembered that the architect

had been someone named Congdon, and he was from New York City, but they didn't remember his first name.

That was enough to get me started trying to find out more about the mysterious Mr. Congdon. I started with Google, and almost at once, pieces began to fall into place. Google told me that on a planned family trip to the Midwest we could easily visit a church designed by Congdon in Pennsylvania, so we did. It was open, so we attended a midweek noon Eucharist – they never had outsiders at these, we learned, and were surprised to see us there. There, the rector was happy to give me a reprint of the local historical society magazine about their church with an article about their architect. Lo and behold, among their architect's commissions, in living color, was a picture of Trinity Lime Rock!

Through that I was able to get in touch with Congdon's great granddaughter, now a medieval history professor in Ohio, who corroborated what I had been finding. Yes, of course Trinity Lime Rock was one of Henry Martyn Congdon's commissions, and she could confirm that using the limited business records remaining after Dr. Congdon's grandmother had thrown out most of them following her husband's death.

In fact, she enlisted me in her ongoing search to find other Congdon commissions, and the current list, along with Congdon's biography, is in one of the appendices of the book.

So how did the myth that Upjohn was Trinity's architect get started?

For that, we need to get back to some Barnum & Richardson history. Barnum & Richardson had failed and gone out of business circa 1920. The last full-time priest, the Rev. Frank H. Bigelow, had left in 1917, seeing the handwriting on the wall, and turned up in eastern Connecticut where he would found the Rectory School. Trinity, lacking both Barnum & Richardsons funding and membership who had been employed by Barnum & Richardson, was having hard times indeed.

Trinity was operating with whatever clergy was available. Eventually the Bishop passed responsibility for Trinity to Christ Church, Canaan, where Fr. Griffin was the Rector (1917 – 1935). Fr. Griffin was not just juggling two parishes at this point, but he was also grappling with a severe drinking problem that would ultimately kill him.

However, therein lies one possible explanation for the architectural misattribution that appeared during the time Fr. Griffin was in charge of Trinity.

Christ Church, Canaan (of which Mrs. Barnum's family had been founders), was an actual Upjohn church. Perhaps, Fr. Griffin wrote a sermon for his home parish, Christ Church, Canaan, where he alluded to the famous Upjohn's indisputable connection to that particular parish church -- and then read the same sermon verbatim in Lime Rock. Or perhaps it was a slip of the tongue in conversation.

In any case, it's certain that Trinity's parishioners did not conjure this up on their own volition. But Upjohn's name was more recognizable than Congdon's and the myth acquired sufficient cachet that the Upjohn myth was for years accepted as fact. It's in an earlier parish history, and in various other documents – including the National Registry application.

Trinity's official sesquicentennial will begin in 1873 – but you and I know that in reality it is already underway! And, we've got another historical correction to be made, so stay tuned!

Thank you!!