

## Church Pews Part 2 Continued

### **7. Fancy embellishments: any beautiful or ornate pew-end carvings or brass plates denoting dedications? Well-appointed kneelers or beautifully embroidered hassocks?**

The pews vary in their terminal embellishments. Some pews are quite simple, terminating in rounded or level ends, such as those at Christ Church, Fort Meade, All Saints, Enterprise, and Grace, Ocala (1880). Others are slightly more elaborate, such as those at Christ Church, Longwood, which have ends topped with carved trefoils.

At least one of the churches, Holy Trinity, Melbourne (1886), has small brass plates with dedications at the ends of its pews. The great majority, however, do not have such plates.

Christ Church, Longwood has individual kneeling rail cushions that are covered in intricate and vibrant needlepoint depicting Christian symbols such as the Christogram, Alpha and Omega, and fish. Kneeling rail cushions of the longer variety are often upholstered in red, as is the case at St. Cyprian's, St. Augustine (1900) and Holy Trinity, Melbourne (1886).

Sometimes chairs in the chancel for presiding clergy have needlepoint cushions. An example of these is found at All Saints, Jensen Beach (1898).

Pew seats are often covered with long cushions. Usually, these are red and hand-tufted with fabric-covered buttons, as they are at Good Shepherd, Maitland. In *Spires in the Sun*, I wrote about the ambience created by the red cushions at Christ Church, Longwood: "In the late afternoon, when sunlight falls on the west windows, light reflects from the cushions to saturate the interior's west alcove with a ruby glow. Spangled with tiny, prismatic refractions from the stained glass, the radiance makes the alcove look like a glass of burgundy wine struck by the sun."

The blue pew cushions at Grace, Port Orange (1893) are remarkable for another reason. They have been recovered over the years, but are said to still be stuffed with the hair of horsetails put in them by parish women when the church was built.

### **8. Any notes about sanctuary seating, i.e. bishop's chair? Or rector's stall? Interesting choir stalls? Or mostly quite pedestrian choir stalls/seating?**



### **St. George's, Fort George Island: prie-dieu and sedilia**

Seats for the presiding clergy at all the churches are made of wood. Usually, they are hand-crafted, and sometimes they are elaborately carved. The bishop's chair at St. George, Fort George Island (1882) is carved with quatrefoil-shaped openings and a pointed back topped with a mitre embossed with a cross.

A strikingly similar bishop's chair is found in the chancel of St. Mark's, Starke (1880). Probably, the two chairs owe their common design to Robert Schuyler, the Fernandina architect who designed both churches. St. Cyprian's, St. Augustine, also has elaborately carved clergy chairs with pointed backs. In contrast, the chairs at Holy Trinity, Fruitland Park and All Saints, Jensen Beach have low flat backs. Both have rounded arms. The former's back is carved with a central quatrefoil and multiple trefoils; the latter's is simpler, having a single, small trefoil cut out in the center.

The bishop's chair at St. Clement's Chapel of the Church of the Advent, Tallahassee, has a notable history. In November 1959, the chapel, having been moved from its original location in Lloyd and restored, was ready to be reconsecrated by Bishop Edward Hamilton West, and a date was set for the occasion. But the sanctuary lacked a bishop's chair, so the Reverend Harry B. Douglas borrowed one from St. John's in Tallahassee. The borrowed seat came with a past that rendered it worthy of the occasion. It had been donated by the women of St. John's in 1854 and had been saved from the fire that consumed St. John's in 1879. Four successive bishops -- Rutledge, Young, Weed, and Juhan -- had sat in it. At the reconsecration of St. Clement's, it seated a fifth. It would be an interesting project to try to ascertain how many of Florida's bishops have sat in it since then.

The chair remains to this day in the chancel of St. Clement's, where it has been re-upholstered in red velvet to match its setting. It is probably the only bishop's chair in existence that is known to have been used by all of the first five bishops of Florida.



**St. Clement's Chapel of the Church of the Advent, Tallahassee: bishop's chair used by the first five Bishops of Florida**

***Spires in the Sun: The Carpenter Gothic Episcopal Churches of Florida* is available for purchase at St. John's Cathedral Bookstore & Gift Shop at a new retail price of \$65. Order the book [here](#).**