

Trinity Episcopal Church  
708 22nd Street  
Galveston  
Calveston County  
Texas

HABS No. TX-294

HABS  
TEX  
84-GALV,  
17-

PHOTOCRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20243

HABS  
TEX  
84-GALV,  
17

## TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Location: 708 22nd Street, Galveston, Galveston County,  
Texas

Present Owner: Trinity Episcopal Church.

Significance: The Trinity Church represents one of Galveston's  
earliest surviving buildings, dating from 1855,  
and is a notable example of the English Gothic  
style parish church.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1855-1857.
2. Architects: John De Young was the original architect  
and also superintendent of the carpenter work. Nicholas J.  
Clayton, a notable Galveston architect, was responsible for the  
repairs of the 1900 storm and Stowe and Stowe, architects of  
Galveston, were engaged for the raising operations in 1925.
3. Builder, contractor, supplier:

The granite and brick work was executed by Frank Brown, a  
Galveston resident.

Mr. Bourke plastered the interior in 1857.

In 1925, the raising of the church 4'-6" above the existing floor  
level was supervised by Stowe and Stowe, Architects, and  
contracted to John Egert.

4. Original plan and construction: John De Young, possibly Texas'  
first architect, was in charge of the carpenter work and  
superintendence of the building. F. Brown executed the brick  
work.

The cornerstone was laid on November 29, 1855, but construction  
was slow. In December 1856 the vestry met again to adopt De  
Young's "draft and plan for columns and/or pillars to be placed  
under roof on each side to support the said roof." A committee  
was also appointed to solicit funds for enclosing the church.

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On May 25, 1857, the vestry and church trustees were authorized to borrow \$10,000 to complete the new church. This was done with the lender, John A. Sauter, accepting the church building and its site as security.

The building was well along at the end of September 1857 at which time the plastering by a Mr. Bourke was being executed. Finally on November 1 the building was opened for worship. Although it was highly regarded at the time, it remained unfinished.

The Tri-Weekly News, November 21, 1857 printed the following description:

"...Exterior: extreme length, 157 feet; width 63 feet. Interior: from front door to back of chancel, 142 feet; chancel, 28 feet deep and 30 feet wide, with vestry rooms at sides, 14 by 28 feet. Width, interior, 60 feet. Height to apse of arch, about 40 feet. 150 pews, 60 of which have been rented for \$3500 per annum. Roof supported by two rows of heavy cluster columns, bronzed. Side windows of enamelled glass, and chancel windows of stained glass. The tower, yet to be raised 25 feet, and exterior to be finished, which will cost about \$10,000. The bell is a fine one, one ton weight. The chancel windows are exceedingly beautiful and cost \$700."

De Young's original plan is not presumed to have included the columns but they were demanded by the congregation from fear that the roof would fail without them. It was in December 1856 as mentioned above that this revision was adopted. The building debt prevented consecration of the church until June 17, 1866. On March 21, 1871, the Reverend Eaton was buried in a tomb under the floor of the chancel, a place of his own choosing.

Services continued in the church until September 1875 when a strong gale blew off a portion of the roof which caused some damage to the interior. The building was soon repaired and in use again.

5. Alterations and additions: By 1891 serious discussion engaged the vestry in contemplation of the poor physical condition of the building. Two arguments divided the vestry into two groups, one desiring to build anew, the other held out for renovation of the old. No progress was made on this issue, however, but the great devastating hurricane of 1900 served to resolve the controversy.

On September 8 of that year the city was inundated and over half destroyed by a tropical hurricane. Trinity Church suffered great damage, the entire south wall was destroyed and much wind and

water damage occurred on the interior. Repairs were quickly underway under the supervision of the noted Galveston architect, Nicholas Clayton, and the building was again in use by May 1901. The interior decoration and the rebuilding of the tower were at that time still incomplete.

During the following years little occurred to the building except for the finishing of it by 1903. Then in 1921 the vestry solicited funds for the necessary raising of the building. Stowe and Stowe of Galveston were selected as architects to supervise the work and on July 31, 1925 a contract calling for raising the church building four and one half feet above that old floor level was signed with John Egert. A separate contract of October 31 provided for a new concrete floor with heating ducts.

Additional renewal came about in June 1926 when \$5,850 was expended on a new copper shingle roof. In that year also a \$10,000 bequest provided funds for plastering the interior walls. Shortly thereafter in February 1927 contracts were signed for this work and the repair of all brick work, waterproofing and small interior changes. During June of that year a heating system was installed.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The Reverend Benjamin Eaton arrived in Texas in 1841, landing at Galveston on January 13 from New Orleans. Eaton found the island and "city" of Galveston to be a desolate place and that little interest was expressed by the people in religious matters. By the following month on February 6, however, sufficient numbers of persons expressed their desire for a church and at a gathering on that date they formally organized a Parish and elected a vestry.

The first meetings were held in the county courthouse building but by April 1841 Eaton was petitioning his Foreign Committee for financial assistance to erect a \$4,000 structure. The Galveston City Company, as was its custom, donated a site for the church; the southeast corner of 23rd and Winnie Streets. By August of 1841 a frame building of Gothic style was in progress of erection and scheduled for completion by the first of that year.

Delays and difficulties hampered the building progress, however, and it was not until June 26, 1842 that it was opened for worship services. Early in the morning of September 18, 1842 a strong north wind blew the building down. Great effort was required to rebuild but by April 1843 the church was again finished. It was consecrated the following year.

By 1854 the church membership had grown and the old building was not adequate for the times.

The meeting of the vestry September 19, 1855 resulted in a resolution to begin the new building. The site was at the opposite end of the block from the old church, the southwest corner of Winnie and 23rd Streets.

The first services held in the church were on November 1, 1857.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Galveston, Texas. Trinity Episcopal Church. Church Archives.  
"Minutes of the Vestry of Trinity Church, Galveston", Manuscript, 1852-93.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Morgan, William M. Trinity Protestant Episcopal Church,  
Galveston, Texas 1841-1953, Houston: The Anson Press, 1954

Prepared by: John C. Garner, Jr.  
Director  
Galveston Architecture Inventory  
March 17, 1967

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Trinity Church is typical of the English medieval parish churches in the Gothic style. It is a basilica plan with a central tower at the east end. The brick walls are supported by buttresses as are all corners of the building. All buttresses project above the building and although they have flat copings it seems probable that they were never finished according to the original design.
2. Condition of fabric: The building is presently in good condition. The walls are tight and show no cracks or openings and the bricks are sound and mortar joints good. The roof is also in good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The church is 63 feet 6 inches wide and 123 feet long, and the tower is 24 feet wide and projects 24 feet 9 inches from the main facade. Height of the roof ridge is 53' from the floor level while the tower is 59' from that point.
2. Foundations: The foundations are presumed to be of the same brick as are the walls.

3. Wall construction: The walls are constructed of a light toned grayish-red brick, laid up without headers. It is readily apparent where the numerous repairs and restorations have occurred. All of the brick are hard-burned and of similar color and texture but the original brick show the characteristic soft markings of the hand molding process. Mortar joints are thick and not tooled. The walls are 17 inches thick.

Molded bricks are found in the hood-molds over door and window openings and in a string-course just below the parapet. Also the parapet with copings is surrounded by a string course of molded brick with a cyma-recta profile. The parapet is stuccoed.

4. Structural system: Exterior walls of the church are load bearing and strengthened at intervals by buttresses. Each side facade is therefore divided into eight bays approximately 13' 6" between buttress faces.

The buttresses are of the same brick as the walls. They are rectangular in section, bonded into the walls and have two coped shoulders, one ten feet from the floor line, the other twenty-four feet. They have flat copings on top but probably were intended to end with a gabled coping or decorative pinnacle.

At each corner of the building there are slim octagonal towers which are in effect angle buttresses, that project above the cornice lines. Rectangular buttresses corresponding in appearance to those along the side facades radiate from each outside angle of these towers. The top sections of the towers have recessed panels in each of the eight faces. These towers or angle buttresses terminate in a flat coping. It seems probable that they were intended to be capped in some other fashion and in their present state give the appearance of being unfinished.

Internal support is provided by a series of cluster columns of wood, quatrefoil in section, that divide the space into a central nave and side aisles. These columns are spaced 15 feet center to center and support an elaborate wood hammer beam roof. The span across the side aisles is 15' 3" and across the nave it is 30 feet.

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: There are three front entrances, the principal entrance being located in the center of the east

tower. Secondary entrances are located at either side of the tower and open into the sanctuary itself in line with the side aisles.

The openings are four-central arches and have corresponding molded brick hood-molds. The pair of doors are wood and have deep-set unmolded panels on the exterior and diagonal beaded ceiling finish on the interior.

- b. Windows: Window openings are lancet arches. The original windows had a center mullion creating coupled lancet-shaped windows in each arch opening. Diagonal wood mullions divided the glass into a small diaper pattern and a transom bar divided the area into two sections.

Most windows are modern replacements and are commemorative stained glass memorials. The large window in the west wall is notable. It was placed there in 1924 as a memorial to George Sealy, prominent Galveston businessman and financier in the nineteenth century. The window is reported to be from the Tiffany company.

- 6. Roof: The roof structure is a fine wood hammer beam design, typical of the medieval style. The roof itself is covered with asphalt shingles over the original standing seam metal roof and has a slope of 10 in 12.

A brick parapet wall extends around the whole perimeter. Drain collectors, large bulbous copper or brass fixtures, are connected to the parapet at alternating wall buttress. Water is conducted by 5" metal leaders to the ground.

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor plan: In plan the church is that of the basilica type. It consists of a central entrance vestibule in the base of the tower and a rectangular nave divided by two rows of cluster columns into a side aisle plan.
- 2. Stairway: The stair to the balcony is located on the north wall of the tower. It is a wood quarter-turn stair with winders.
- 3. Floor: The floor is cement throughout with carpet runners.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls are plastered and painted. The ceiling is beaded wood laid in alternating diagonal panels.
- 5. Doors: There are four doors leading from the tower vestibule to the nave, each containing four wood panels. A wood molding frames the opening in the shape of a large arch.

6. Trim: Wood trim around the doors only.
7. Hardware: The entrance door has the only hardware of note, a massive iron rim lock.
8. Lighting: Modern electric fixtures.

D. Site:

1. Orientation and general setting: The church occupies the southwest corner of 22nd Street and Winnie Avenue and faces east.

Prepared by: John C. Garner, Jr.  
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Galveston Architecture Inventory  
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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Galveston Survey was jointly sponsored by the National Park Service, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation and the Galveston Historical Foundation Inc., and developed under the direction of James C. Massey, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS). This structure was measured and drawn in the summer of 1967 under the direction of Professor Melvin M. Rotsch, project supervisor (Texas A&M), John C. Garner, Jr., architect (University of Texas), by student architects Michael D. Casey (University of Houston), Larry D. Johnston (Kansas State University), James E. Murphy (Texas A&M), and Gerald R. Rapp (Texas A&M). The historical data was written by John C. Garner, Jr., acting as the Director of the Galveston Architecture Inventory. The written data was edited for transmittal to the Library of Congress in the summer of 1980 by Kent R. Newell of the HABS staff. The photographs were taken by Allen Stross in the summer of 1967.