

## Old theological books draw mystifying connections



Mineral Point's 166 year-old Trinity Church is home again to a set of theological writings by the Archbishop of Canterbury, printed in 1757.

by Jean Berns Jones

A nearly complete set of antique, well traveled books recently restored for the Trinity Episcopal Church arouses curiosity about their past connections with the Mineral Point church, an estate sale in Dodgeville, a library in Philadelphia, and a 17th century Archbishop of Canterbury.

Katherine Metcalf Martin of Mineral Point and John Metcalf of Madison, have restored the 11 leather covered, theological volumes and gifted them to the Trinity Episcopal Church -- to which they once belonged.

The books contain sermons written by the Most Rev. John Tillotson, who served as Archbishop of Canterbury, England from 1691-1694. Many details remain unknown about the circuitous route by which they made their way from London to Pennsylvania, to Mineral Point, then to Dodgeville, and finally back to Mineral Point.

Now they are at home again in Trinity Church, the place which the books themselves testify was their intended destination many years past.

It almost seems too much of a coincidence that when the volumes surfaced at an estate sale in Dodgeville in 2010, they came into the hands of Katherine -- a devoted and skilled local historian. They could not have landed in a better place.

Katherine has deep roots in Iowa County, where her ancestors settled after coming from Wales and Cornwall. She has long been a member of Trinity Church. Since leaving her job as Principal of Mineral Point Elementary School about ten

years ago, she justified her name by spreading joy to all she met as a school teacher, her husband's optometric assistant, a Methodist Church music leader, and widely traveled, well-educated, delightful person.

Katherine's cousin John Metcalf, who is the son of Jack and Ruth Metcalf of Dodgeville, was among the crowd at the sale where a friend of his purchased the box of eleven old books. Volume 3 is missing from the original dozen, and it will be welcomed at Trinity Church if it should ever be found.

When John learned the books were sermons of Rev. John Tillotson who was ordained an Episcopal minister about 1658, he bought the box from the first owner for more than the bid price. It was his plan to give the books to Trinity Church, since Trinity is the only Episcopal Church in Iowa County.

"John is not only an eminent historian, but he also studied at the seminary at Nashotah, near Oconomowoc, and he is very familiar with all things Episcopalian," Katherine explained. John mailed the books to her without really looking at them.

"Soon a large box of books arrived on my doorstep," Katherine said. "As the days went by,

years ago, she has had an active retirement.

The years included collaborating and authoring two popular books with local residents Eleanor Nelson (Dodgeville) and Lois Holland (Mineral Point), both of whom have since passed away. The community is grateful to have these outstanding citizens immortalized in Katherine's books.

"History is an enormous interest of mine and I've done a lot of genealogical work," Katherine said. "The longer I do it, the more I come to the conclusion that we are all connected. It's just amazing."

**Bishop Steven Miller of the Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee is shown with the volumes of sermons after formally rededicating them on a visit to Trinity Church January 30th. The oak bookcase housing the Tillotson volumes in Trinity's undercroft was designed and built by Mineral Point furniture designer Tom Barker, who has designed for such companies as Henredon, Tappan, and Zenith Electronics. On the top shelf, a barrister**



bookcase-style compartment protects the Tillotson books behind a sheet of Plexiglas—and even provides room for the missing Volume 3, should it ever be found.

I took out one book after the other and spread them around my office."

"The Covers were coming off many of them and the only thing holding some of them together was a little bit of animal glue. Though dusty and yellow with age, the print was very clear and the pages were in surprisingly good condition. I smiled as I looked at the first message and noticed the long 's,'" she continued.

"I opened one book and the cover actually fell off. Inside was a notation. And then I began to look more closely."

"On the inside front cover of each book was a label reading: 'Presented by the Bishop White Parish Library Association of Philadelphia to the Rector and Vestry of Trinity Church, Mineral Point for the use of the rectory for the time being.'"

Then Katherine turned the books on their sides, and to her astonishment she saw that most of their edges were stamped with the words, "Trinity Church of Mineral Point."

"Slowly the full import of what I was holding in my hands roared through mind and heart," she said. "I held books that had been printed in 1757, sixty-six years after the archbishop's death in 1694."

John and Katherine engaged a reputable bookbinder named James Twomey in Kenosha. He came to Katherine's house and gave a proposal for restoring the volumes of sermons.

A vapor based de-acidification treatment was used to remove acid from the pages. Coal fumes, sulphur dioxide and moisture, had created acid which seeped

into the paper.

Twomey offered to remove the acid, add new linings to the back of the books, re-attach loose pages; dye, oil and polish the antique leather, and tool the volume numbers directly onto the spines as they were before.

He also attempted to retain the original labels which were made of goat skin, but saving them was not possible so they were replaced. The covers, still original, are calfskin.

After about seven months, the books were returned. "They look like old books, which they should," Katherine said. "I was absolutely thrilled to get them." She and John split the cost.

"Once we knew what we had, it became a challenge to try to discover how they came to be the property of Trinity, and then how they ever left the church's possession, and how they wound up in Glee's basement," she said.

"Of course, conjecture runs rampant, but unfortunately I've been unable to find any specific information to date," she added.

Katherine did, however, uncover interesting facts about some of the characters who figure in the story -- enough to piece together a few tentative speculations.

The Philadelphia library that originally presented the books to Trinity Church was named for Bishop William White, who had an assistant who is known to have visited Mineral Point in 1838.

White was a noteworthy man in his own right. Born in Philadelphia, in 1787 he sailed to England to be consecrated as a bishop. There were not yet any bishops of the Anglican Church in America and after the Revolutionary War, it became apparent that the new country needed one. White previously traveled to England in 1770 to become a deacon and had been serving as rector of a church in Philadelphia.

White served as Chaplain to the Continental Congress, and later as the first Chaplain of the U.S. Senate. He also served with George Washington during the Revolutionary War.

White's assistant, Jackson Kemper, was consecrated in 1835 when the Episcopal Church needed missionary bishops to preach west of the country's settled areas. Kemper left immediately for St. Louis where he established a college, and then he came to Wisconsin. He was Bishop of Wisconsin from 1859-1870 and founded Nashotah House, where John Metcalf would study many years later.

"Kemper wound up in Mineral Point to do confirmations and try to start a parish school," Katherine said. "Records show that on July 26, 1838, he preached in Mineral Point."

"There are many unanswered questions. Could Bishop White have brought these books to us



Katherine Martin is shown with her husband, Bill, daughter Beth Turner and son Tom Spicuzza.

as a consecration gift in 1855?" she asked. "Maybe Bishop Kemper brought them. Or perhaps Rev. Richard Cadle brought them when he came to southwest Wisconsin after leaving the missionary school in Green Bay. Might they have been given to one of our early priests to provide substance to his sermons?"

The writer, Archbishop Tillotson, produced sermons that were highly regarded during his lifetime. A new edition of his works was published as recently as the

Katherine said, "but they are very good. They are powerful." (The antiquated long 's' used in early English was often confused with the lower case 'f' and was later changed to the small 's' used today).

Other questions surrounding the books lead with how they happened to leave the possession of Trinity Church, and how they came to be in the Enright's basement.

"Were they put out of the church as 'just old books' at a sale?" Katherine wondered



Books before restoration.

1980s. Tillotson was married to the niece of Oliver Cromwell. Originally a Presbyterian minister, he became a curate in the Church of England in 1662 following the restoration of the monarchy and passage of the Act of Uniformity.

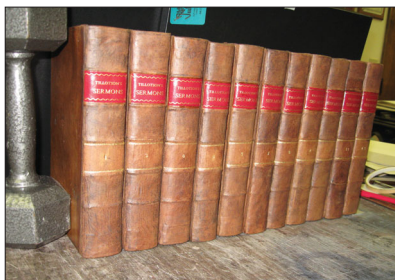
As archbishop, he remained a rather independent thinker whose sermons would sometimes offend. In fact, one sermon he preached at Whitehall in 1672 resulted in the permanent absence of the Duke of York, the future James II, from the chapel thereafter.

"I find the sermons difficult to read because of the long 's,'" she concluded.

The restored volumes have been carefully placed inside an oak bookcase that was custom made by Tom Baker, and presented to the church. Bishop Steven Miller of the Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee re-dedicated them during an official visit to Trinity Church on January 30th.

The historic Mineral Point church, organized 172 years ago, provides an ideal setting for the old books which have now returned home. The Gothic Revival-style building is reputedly Wisconsin's oldest church building in continuous use. The trefoil Trinity window above the altar is said to be the oldest stained glass window in the state.

"Monetarily, the value of each book appears to be about \$250 if sold on eBay," Katherine said. "But whatever the price tag, the historical value for us is beyond price."



Books after restoration.

