

**AN HISTORICAL DISCOURSE: DELIVERED  
IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, PROVIDENCE,  
R.I., ON ST. BARNABAS'S DAY, JUNE 11,  
1872, IN COMMEMORATION OF THE  
ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH  
ANNIVERSARY OF THE PARISH**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649316700

An Historical Discourse: Delivered in St. John's Church, Providence, R.I., on St. Barnabas's Day, June 11, 1872, in commemoration of the One Hundred and fiftieth Anniversary of the Parish by Thomas M. Clark

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**THOMAS M. CLARK**

**AN HISTORICAL DISCOURSE: DELIVERED  
IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, PROVIDENCE,  
R.I., ON ST. BARNABAS'S DAY, JUNE 11,  
1872, IN COMMEMORATION OF THE  
ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH  
ANNIVERSARY OF THE PARISH**



*Imperfect -- Photographs wanting.*

0

AN HISTORICAL DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, PROVIDENCE, R. I.,

ON ST. BARNABAS'S DAY, JUNE 11, 1872,

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE

One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary

OF THE PARISH.

BY THE  
*March*  
RT. REV. THOMAS M. CLARK, D.D., LL.D.,  
*Bishop of Rhode Island.*

---

PUBLISHED, WITH AN APPENDIX, AT THE REQUEST OF THE VESTRY,  
WITH A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE OLD PARSONAGE.

---

*c'*  
The Church Press:  
M. H. MALLORY & CO., HARTFORD, CONN.  
1872.

u s 14384.20.60

1873. April 2

Gift of

Mrs. Jane Anthony James,  
of Concord, N. H.

## DISCOURSE.

---

“Even from the day that the foundation of the Lord’s temple was laid, consider it.”—*Haggai*, ii. 18.

ONE hundred and fifty years ago this morning, on the Feast of St. Barnabas, a band of workmen assembled here, and erected the frame of a building, to be known as King’s Church; the first Episcopal house of worship in Providence. The township, at that time, covered an area twenty-four miles square, and contained a population of about four thousand persons, most of whom were engaged in husbandry and handicraft. “Through the want of instruction,” says a missionary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, who visited the place, “the people are become quite rude, and void of all knowledge in religion; yet they are of a good and teachable disposition.” At his first service, as he reports, “he preached to the greatest number of people

that he had ever had together since he came to America;" and he adds that "there is a great prospect of settling a church here; and if the Society will send a missionary to a people so much in want, and yet so desirous of receiving the Gospel, perhaps this might prove one of the greatest acts of charity they have ever done yet." A little while after, he writes thus: "I have preached there again, and the number of people is so increased, that no house there could hold them, so that I was obliged to preach in the open fields. The people are now going about to get subscriptions to build a church." Accordingly, in 1722, having resolved, as the record reads, "to get a minister and live like Christians," with some aid from Newport, Boston, and other places, they managed to raise a timber building for a church, and, in two years, a stated congregation of not much above one hundred persons was gathered there, with seventeen communicants. This was the humble beginning of the Episcopal Church in Providence,—the little seed which has produced such abundant harvests.

It was at this period that the first impulse was given to the cause of Episcopacy in the neighboring colonies of Massachusetts and Connecticut. The original fervor of the Puritans, which had stimulated them to such zeal in the propagation of their



peculiar polity, that they were able to mould all the institutions of New England society after their own pattern, had now, after the lapse of a century, in a degree expended itself; their first preachers, who had emigrated from England, and brought with them the learning and culture of Oxford and Cambridge, were followed, after a generation or two, by a class of men much their inferiors both in piety and mental training; the inevitable reaction from the rigid and unnatural restrictions which they imposed upon society, and from the harsh and stern doctrines which they preached, was already beginning to manifest itself in a general laxity of morals and religion; and large tracts of country were entirely destitute of the means of grace and the institutions of the Gospel. At this crisis the Church of England, through the agency of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, addressed itself with vigor to the work of planting the ministry and services of the Anglican communion upon these shores, sending missionaries to the Colonies, from Piscataqua to Carolina, and sustaining them with a liberality for which we shall have cause to be grateful to the latest generation. It was a steady and persistent faith which led that Society to continue its benefactions without abatement for nearly a century. After a score or two of

years, one would have thought that they might have said to our American parishes, "You are now old enough to stand alone, and hereafter you must take care of yourselves." This is the way in which we are likely to deal with missionary stations in the newer parts of our own country.

I do not think there was much to encourage the friends and patrons of the Church during this period. Its growth was very slight; here in Rhode Island no addition was made to the four parishes founded in the early part of the century; and even with the aid received from abroad, they found it difficult to sustain themselves. The small rental levied upon the pews it was hard to collect, as is indicated by the record of frequent sales to pay the taxes. Almost every improvement was effected by means of a lottery. If the chancel is to be enlarged, or a new organ procured, or a rectory to be built, it is done by resort to this agency. When it was proposed to erect a steeple on the old church, a license for a lottery is asked from the General Assembly, backed by the suggestion that a clock under the belfry will be convenient to the farmers coming in over Smith's Hill from the country; and the church in which we are assembled was paid for, in part, by the same device.

Neither was the Episcopal Church, in the last

century, an influential element in American society. Some of the most intelligent and respectable citizens were to be found among its members; but many were supposed to resort to this communion, not so much because of any intense religious conviction or special regard for its peculiar institutions, as to escape taxation for the support of the Congregational ministry. In Rhode Island and the Providence Plantations there was no such compulsory legislation as that which drove men into the fold of the Episcopal Church in Massachusetts and Connecticut, in order to avoid assessment to sustain what was known as "The Standing Order;" and the strength of this parish was considerably augmented by accessions from Rehoboth, in Massachusetts, which formerly bordered close upon Providence; and the first parsonage was placed at some distance from the church, in a north-easterly direction, in order to give the rector free access to his parishioners over the line. In the year 1729, thirty persons were confined in the jail at Bristol, then under the jurisdiction of Massachusetts, for refusing to pay the salary of the Congregational minister. By the laws of that colony, they would have been exempt if they lived within five miles of an Episcopal church, and had declared themselves to be regular attendants there; but, as they resided in