



## DF07 - The Vision in our Parish Buildings Dear Friends

### The Vision in our Parish Buildings

Cross Roads, October 12, 1988

Dear Friends,

Recently a parishioner brought to my attention a framed photograph of the chapel taken about 1892, which was in a closeout sale at a local camera store. That picture, which now hangs in the parish office, deepens one's historical perspective of the chapel. Despite its fading paint and its unkempt grounds, the viewer feels a respect for the little church's rugged, persevering character.

About the same time as discovering this picture, I came across an editorial from an area newspaper, written about 1911, decrying the proposal of an "addition to the Chapel of the Cross in the rear" (now called the Battle Building). "The Chapel of the Cross," the writer explained, "which the years have served merely to make more beautiful in its simplicity, stands on a lot adjoining the University campus. Through the churchyard runs a path leading from the campus to the main street of the town. Thousands of former collegians ...have made the little church a subconscious part of themselves."

The writer describes the chapel as "a sentient thing, with more of religion in its weather-beaten exterior than may be found inside many a more imposing structure," and suggested that any addition would mar its simplicity. In addition, "all too few things are left of the old Chapel Hill. Something should be preserved as a shrine. It would not be fair to ask the Episcopalians of the village to do it all; but they certainly have a chance to exert through the maintenance of the Chapel of the Cross as it is, an influence over returned heathen that no amount of missionary work from a shiny new church could give them."

The author concluded, in the impassioned style of the day, by voicing complete "opposition to the progress that would disturb a tendril of the ivy which clings to the little chapel, which is in itself a seven day sermon, more potent than any we ever remember having heard inside it"!!

Of course, the addition was built a decade later, as was a new church, and the Yates Wing some 25 years after that. Needs have been attended to and growing opportunities for ministry boldly seized. But the concerns of the vexed editorialist have also been addressed. The importance of both the "proclamation of the building" eloquently championed in the article, and the preservation of our history, have been an ongoing part of the parish's vision. (Most recently the Chapel of the Cross was awarded a Gertrude S. Carraway Award by the Historic Foundation of North Carolina for excellence in preservation efforts.)

Thanks be to God for those, laity and clergy, who have maintained that vision.

-- Stephen