

# St. John's Protestant Episcopal Church FAQs

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**Q: What is the size of the congregation today?** The congregation has about 300 members, with roughly 100 attending services on any given Sunday.

**Q: What is its denomination?** St. John's is an Episcopal church. During the colonial era, St. John's was part of the Church of England also known as the Anglican Church.



*Conjectural view of west end 1772-1834*

**Q: Has the church always been called St. John's?** No, the church was referred to as the Henrico Parish Church, the Church at Richmond town, etc. The church is referred to as St. John's in vestry records for the first time under Reverend Lee on April 25, 1829.

**Q: When were the stained glass windows added?** The windows were added between 1888 and 1914, during the Victorian era. The original church windows were clear glass.

**Q: What is the dollar sign I see on some graves and in the window?** It's actually a monogram, or Christogram, symbolizing Jesus Christ. IHS are three letters of Jesus name in Greek, and is Latin for Iesu Hominum Salvatore, "Jesus the Savior of Man." It is sometimes attributed as "In His Service."

**Q: Why are the pew boxes so high?** A typical feature of colonial churches, high backed pews and their enclosures prevent drafts and hold in heat during the cold winter months.

**Q: Did families own the boxes?** Yes, the boxes were essentially rented, to help pay for upkeep of the church.

**Q: What is a sounding board?** A sounding board hangs above a pulpit in order to project the sound of the minister's voice outward towards the congregation. Our sounding board is original to the 1741 church.

**Q: What are the flags in the corner near the West Door?** The US Flag, the Grand Union, Union Jack, the Cross of St. George (England), Episcopal, and Commonwealth of Virginia.

**Q: Why is there a British flag on our flag?** That is the Grand Union Flag, also known as the Continental Jack. It was one of the first flags flown in Revolutionary America. The stripes represent the thirteen united colonies, but the Union Jack is retained as the canton, representing our tie to the King.

**Q: Why are there gravestones on the sidewalks?** The graveyard and its markers predate the landscaping. The landscape designers decided to leave the markers in place, and to work around them. There are graves under every building on the church grounds.

**Q: Did Patrick Henry (or any other delegate) attend church here?** Patrick Henry was never a parishioner of St. John's. He lived in Richmond only a short time during his second stint as

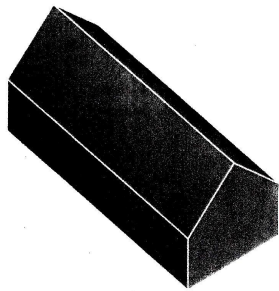
Governor, and is not known to have worshiped here. The Second Virginia Convention was held at St. John's due to the size of the building, and not any religious affiliation. Two delegates, Richard Adams and Samuel Duvall, were vestrymen of the Church and the Reverend Miles Selden was sympathetic to the colonial cause.

**Q: Was Patrick Henry in the pulpit when he delivered his famous speech?** No. It is unlikely that Patrick Henry, or any other delegate, spoke from the pulpit. The pulpit was *and still is* a holy and sacred space reserved for the Rector.

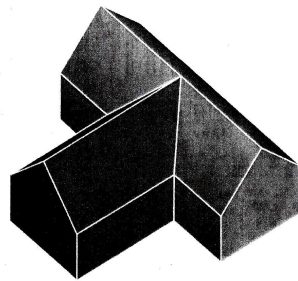
**Q: Did Edgar Allan Poe attend church here?** There is no evidence that Poe attended St. John's. The Allans, who raised Poe, attended Monumental Church, which sits to the west on Broad Street. Poe's mother, Eliza Poe, is buried here. She died in 1811. Poe's first and last fiancée Elmira Shelton, who lived on Grace Street behind the church, did attend church here.

**Q: Was the building damaged during the Civil War?** No. The building and the surrounding neighborhood were spared. Most of the damage occurred to the West of Shockoe Creek, i.e. today's downtown, and south of Capitol Square.

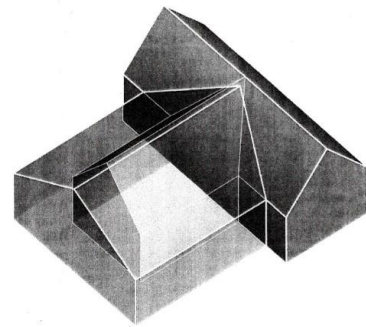
**Q: Are there any Confederates buried here?** Yes. While the graveyard was essentially full by the 1820s, there is one Confederate veteran (that we know of) buried here. Rev. Alexander Weddell, a Civil War veteran who was rector of St. John's Church in the 1870s, has a large monument near the northwest corner of the church, close to Parson's Row.



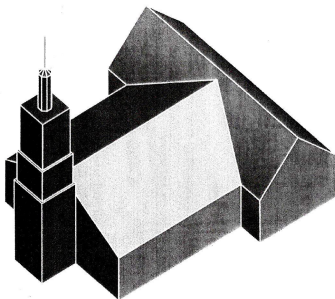
1741



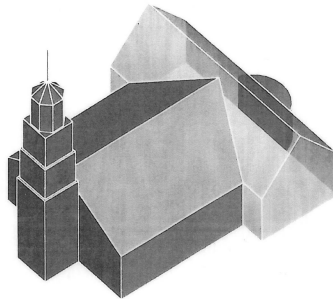
1772



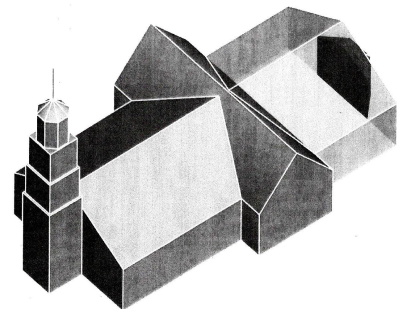
1829



1833



1877



1905