

# SPRING ST. CHURCH MARKS FOUNDING

## The Final Service of Its 145th Anniversary Is Held at Presbyterian Edifice

The third and final service in the observance of the 145th anniversary of the Spring Street Presbyterian Church was held yesterday in the church edifice at Spring and Varick Streets. It is believed to be the oldest Presbyterian Church in the city still on its original site.

Efforts to found the church began in 1807 when several members of the First Church on Wall Street bought four lots in a new neighborhood that was then open country. The first regular services were held in a grocery store.

When the old First Church building was demolished in 1810, they obtained some of the timbers, pews and the pulpit for the new church at 246 Spring Street. The building was opened on May 6, 1811.

An antiabolition mob almost destroyed the church in 1834. With cries of "let's wipe out the Presbyterian barn," they descended on the building, tearing off the doors and flinging pews into the street. On June 19, 1836, the present church structure was opened.

During the Civil War, the membership dwindled, and the Presbytery urged merger with other congregations. But an elderly Negro woman, Nancy Henry, who lived in a basement on near-by Vandam Street, held prayer meetings in her home. These were soon overcrowded. By 1901 the activities of the church had been expanded considerably. Settlement work was carried on and Sunday School classes for Chinese and Italians were organized.

The decline in the neighborhood population, in recent years has curtailed many of these activities. Only 12 per cent of the congregation now live in the parish. Old members, however, continue to attend services.

"The Spring Street Church has endured because it has been imbued with spiritual power," Dr. Howard W. Hintz asserted in his sermon there yesterday.

"The power of the Holy Spirit is in the members of this church," he said, "and as long as the people exert their spiritual power to preserve it, the church cannot die."

Dr. Hintz, now a professor and chairman of the Department of Philosophy at Brooklyn College, is a former minister of the church. The post is now filled by the Rev. William Calvin Colby.

**The New York Times**

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Originally published May 14, 1956

**ITEM #15270**

August 1, 1840

THE COLORED AMERICAN

New York, New York

## FIRST OF AUGUST.

This day is the memorable and ever to be remembered first of August. The second anniversary of that glorious event which raised up from chattels personal 800,000, of our dear brethren in the West Indies, to the condition of men.

It is worthy to be noticed, that this is the day when, by the original act of Parliament, they were all unconditionally to be free. But truth and justice, in the hands of the local legislature, stole the march upon the original act, and two years since their term of apprenticeship was made to expire, during which time these brethren have been rejoicing in their new condition, and enduring something of wrong and intrigue from managers of estates. The system of improvement goes gloriously on. Schools are multiplying - Churches are increasing, and the religion of the cross regarded as first in importance. We have not attempted, and have not room to describe the glorious results that follow, as we learn them from Rev. Mr. Knibb's speech, delivered in Exeter hall, and from other sources.

We hope while this sheet is floating upon the breeze, to visit its patrons, that we shall be collected in assemblies, to rejoice over this event, and pray that we may soon have occasion to rejoice over a similar state of things in our own country. We give above a cut, emblematic of the glorious scene. Truth standing with the word of God, and shedding light down upon the people, and slavery receding, and all rejoicing except the old overseer who with whip, in hand is sad.

The celebration of this day in this city, will take place at the Rev. Dr. Patton's, Church in Spring street, near Varick, at 4 o'clock. Several addresses will be delivered and information made known.

← Spring Street Presbyterian Church

**The Past, Present, and Future.**

*New York Daily Times (1851-1857); Nov 1, 1856; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2003)*  
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renders its insolvency as sure as fate. Let it lose one-half the Slave States and the Democratic Party is shorn of its power, and passes into oblivion. It must lose all these States if it fails to comply with the future demands of the Slave Oligarchy. Of what those will be we have already significant indications. Slavery in the Territories, acquisition of Cuba and Central America by theft if needs be, a general interference in the quarrels of all the world abroad, and the re-establishment of the African slave-trade, are among those that will be soonest pressed. Let the Democratic Party refuse to bend the knee to Baal in all these, and it loses at once its only present element of power. Let it assent to these humiliating terms of continued copartnership, and who doubts that the North will flee from it as from a pestilence?

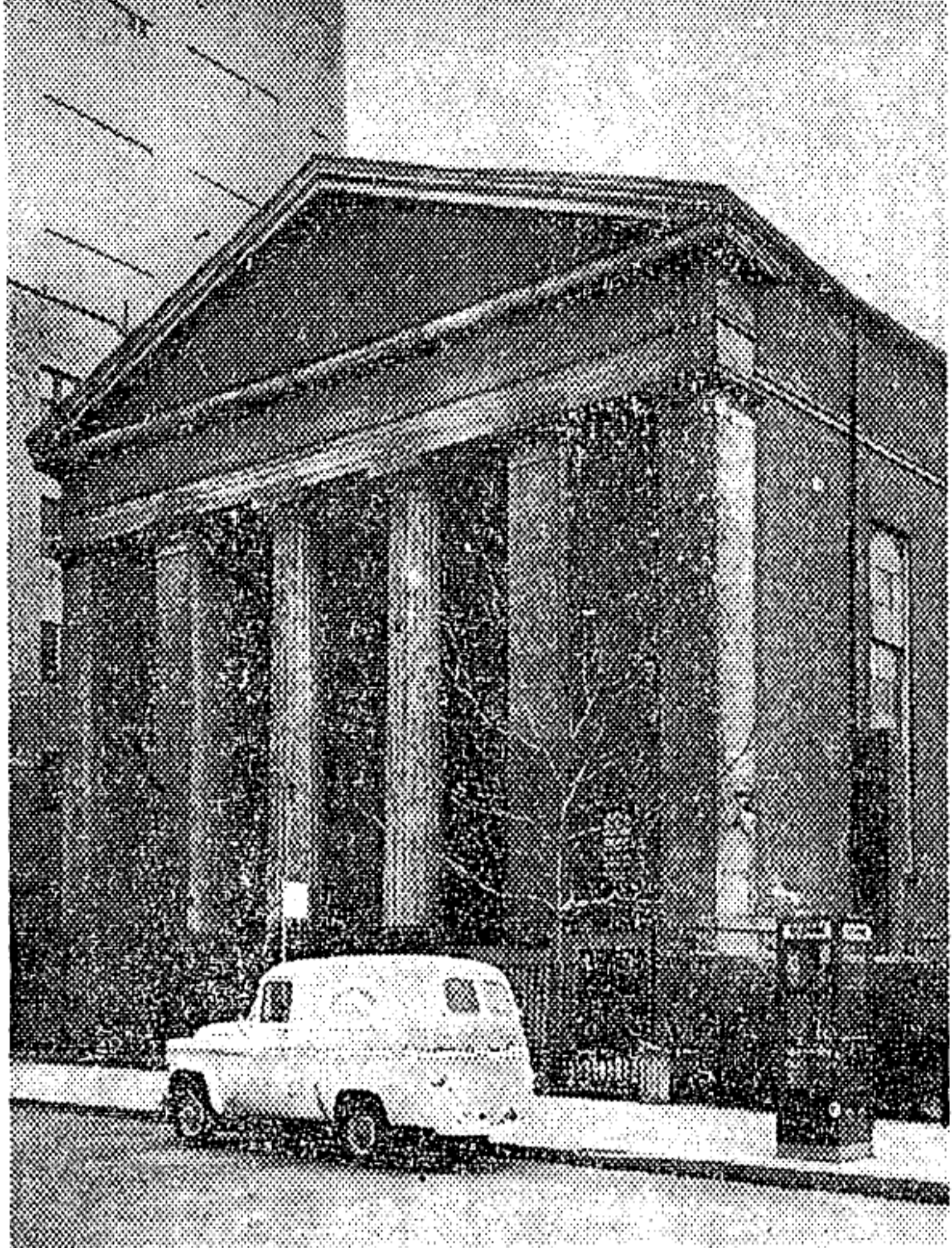
**The Past, Present, and Future.**

Twenty years ago the Light-street Presbyterian Church edifice, and that occupied in Spring-street, near Varick, by another congregation of the same denomination, were attacked and seriously damaged by mobs, because Rev. SAMUEL H. COX, who preached in the former, and Rev. HENRY G. LEWIS, who presided over the latter, had dared to denounce the institution of Slavery, and to offer a plea in behalf of Freedom. The private residences of these clergymen, as well as that of Mr. ARTHUR TAPPAN, a highly respectable member of our community, were also assailed, their doors and windows broken in with paving-stones, and their families driven in terror from their homes, in the night-time, before the fury of the rabble. Even the persons of the gentlemen named were saved from serious, if not fatal harm, only because the mob failed to discover their places of retreat. Very many of our readers will remember these exciting scenes.

The gentlemen who were the objects of this outburst of that enoig "popular sovereignty" which FRECKER, DOUGLAS & Co. have more recently inaugurated in Kansas, are still living. So far as the clergymen named are concerned, we believe they hold to-day essentially the same

← Spring Street  
Presbyterian Church

# 152-Year-Old Spring St. Church Is Being Closed by Presbytery



The New York Times

Spring Street Presbyterian Church, which will be closed

By PAUL L. MONTGOMERY

The historic Spring Street Presbyterian Church, overtaken by old age and a changing neighborhood, will be closed at the end of the month.

Representatives of the Presbytery of the City of New York met Wednesday night with Charles I. Bittner, the only active member of the 152-year-old church's session, to arrange the formal transfer of the property.

The Presbytery, the ruling body for Presbyterian churches in the city, had voted last week to dissolve the congregation of the church.

In the next few days the 49 members of the Spring Street congregation, many of whom are past retirement age, will receive formal notification that the morning worship service on Dec. 29 will be the last.

The Presbytery has made several studies of the declining church in the last few years. In September the church's 83-year-old minister, the Rev. Dr. William Calvin Colby, died. About the same time the church appealed to the Presbytery for a new heating plant.

The Presbytery's Committee on Extension and Development decided that the church's geographical location and the lack of a large population in the neighborhood did not warrant the expense of keeping up the church and trying to expand its ministry.

The Presbytery intends to conduct a study of Lower Manhattan, the object of several redevelopment plans, to determine the role of the church there. There is a slender possibility that if the Spring Street neighborhood acquires more residential housing, the church may be eventually reopened.

However, the church property, believed to be worth about \$400,000, may be sold to further Presbyterian work in another area.

The Spring Street Church, which is near the entrance to the Holland Tunnel, was founded in 1811. Its present building, once in open country but now surrounded by warehouses and factories, was built in 1836.

In 1914 its congregation numbered 667, but its neighborhood was changing from residential to commercial. The next year membership dropped to 531; by 1922 it was 256. After that the erosion to the present 49 was gradual. The Sunday School was discontinued two years ago.

The exterior of the Greek revival edifice is cracked and peeling. The interior, built to seat about 530, is threadbare and musty.

Opposition to the closing has

been expressed by most of the congregation and by some other ministers in the city. But they seem resigned now.

Mr. Bittner, who has a grocery store on West Fourth Street, has almost singlehandedly kept the church open since the death of Dr. Crosby, who was not able to devote much time to his work because of age and the illness of his wife.

Another member, Miss Martha McKenzie, a 58-year-old dressmaker, joined the congregation a year and a half ago. She left one of the city's largest churches and came to Spring Street because she felt it was "more like a church."

"I can't believe they're going to close it down," she said yesterday. "The church has a future, no matter what this Presbytery says."