



[28]

The French Huguenot Church

136 Church Street

Church and Queen Streets

Organized about 1681

Building erected 1845

Fifteen Huguenots, most of them with families, were a part of the life of early Charles Town or Charlestown, as the city was called until it was incorporated in 1783. Grants and warrants of surveys of lots were issued as early as 1677. A group of 45 Huguenots debarked from the ship "Richmond" at Oyster Point (lower Charlestown) on April 30, 1680. A church organization was effected promptly, and a place to hold religious services was procured. Huguenot refugees, when moving in reasonably-sized groups, invariably carried their pastor with them and were zealous in maintaining their worship.

The Rev. Phillip Trouillard, who is thought to have been the first pastor of this church and who conducted services in 1686, may have landed with these immigrants in 1680 and begun serving them at once. The Rev. Elias Prioleau was serving as pastor in 1687.

Three buildings on the same site have been used. The deed for the present site was executed May 5, 1687, and a building was erected soon afterwards. This was purposely blown up in the vain effort to arrest the great fire of June 13, 1796. The second building was erected in 1800 and in 1844 it was torn down and the present building was dedicated on May 11, 1845.

Edward B. White (who also designed the Grace Episcopal Church) was the architect. This building is the earliest example of Gothic

Revival found in Charleston. It was badly damaged by the earthquake of August 31, 1886, but through the generosity of Mr. Charles Lanier of New York it was restored.

The panels at the entrance attract attention, and the far-famed mural tablets, adorning the walls in memory of illustrious Huguenots, have conferred on it the gracious appellation—a second Notre Dame des Victoires of Paris. Dr. Charles S. Vedder served as pastor from 1866 to 1916.

Over the inner center door as one enters is the inscription "Seek ye the Lord while He may be Found." As one leaves the sanctuary the inscription over the door is, "Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only."

This is one of the few Huguenot churches still existing today in America. Its liturgy is a translation and an adoption from that of the Churches of Neufchatel and Vallangin, with additions from the Protestant Episcopal Church. Its services were conducted in the French language until 1828. The form of government was Presbyterian.

This is one of the shrines that many visit—there finding a tie binding them to the past and to the religious life of former days which was marked by bitter persecution, by great courage and by steadfast devotion to one's faith.

