

The Worthington Chapel

The Worthington Memorial Chapel was erected in 1883 by Sarah Newton Worthington, widow of Henry Rossiter Worthington, who wanted to build the chapel with a crypt for family burials. Henry Rossiter Worthington was best known for inventing “the Worthington Steam Pump” as well as being a founding member of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. The chapel was placed on the edge of the Worthington estate, which at one time covered hundreds of acres of The Saw Mill River Valley between Elmsford and Ardsley. There are no drawings or records pertaining to the building of the chapel however, a graceful 1883 is affixed to the gable on the west front wall above the circular window. When Sarah built her family Chapel there was also a little wooden Episcopal church, St Paul's, several hundred yards south on Saw Mill River Road. Legend has it that Mrs Worthington directed there be no public services in the chapel to preclude any competition with Saint Paul's which later moved to Yonkers.

When the Worthington Memorial Chapel was built, there were no known official burial places for Bishops of the Episcopal Diocese of New York and Sarah Worthington specified in her will that in addition to members of the Worthington family, Bishops could be buried within the church as well. However, there are no Bishops buried here because the official internment place for them was later made available at the Cathedral of St John the Divine in New York City when the construction of that great edifice was begun in 1892.

The Worthington Memorial Chapel was used exclusively as a private chapel and mausoleum by the Worthington family. On November 12th 1896 it was consecrated as the Worthington Memorial Church of St Joseph of Arimathea. There is no documentation saying how the application was made or how the name Saint Joseph of Arimathea arose.

In 1901 an addition was made to the church by Worthington Whitehouse & IZard Newton Whiteside Rae, sons of Amelia Stuart Rae (daughter of Sarah and Henry Worthington). The addition included refinishing the chancel and sanctuary in white marble as well as constructing the rector's study and the large crypt below. An interesting note: the ceiling of the crypt has a quadripartite tile ceiling very similar to the ceiling outside the entrance of the Oyster Bar in Grand Central Station.

Many functions were held at a former Parish house on 11 Lawn Avenue in Elmsford. The early congregation felt that the chapel wasn't really theirs, as it had been built for

private purposes by the Worthington family. Sunday Morning services were held in the chapel and Sunday school was held in the large room beneath the chapel but Vestry meetings, parish meetings and Sunday evening services were held at the parish house. In 1929 they proposed a new archway that would give access between the chapel and the choir room, AKA rector's office.

Originally the walls inside the church were an old rose color and the woodwork was all cherry. You will notice that some of the pews in the Nave have carved numbers on their aisle ends others do not and the numbered pews are not placed in any strict numerical order the original Chapel had substantially fewer pews and it was not until well into the 1930s that the growth in the congregation required more seating when the additional pews were installed the old queue numbers were disregarded

In late 1933 a 50th anniversary service of the building of the chapel was held and a member of the Worthington family attended as well as representatives of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers.

In June 1952, Walter McNeeley, the first rector of St Joseph of Arimathea, proposed plans for an addition to be added to the rear of the church to house Sunday School rooms, a lavatory and a study for the rector. It grew to include a kitchen, complete toilet facilities and a renovation of the present basement.

In 1983, two events were held to celebrate the 100th anniversary of St. Joseph of Arimathea Church. One included Chester Sawtelle, the Worthington Family historian talking about Henry Rossiter Worthington and the other included an English vicar discussing English lore and background on St Joseph of Arimathea and Glastonbury.

October 1990 the church as we now know it was fully in place. Despite the diocese recommending a professional help to raise the funds for the construction, it was done in a quiet, low key, St. Joseph way and it surpassed the goal of \$900,000 by more than 27%! The kitchen was renovated, a new vestibule was added along with a relocated stairway. The second floor was added with an elevator, altar guild room, office, bathroom and The Cutler room. Finally, the Petty-Madden organ was installed.

We are now looking forward to the 130th anniversary of the consecration of St. Joseph of Arimathea Episcopal Church. We are no longer as solvent as we once were, but we share great optimism for what the future holds. It is our goal to raise \$130,000 through a variety of activities, new and old. We are hopeful that these monies will allow us to

continue celebrating this wonderful chapel and the many people who pass through it's doors.