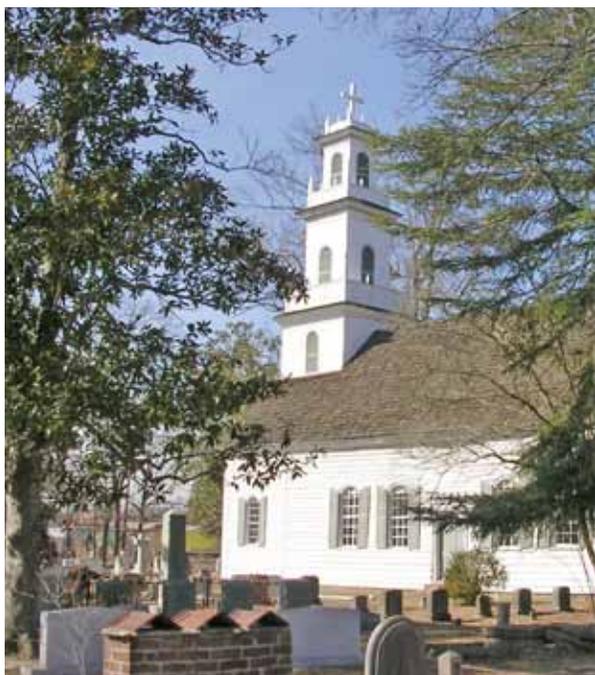
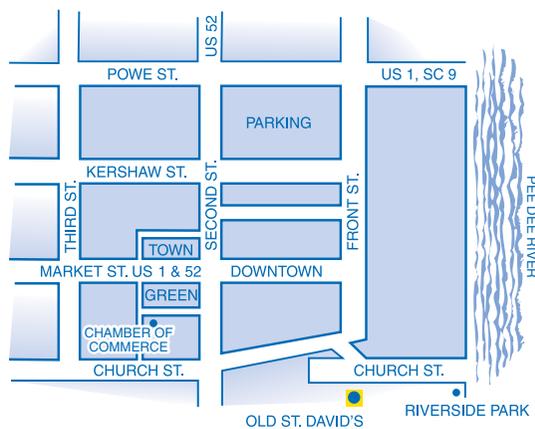


Major renovations were again necessary in the 1970's when the church gave the building to the Chesterfield County Historic Preservation Commission for the purpose of restoration. The commission, with the help of grants from the SC Department of Archives and History, stabilized the structure and restored it to the period of 1826. This included removing two side rooms added in 1883 that were in serious disrepair.

In the surrounding graveyard lie soldiers from almost all of America's wars. The first Confederate Monument (1867) ever built is here, as well as the graves of famed steamboat commander Moses Rogers and Alexander Gregg, whose monument, interestingly, was paid for by the Catholics of Texas. While the old portion of the cemetery belongs to the Episcopal Church, people of all faiths are buried here, and there is even a Catholic section, unusual in a Protestant cemetery.



Old St. David's has long symbolized Cheraw and is held in great affection by the citizens. More than 140 years ago Gregg wrote in a *History of the Old Cheraws*, "Amid the changes of time and civil rule only the old parish church remained to tell its tale in the associations and traditions connected with earlier days." Cheraw and the church welcome guests who wish to hear that tale, still being told after more than two centuries.



Old St. David's Church is located on Church Street, near the Great Pee Dee River, two blocks southeast of the Cheraw Town Hall. The church is a beautiful venue for intimate weddings and civic events and may be reserved for a fee. While the cemetery is handicapped accessible, the church has two steps.

For more information about Old St. David's Church and Cheraw's 10-block historic area, take advantage of the Historic Cheraw Cell Phone Tour by dialing 843.865.3002. Old St. David's Church is tour stop #3.

Located in the northeastern midlands of South Carolina, Cheraw is a 40-minute drive from I-95, 85 miles northeast of Columbia, SC and 75 miles southeast of Charlotte. Cheraw is easily accessible via US 1, US 52 and SC 9.

For more information, contact the Town of Cheraw Office of Tourism at 843.537.8425 or toll free at 888.537.0014 or by visiting [www.cheraw.com](http://www.cheraw.com). The office is located at Town Hall, 200 Market Street, Cheraw, SC 29520.



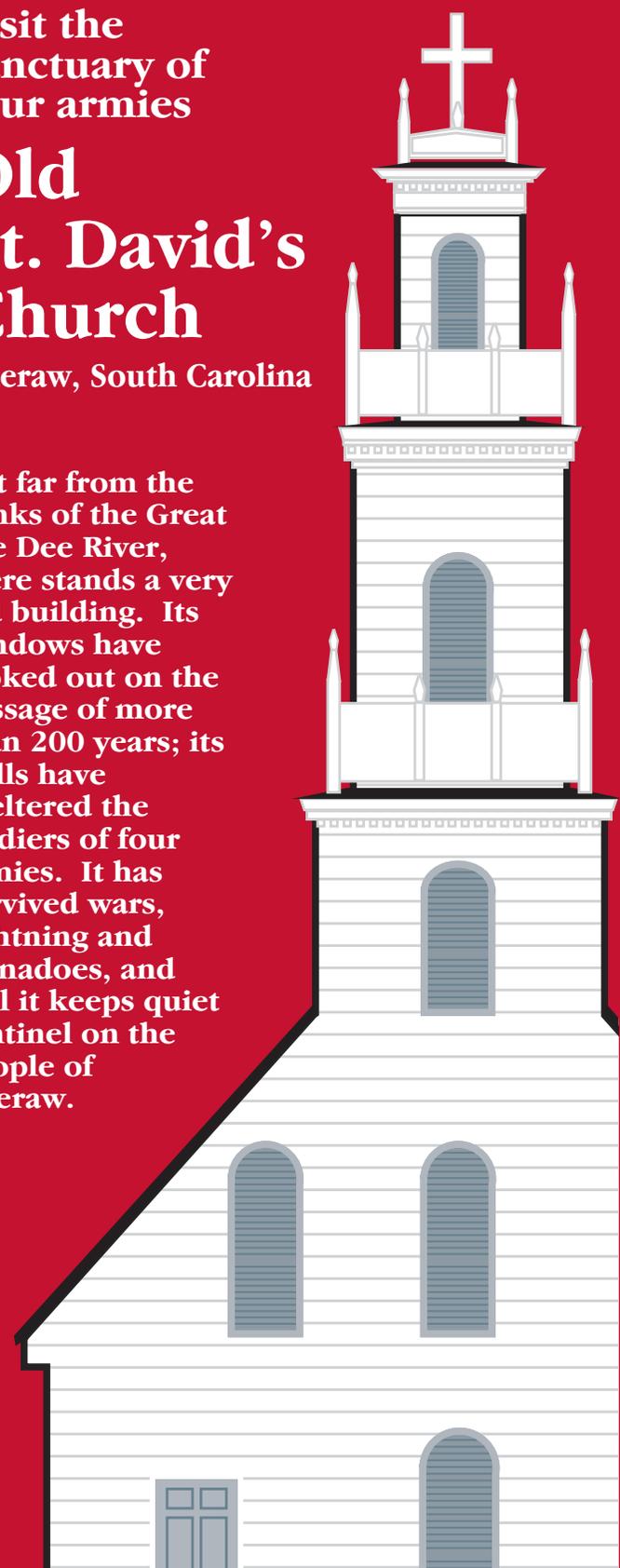
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Visit the sanctuary of four armies

# Old St. David's Church

Cheraw, South Carolina

Not far from the banks of the Great Pee Dee River, there stands a very old building. Its windows have looked out on the passage of more than 200 years; its walls have sheltered the soldiers of four armies. It has survived wars, lightning and tornadoes, and still it keeps quiet sentinel on the people of Cheraw.



In 1768 by an Act of the General Assembly of the Province of South Carolina St. David's Parish was established to serve both the religious and civic needs of a growing population. The parish included the lands that later became Chesterfield, Darlington, and Marlboro Counties and portions of Florence and Lee.

The Anglican Church was the established or state church in South Carolina, and the Vestry was as much a political body as a religious one. The wardens and commissioners were responsible for the roads, the poor, orphans, elections and collecting taxes in addition to their church duties. The first commissioners were Ely Kershaw, Phillip Pledger, George Hicks, Thomas Lide, Benjamin Rogers, Robert Weaver, Charles Bedingfield, Thomas Ellerbee and Claudius Pegues.

This last parish to be established under King George the Third was named for David, patron saint of Wales. The first major settlement in the Old Cheraws was the Welsh one near present day Society Hill, and the "Welsh Neck" made up a large portion of the new parish.

A contract was let on February 22, 1770 between Thomas Bingham, carpenter, and the commissioners according to the specifications set out very plainly in the Vestry records of the parish, still extant.

The building was to be located on the southwest side of the Pee Dee River on land granted for that purpose by Ely Kershaw, who owned most of the present downtown area of Cheraw. The church was in use by 1772 but was not actually completed until 1774.

The central section appears much as it did in 1774 when the church was finally finished. The box pews have been reconstructed. The high pulpit of "polished black walnut" was reconstructed following research on surviving South Carolina pulpits. It was originally "built together with a clerk's desk, staircase, and banister, after the model of the Georgetown pulpit" which has not survived. The stair handrail is the original. Anglican churches at this period were very plain with the main emphasis on preaching rather than the altar area with its "neat communion table". The pews all face the centrally located pulpit. There was probably no lighting and no heat. In 1827, Eleanor Wilson Harrington gave the three rush bottomed chairs. The stairs leading up to the slave gallery were moved to the new vestibule in 1826, and the interior blinds were installed in 1856.

During the Revolution, Cheraw was at the center of a wide area of unrest and was considered strategic by both sides. Consequently, St. David's was used by the South Carolina militia as quarters on several occasions, and in the summer of 1780, the Fraser Highlanders 71st Regiment used the church as a hospital. Following the Fall of Charleston to the British in May 1780, Lord Charles Cornwallis ordered detachments from the Regiment to Cheraw. Arriving in Cheraw on June 9,



1780, the soldiers, under the command of Major Archibald McArthur, camped near the Great Pee Dee River, not far from the church. While in Cheraw, many of the soldiers became ill with a fever, died and are buried in the church cemetery. In November, 2011, a new headstone and markers at the graves were dedicated, telling future generations more of the story about these soldiers of the Fraser Highlanders, who died with honor serving their King, far away from their Scottish homeland.

After the war the area was devastated, and the church was used infrequently. The Anglican Church was disestablished, and the Vestry ceased to meet after 1785 when the new counties act was passed.

After several decades both the Baptists and the Presbyterians began using the church. This resulted at one point in a race between the two preachers to get to the church's pulpit first. The Episcopal Church, successor to the Church of England in America, reclaimed the building in late 1819. By 1826 the Episcopalians had grown enough to make the additions that changed the rectangular structure with a jerkin-head roof into what you see today. The church has been restored to the 1826 period when the steeple, vestibule and vestry room on the rear were added. The cross on the top of the steeple was added in 1883.

The first "settled" clergyman was the Rev. Andrew Fowler who came in 1819. He also founded a mission in Wadesboro, NC. Later rectors founded the Episcopal churches in Society Hill (1834) and Bennettsville (1863). Two Episcopal Bishops were rectors of Old St. David's. The Rt. Rev. Alexander Gregg was the rector from 1846-1859. He was called from Cheraw to be the first Episcopal bishop of Texas. He named a number of parishes in Texas "St. David's" after this church. He also authored a *History of the Old Cheraws*.

The last rector of Old St. David's was the Right Rev. Albert S. Thomas, who designed the new church. He went on to become Bishop of the Diocese of South Carolina and the author of *The Episcopal Church in South Carolina*.

The church grew and prospered in the 19th century until the Confederate War, and a number of changes were made to the interior. The war, and especially Sherman's March, brought great suffering to Cheraw. Old St. David's was used as a hospital by both armies. There is a drawing which was published in a Northern newspaper which clearly shows the church with canon and ordinance stacked among the graves. The church was damaged in the munitions explosion that destroyed most of the business area during Sherman's stay in 1865.

Years after the end of the war, the church again began to grow, and the members eventually felt the need for more space. The congregation built a new building on Market Street and moved there in 1916.

After 1916, the old church was used sporadically until it became unsafe in the 1960's. Some work was done in 1952 by the Old Cheraws Chapter, DAR, and by several civic groups in 1953, including removing a steel ceiling and replacing the original coved ceiling.