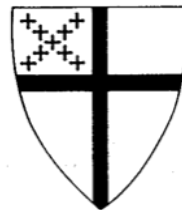




Give me my scallop-shell of quiet
My staff of faith to walk upon,...
and thus I'll take my pilgrimage.
— Sir Walter Raleigh

The Staff

“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”



August 2017
Special Edition

Philippians 2:9-11 (New King James Version)

Traditional Anglican worship of Jesus Christ and Biblically orthodox preaching.

DIOCESE OF THE RIO GRANDE

Jesus Christ, *Head of the Church*

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Michael Vono, *Bishop*

The Rev. Dr. Nicholas J. Funk, *Rector*

The Rev. Canon Brian C. Hobden, *Rector Emeritus*

The Rev. Dr. Frank Williams, *Assisting Priest*

“ *P* reacher Lewis said John Sullivan, one of the earliest members of the “Choir Boys,” was “faithful and earnest” in his service to St. James’. When he died in 1907 from a severe case of scarlet fever that was at epidemic stages on the NMA&M campus, Lewis wrote Bishop Kendrick that Sullivan “was prepared to go, an example to the rest of the college students.”



The first vested choir at St. James' Episcopal Church 1905-06.
Photo courtesy of the Institute of Historical Survey Foundation.

It doesn't take long to learn that St. James' Church is steeped in history. Even a cursory glance around our church tells of the many people who have come before us and worshiped our Lord Jesus in the same space. Whether it be the Altar, the organ, the chalice and paten, or the pulpit, the saints who have gone before us have given us these treasures, and their names are inscribed on the articles themselves, or at least inscribed in the hearts of those who remember their gift. The book, *A Tour of St. James' Church: An Episcopal Church in the Diocese of the Rio Grande* by Lorraine Southward, gives a good listing of most of these articles. Patrick and Margo Lamb have taken up the honorable task of attaching stories to the names of those commemorated in the windows of our baptistery. Their research took them into the archives of NMSU library, the recesses of The Institute for Historical Survey and a surprise contact in Yazoo City Mississippi (which published a piece about the windows). I hope you enjoy the article as much as I did, and thank the Lambs for their hard work on this project.

Peace,

Choir Boys

Research by Margo Lamb

Article by Patrick Lamb

Imagine you are sitting in quiet contemplation in an older church, surrounded by history. There are stained glass windows, plaques and other tributes to persons whose lives were guided and shaped by the church and whose lives guided and shaped the congregation itself.

As you read the names on the windows and plaques, you begin to wonder about the people named in the memorials and their lives. Some names you may recognize, but many you don't. Your curiosity is piqued and you decide to search for more information about the lives of these individuals – why were they honored, what attracted them to the church, what was their role there and what was unique in their character.

You realize your search for information may be challenging because, as with many organizations, institutional memory fails rapidly unless there is a concerted effort to recapture and record it.

As one of the oldest non-Roman Catholic churches in New Mexico, St. James' Episcopal Church in Mesilla Park, NM, has a rich and storied history, and fortunately much of it has been captured in various publications. But in the case of seven young men whose names are





carried in the richly decorated stained glass windows in the baptistry on the right side of the transept , little is known about these individuals – John Jennings, Arthur Gartman, Rass Harrison, Cornelius Henry, Eldridge Murphy (first name spelled Eldredge in the church window), John Sullivan and Bodo Otto Bowman. An eighth member of this group, George Percival Taylor, is recognized on a separate plaque near the baptistry that was installed after the original stained glass windows were dedicated on March 31, 1912.

What all of these young men had in common was membership in the St. James' Choir and (except for the younger Bodo Otto Bowman), attendance at the blossoming New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (NMA&M and now New Mexico State University) and that their promising lives were cut terribly short by the ravages of common diseases or other conditions that medicine at the time had little success in curing.

Interest in the windows recently renewed when an historic piano belonging to the family of legendary St. James' Vicar Hunter "Preacher" Lewis, was placed along the north side of the baptistry, covering up the names of Arthur Gartman and John Jennings on the bottom edge of the window. Preliminary research of church histories and documents provided only cursory additional information. What was known was that the windows were dedicated on Palm Sunday in 1912, that the individuals were members of the choir, that some had been baptized and confirmed at the church and that all died within a relatively short time of each other.

When the stained glass windows were installed at St. James', NMA&M was still in its infancy, having been established in 1888 first as "Las Cruces College." A year later the Rodey Act, enacted by the Territorial Legislature, located the state's agricultural college in Las Cruces. It essentially absorbed the Las Cruces College and the transformation was completed on Jan. 15, 1890. It was designated as the territory's land grant college under the Morrill Act. Fifteen years later, when some of the first "Choir Boys" began arriving at the school, there were approximately 70 students, including those in college and in three preparatory academies established to provide basic education to those in the territory with limited opportunities.

You can imagine what it must have been like when some of these young men arrived to attend the college. In the case of Hiram Cornelius Henry, who came from Mississippi, it must have been a true culture shock. Stepping off the train at the station in Mesilla Park, he saw not the lush green southern landscape to which he was accustomed, but miles of dry desert landscape with scruffy mesquite and creosote bushes, a few cottonwoods near the Rio Grande, an endless sky toward the West Mesa and a stunning upthrust of granite that formed the Organ Mountains to the east. To get to the college, he would have had to travel along College Avenue, a straight two-

lane dirt road lined with some new struggling shade trees and a fence. The college itself consisted of just a few buildings, including two that rose higher than two stories and stood out in stark contrast to the flat and treeless landscape surrounding them. Just as he began his journey to the college, he would have passed by an odd building. It was the original St. James' Episcopal Church, a rectangular box of exposed mud bricks, a tin roof, three arched windows on each side, a feeble attempt at landscaping and a cross on top of its north face. It was here that he would, at the urging of "Preacher" Lewis, become involved in the St. James' Choir, claimed by church historians to be the first vested men's choir in the territory.

Lewis had come to New Mexico in 1905 to assume pastoral duties at St. James', which had been established in 1875 and met regularly in an adobe building in Mesilla until the first permanent church was erected in 1901 in nearby Mesilla Park. There had already been a choir established by church organist and choir director Dr. J.R.

MacArthur, growing out of a four-member quartet. Initially, it was hoped that the choir could include men and women, but when noses were counted, there was only one woman willing to sing with the men. Lewis seized on the opportunity to expand the choir and saw its potential to unite the college, the community and his church. Within a short time, it had grown into two choirs – a morning choir and an evening choir. In addition to singing regularly at the church, it conducted performances in the community, at the college and even performed one play a year. In 1907, the choir staged an opera to help raise funds for a church pipe organ. Records show the performance netted \$80. When scripts called for actresses, the men of the choir donned wigs and dresses to play the women's parts. The choir had a strict set of rules, including the ability to remove members whose conduct was "not satisfactory" and those who failed to regularly attend practice. The St. James' Choir became such an integral part of the life of NMA&M that it earned a regular section in the college yearbook, known as the Swastika. An article in a 1914 edition of the college newspaper, "The Round Up," notes that the choir "has been an important factor in the spiritual life of the College and the community."

Hiram Cornelius Henry was one of the earliest members of the expanded choir, serving in it from 1906 to 1908. Born in Yazoo City, Miss., Oct. 4, 1888, it was not clear why he selected a school so far away from his home in the South, although records show that his brother, Claud, also attended the college. Records also show Cornelius briefly managed a family-owned cotton plantation after his graduation (hence a possible interest in things agricultural), but his real passion appeared to be music and theater. Known as the "Mississippi Bubble" by his friends at school, he planned to take voice lessons in Philadelphia after his graduation. However, records show his plans changed and in late 1910, he had accepted a position as a stenographer somewhere in



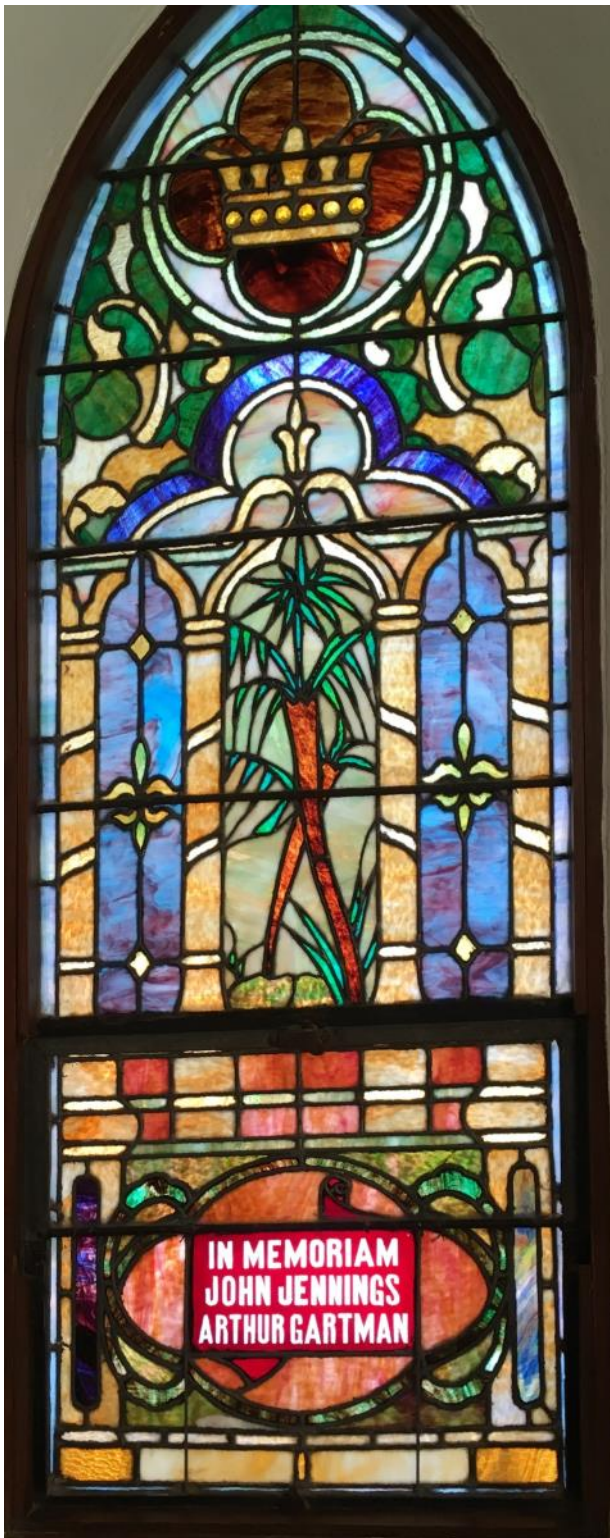


Mexico (stenography was a major career offering at NMA&M at the time). Yet just half a year later, he had returned to his home town of Yazoo City where died on June 21, 1911, of complications from gall stone surgery. He is buried in Yazoo City.

He was a member of a prominent family in Mississippi. His father William was a district judge, and the family appeared to be well connected politically to the

state's Republican party. The father's law firm is still in existence and said to be one of the oldest in the state. An obituary for Cornelius in the "Yazoo County News" was prominently displayed and described the 22-year-old as "a young man full of hope, ambition and promise." Although many other members of the "Choir Boys" were confirmed and/or baptized at St. James', Henry was a member of the Presbyterian Church in his home town.

John Jennings, whose name is currently obscured by the piano in the baptistry, was the son of the superintendent of the Weaver Coal Mine in the northwestern New Mexico community of Gibson, just outside present day Gallup. He served in the Morning Choir from 1907-1909. Research of Swastika college yearbooks from the era show students had scores of on-campus activities to keep them occupied between classes, and Jennings participated in many. Known to his friends for his favorite saying of "By Jove," he played baseball for the college and his hope was to some day to take the diamond with the Chicago White Sox. The 1910 Swastika noted that in a memorable matchup against Albuquerque High School, Jennings was credited with a game "well pitched." He was a member of the Tennis Club, the Current Topics Club and a group which called itself The Sons of Rest. In the school yearbook, the club described its purpose was "to have a good time... and cheer up those who have had trouble, especially with the opposite sex." "The Round Up" reported in an article dated March 3, 1910, that Jennings had left college because of "heart trouble" and returned to his home near Gallup. He died there of what was described at the time of "dropsy" (most



likely heart failure from other complications) on Nov. 4, 1911. He was buried in Gallup following a Catholic funeral service.

Very little is known about Arthur Gartman, the other young man whose name also is currently obscured by the piano. Census records show he was born Aug. 14, 1891, in Kaufman County, Texas, to a farming family which appeared to move frequently around Texas and New Mexico. (A St. James' baptismal record shows his birth date was in 1892). Various documents show the family farmed in New Mexico near Berino and Shalem Colony in Dona Ana County. He was baptized at St. James 'in 1910 apparently while attending classes at the "A Class" Preparatory School at the college. Searches of NMSU documents and area publications reveal little more about him. He was a member of the St. James' Choir in 1909 and part of 1910. He was baptized by Preacher Lewis April 30, 1910, with the rector's niece, Lillian Hunter Taylor, identified as one of his Godparents. His date of death has not been determined but it was most likely in 1911, within two or three years of the deaths of most of the other "Choir Boys." There is speculation he died from a disease which affected them as well. No record has been found of his death or his burial location.

One of the earliest members of the St. James' Choir was John Daniel Sullivan, who was born in Bloomfield, NM, on Sept. 5, 1887. Records name him



as a “charter member” of the choir and was described as “faithful and earnest” in his service from 1905 to 1907. He was baptized by Preacher Lewis in 1905 in what Episcopal Church records indicate was the first baptism of a “college boy at St. James’.

He started at the college in the “B Class” Preparatory School, but then entered the regular curriculum. Like so many others in his class, Sullivan was active in a wide range of activities



at the school, including lettering in track and football. It was noted in the Swastika that in 1906, the football team on which Sullivan played defeated the fledgling University of New Mexico 25-5 – a proud day for the team that would one day become the “Aggies” and count UNM as their greatest rival. In March of 1907, a scarlet fever epidemic engulfed the campus, and Sullivan fell victim to the disease and died March 17, 1907. Records show a national epidemic of scarlet fever was diminishing at the time of Sullivan’s death, but it still managed to strike many young people in New Mexico at the time. In a letter to Bishop Kendrick of the diocese, Preacher Lewis decried the loss of several young college students to scarlet fever, especially Sullivan who he said had experienced a “very bad case.” As Lewis said of Sullivan, “he was prepared to go, an example to the rest of the college students.” He noted that because of the outbreak, the college had been forced to close temporarily. Sullivan was buried in Las Cruces in the I.O.O.F. (Odd Fellows) Cemetery.

John Eldridge Murphy was born in Pueblo, Colo. July 17, 1892. He moved to El Paso with his parents and attended El Paso High School where he played end for what the “El Paso Herald” described as the “crack high school (football) team.” He also attended high school in Colorado Springs briefly before returning to El Paso and then attending the fourth year preparatory school at NMA&M. His interest was becoming a farmer but he also enjoyed sports and played both baseball and football, where he also played end for the college team. He served in the St. James’ Choir in 1910 and 1911. He died in El Paso on Aug. 23, 1911, reportedly of typhoid fever. In his obituary in the “El Paso Herald,” he was praised for once helping rescue a friend who had been injured in a climbing accident in nearby mountains. The newspaper account says Eldridge stayed overnight in cold temperatures to keep the injured man warm until

rescue arrived. He and another member of the “Choir Boys,” Cornelius Henry, were both memorialized in a service at St. James’ on Sept. 3, 1911. He is buried in El Paso. A stained glass window at the original First Presbyterian Church in El Paso was also dedicated in his honor, according to the newspaper.

Rass Harrison, whose full name was Charles Ross Erastus Harrison, was born March 15, 1891, in the Texas Panhandle town of Floydada. He was also baptized and confirmed at St. James’ and served in its morning choir from 1907 to 1909. Another enthusiastic student, Harrison took advantage of many extra curricular activities at the growing college. He started in the Third Year Preparatory school, where he served as its president, then focused his studies on music. He was president of the college band where he played cornet and bass in a quartet, chairman of the YMCA Music Committee, and was also known for playing the violin. As one account in the “Round Up” reported, Harrison “fiddled several rousing pieces” during an open House at the YMCA. He was a member of the college track team and may have played football. He was a member of organizations called the Blue Goose Club, the Apollo Club and the Sons of Rest club, which also counted Jennings as a member. One comment in the school annual noted that at his boarding house, he was listed as No. 2 among the residents who could consume the most food. He apparently became ill while still in school and returned to the Texas Panhandle where he died in Amarillo Sept. 1, 1910 of typhoid fever. Ironically, the notice of his death in the “Round Up” coincided with a report the same day that the iconic “Old Main” structure – the first permanent major building on campus – had burned. In the article about his death, Harrison was described as “sweet and gentle” and held in high esteem by his classmates as one of the school’s “most successful students.” It is believed he was buried in Texas near his home.

Of all the names on the memorials on the walls and windows of St. James’, that of Bodo Otto Bowman is one of the most prominent. He was born into a pioneer family in the Mesilla Valley, the son of Henry Bowman and his wife, Carrie Otto Bowman. Henry Bowman’s father, George Bowman, an attorney who came to New Mexico from Pennsylvania, was involved in the establishment and early growth of St. James’. The Bowman family also established the community of Mesilla Park, was instrumental in the development of the



Elephant Butte Irrigation District and prospered in early banking and insurance operations. Born Dec. 20, 1894, Bodo died March 17, 1909, at the age of just 14 from peritonitis, an inflammation of the tissue in the abdomen which may have been caused by a ruptured appendix. So tragic was the death of young Bodo that it became front page news in the Las Cruces newspaper, the "Rio Grande Republican." The publication observed that the funeral was "one of the most largely attended" in Las Cruces in many years and was conducted by Preacher Lewis and included a performance by 22 members of the St. James' choir. The newspaper article said Bodo had been ill "but a

short time... but was outdoors with his playmates just a week before the funeral." He is buried in the Masonic Cemetery in Las Cruces, alongside his parents.



Preacher Lewis hand picked Bowman to be the first cross bearer, or "crucifer" of the expanded St. James' Choir, a position the young man who was described as having "a sweet disposition" took seriously and reportedly never missed a single service.

Young Bodo likely knew and became friends with many of the older members of the choir who all died within five years of each other. No doubt, he looked up to them as role models. Although no photos with specific identification of the young man can be found, it is assumed he is the focused looking young man carrying the cross front and center in many photographs of the St. James' Choir. He also is memorialized in the "Good Shepherd" stained glass window directly above the altar. The middle stained glass window in the baptistry identifies him as "crucifer" in the choir.

Although not memorialized in the windows of the baptistry, George Percival Taylor was clearly one of the "Choir Boys. Taylor, who was born in Illinois April 3, 1889, died July 19, 1912, of kidney failure most likely linked to a bout with scarlet fever. His death came just three and one-half months after the dedication of the windows in the baptistry at St. James'. Taylor, who was also baptized at the church, was a member of the morning choir in 1911 and 1912. A member of the Senior Preparatory Class at the college, he was a member of the YMCA Cabinet and was involved in Bible Study. His July 19, 1912, obituary in the "El Paso Herald" described him as "one of the foremost athletes of his time at the Agriculture College." He was working at the John B. Watson grocery store in El Paso at the time of his death. His name is inscribed on a wood and brass plaque on the wall on the east side of the church. He was buried in El Paso. He had a brother who lived in San Marcial, NM, one in Las Cruces and a sister in Albuquerque.

Records available do not provide much detail on the movement to memorialize the seven “Choir Boys” in the stained glass windows of the church. The St. James’ Book of Remembrance indicates that the window for Bowman, Sullivan, Murphy, Harrison and Henry was given by members of the choir. The window memorializing Jennings and Gartman was given by “family and friends.” A newspaper article said the windows were installed to memorialize members of the choir who had died in recent years. It was likely that the Bowman family, who wanted their 14-year-old son Otto, to be in the center of the three-panel window, were strongly involved in the overall effort. The 1909 Swastika described the Bowmans as having “always been the choir’s best friends.” The dedication ceremony held for the windows on March 31, 1912, was attended by many members of the choir, including personal friends of the young men, Norfleet Bone and Olaf Windsor, who participated in the unveiling of the two windows.

The story of the “Choir Boys” is just one of many important historical footnotes in the ministry of St. James’ Episcopal Church to its congregation and community. It represents a unique time in which there was a special connection between these young men who were on the verge of beginning their lives in the world, Preacher Lewis and his love and support for them and the opportunities, enthusiastic atmosphere and camaraderie offered by the New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts and St. James’.

For those interested in learning more about St. James’ history, we recommend the 1993 book by Opal Lee Priestly Journeys of Faith, and the booklet by communicant and church member, Lorraine Southward, “A Tour of St. James’ Church,” published in 2000, and a history of St. James’ prepared by long-time church member Frank Houghton in 1974. All of these sources were used in preparation of this article.

Special thanks to the Institute of Historical Survey Foundation and its director Evan Davies, Lorraine Southward, New Mexico State University Library and the NMSU Library Archives and Special Collections, Cheryl Wilson, Craig Wooten, librarian at B. S. Ricks Memorial Library, Yazoo City, Mississippi, and Fr. Nicholas Funk.

From the 1913 NMSU Swastika:

One of the pleasant experiences of students going back to the college for a visit is the opportunity of singing in the choir again. One of the windows in the new church was donated by the members as a memorial to those of their number who have passed away, and the last service of each school year is also devoted to a memorial.



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Much praise is given
the (St. James') choir
for its united and
individual effort for the
uplift of its members
and the example they
give their fellow
students.

Unknown,
The Roundup (1914)



St. James' Holy Eucharist Service Schedule

**Sundays at 8:00 am Rite I
Adult Sunday School 9:30 am
Children's Sunday School & Nursery 10:15 am
Sundays at 10:30 am Rite II
Wednesdays at 10:00 am Rite I
1928 BCP 8:00 am on the Fifth Sunday**