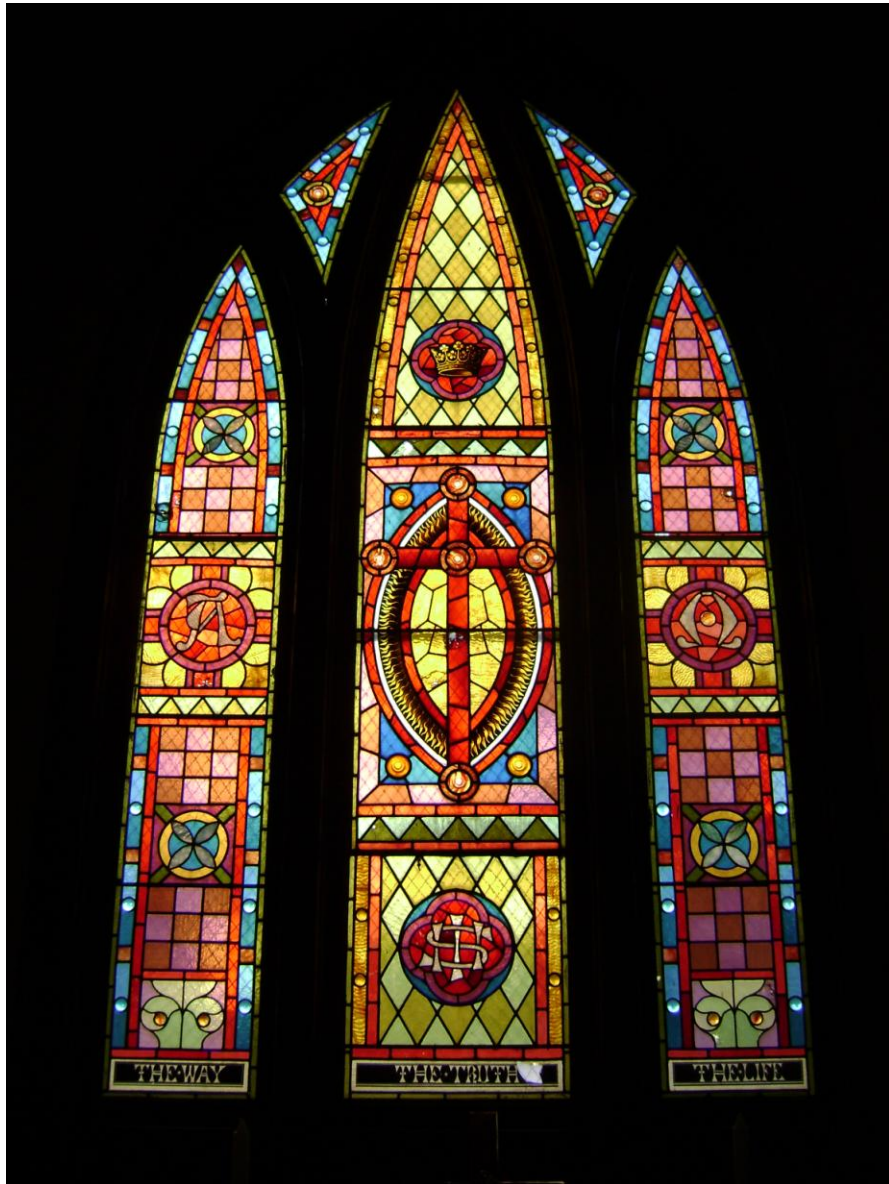


Trinity Episcopal Church

Groton, South Dakota



Stained Glass Repair
January 2016

Trinity Episcopal Church

3rd Street at 3rd Avenue
Groton, South Dakota

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Introduction



Photo courtesy of John Davis, Aberdeen American News

Trinity Episcopal Church has been a historic landmark in Groton since it was built in 1884. It was the first church in Groton, and is the oldest historic monument in town.

The focal feature of this building is a large stained and painted glass arched window with wooden tracery that creates three lancet shapes behind the altar. The small lancet windows on the sides and in the vestibule are not part of the current grant proposal.

The purpose of this study is to assess the damage to the 130-year-old window and provide a solution to return it to its former glory. The repairs recommended in this report will respect the historic character of the building and, more importantly, the ornate window itself. The following needs have been identified:

1. The outer plexiglass needs to be removed and replaced with glass.
2. The stained and painted glass windows themselves need to be disassembled and re-ledged back together.
3. Some individual pieces of stained and painted glass will need to be repaired or replaced.
4. Structural members between the stained glass will need to be examined and replaced as needed.
5. The exterior window trim needs to be repainted.

History



Photo courtesy of South Dakota State Historical Society

Trinity Episcopal Church was built by the congregation as a place of worship and a center for residents of the newly formed town of Groton to come together and gather as a community. The cost of the building was \$1,200. Construction started July 1, 1883, and was completed June 30, 1884.

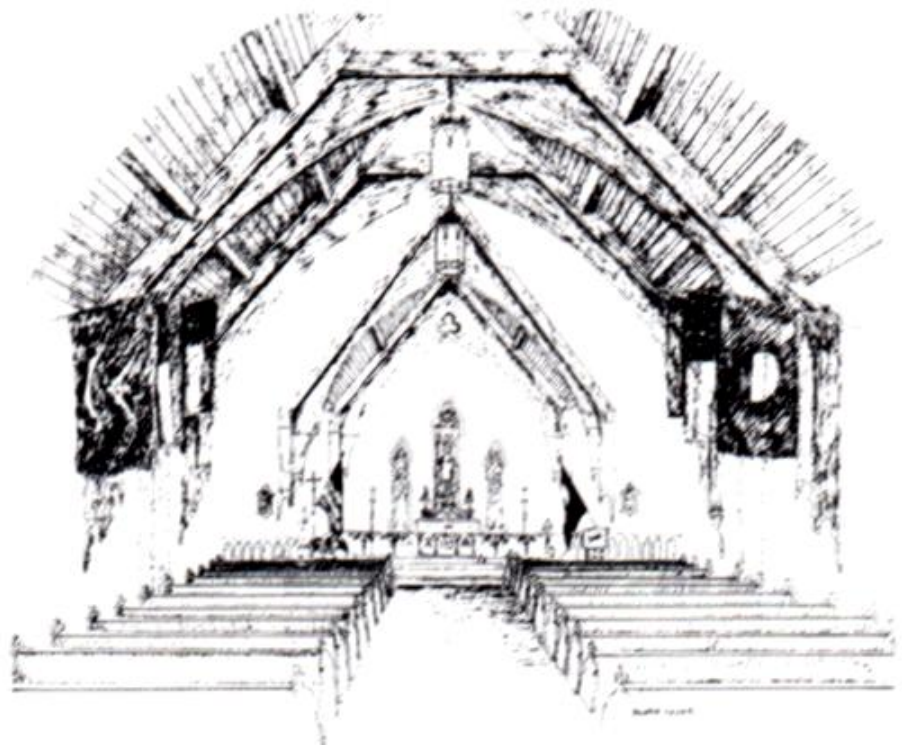
Several denominations held services in the church. The last services before the recent resurgence of interest in the church were held there in the late 1960's.

The church was consecrated into the Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota until the Diocese deeded the property to the Brown County Historical Society in 1975. The Church was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.

The church is exactly as it was in the 1880's except for an oil floor furnace, chimney and turn-of-the-century wiring.

The caption of this undated photo states: "The building is shaded by leafy deciduous trees in a park setting." The city grew up around the church, and by 1932, a house was constructed on the adjacent lot to the south. The church is now in a historic residential area close to downtown.

Architecture



Architecturally, Trinity Episcopal Church is typical of the size, materials and style of architecture seen in many Midwestern country churches erected in the 1880's when the area was being settled.

The church was built after the pattern entitled "Wooden Chapel", published in Richard Upjohn's Rural Architecture. It is constructed of frame resting on stone and concrete foundation. The church is one story in height with the gable roof sloping down to meet the window tops. The double front doors are enclosed in a 12-foot-tall Gothic arch.

The interior has stained and grained wood throughout, including the wooden truss ceiling. The exterior is board and batten.

Richard Upjohn was a British-born American architect who became most famous for his Gothic Revival churches such as the elaborate, expensive Trinity Church on Wall Street in lower Manhattan. Prompted by more requests than he could satisfy to design small churches for poor congregations, the socially-conscious Upjohn published his book on rural architecture in 1852. His designs for modest but intensely "church-like" Gothic Revival churches typically featured steep roofs, board and batten walls, and narrow pointed windows, all of which are exemplified in Trinity Episcopal Church. His designs were suited to the skills and materials of local builders. As he intended, his designs were replicated and adapted across much of the country for many years.

Groton's Trinity Episcopal Church is the single remaining example of a rural board-and-batten Episcopal Church of Upjohn's design in the state of South Dakota.

Significance of Windows



Comments of Thom C. Berg, Stained Glass Artist, Northern Lights Design Studio, Aberdeen, SD, whose 28 years of experience in the design and construction of stained glass have given him insights into the development and use of stained glass, especially in this region.

Words cannot describe the feeling one has upon first seeing the large altar window which is the subject of this grant proposal. The window totally dominates the interior of this small and simple prairie church. Its design perfectly mimics the form of the sanctuary, reflecting that it was designed especially for this church.

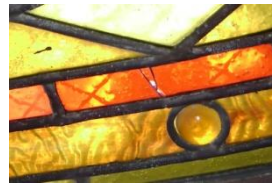
The glass panels themselves are of the neo-Gothic era (the last quarter of the 19th century), and are very simple in their symbolism.

Since the panels were made especially for this church, one must place oneself in the era of their creation to best appreciate them. Their simple content and their striking colors reflect the values of the parishioners who ordered them. These parishioners were extremely hard-working and poor people, trying to make a life in this harsh environment. For them to contribute their input and their very hard-earned money for an undertaking and purchase of this nature indicates incorporation of their wishes and ideals into these beautiful panels.

The images included are very simple and indicative of what we know about our ancestors, yet the colors used are rich, vibrant and inspiring.

We are presented here with an opportunity to preserve a historical and cultural diamond. The church itself is already listed on the National Register of Historic Sites. Repairing these wonderful panels would enhance that status many fold and would represent a magnificent gift to future generations.

Condition of Windows



The windows suffered extensive damage at the hands of vandals during the time the church was not being used or supervised by the Episcopal Diocese until it was deeded to the Brown County Historical Society. Baseballs thrown through the small lancet windows broke almost two-thirds of them. These are now filled with plain opaque glass.

A metal grill on the outside of the big altar window saved it from destruction by baseballs, but it was not immune to shots fired from BB guns. It has numerous holes and cracks which will require replacement of pieces of stained and painted glass.

To protect the windows, the Brown County Historical Society removed the metal grill from the large altar window, covered all the windows with plexiglass, and re-installed the metal grill. No further damage to the windows or to the church itself has occurred since it came under the supervision of the Brown County Historical Society.

Despite the extensive vandal damage, the most pressing reason for repairing the 130-year-old windows now is the weight bowing and bulging due to aging lead. This grant application seeks funds for the repair of only the large altar window and not the small side windows because the altar window needs immediate attention, whereas the small windows can wait until such time as they can be repaired and replaced as a complete project, funded by the sale of memorial plaques for each window.

Estimate



Stained glass professionals were asked in to submit cost estimates for the 2015 application based on the following specifications, with work to be done in compliance with the Standards of the Secretary of interior:

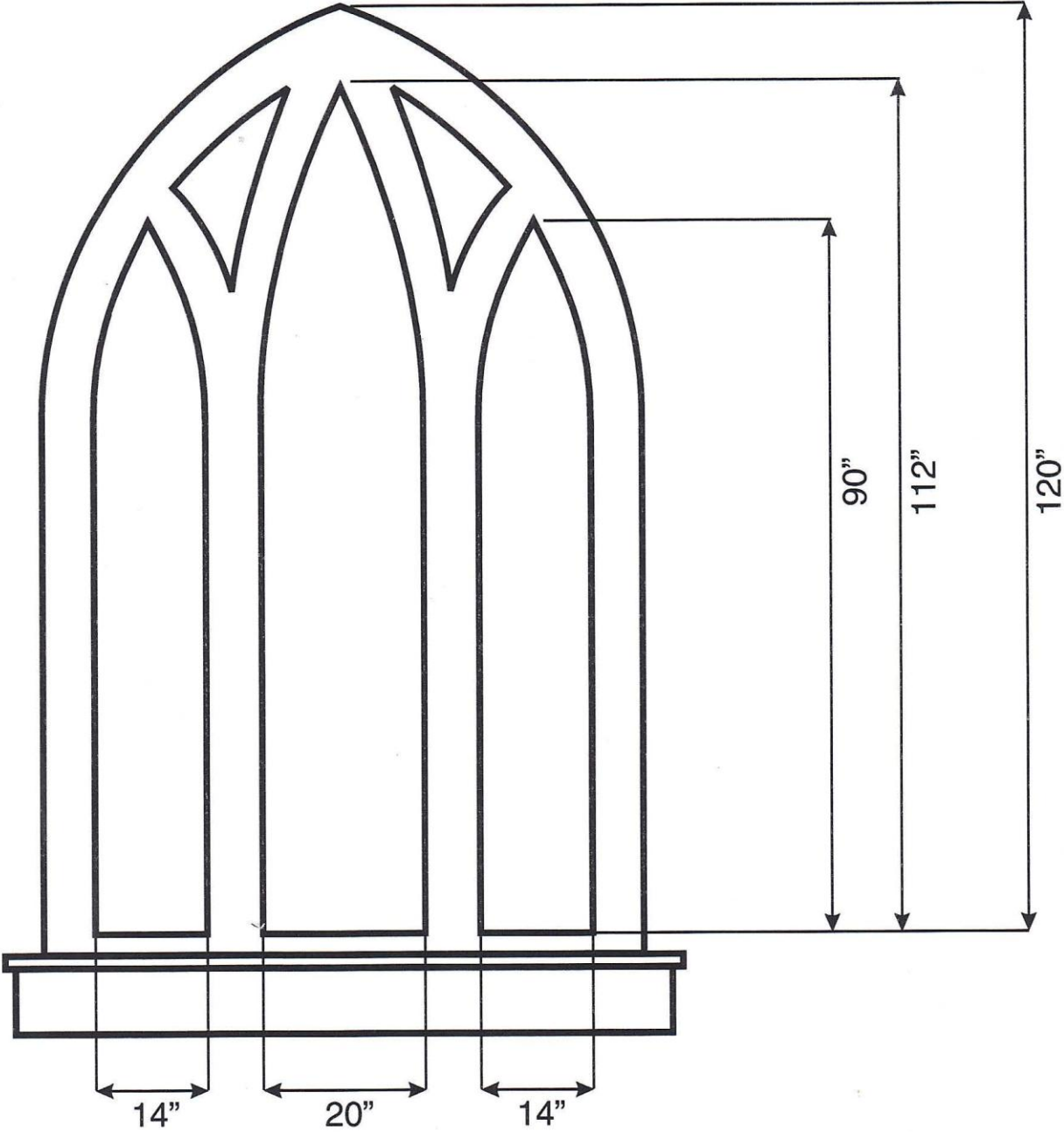
- *Remove exterior plexiglass and metal grill
- *Remove large altar window
- *Determine if plexiglass can protect holes sufficiently while windows are out and re-install it and grill, OR
- *Seal opening with wood to protect during restoration
- *Clean, disassemble and re-lead glass, replacing pieces as needed
- *Repair or replace structural members as needed
- *Re-install restored window
- *Install clear exterior protective vented glass with custom aluminum frames
- *Paint and finish. Re-install metal grill.

Two cost estimates were from similar stained glass repair companies which have the facilities to complete the entire project. These estimates were only \$160 apart, and were in the expected range of \$15,000 to \$20,000. A third 2015 estimate of \$43,500 was from a smaller studio which would have contracted out the protective glazing and frames, but this bidder did not respond to the 2016 request for bids.

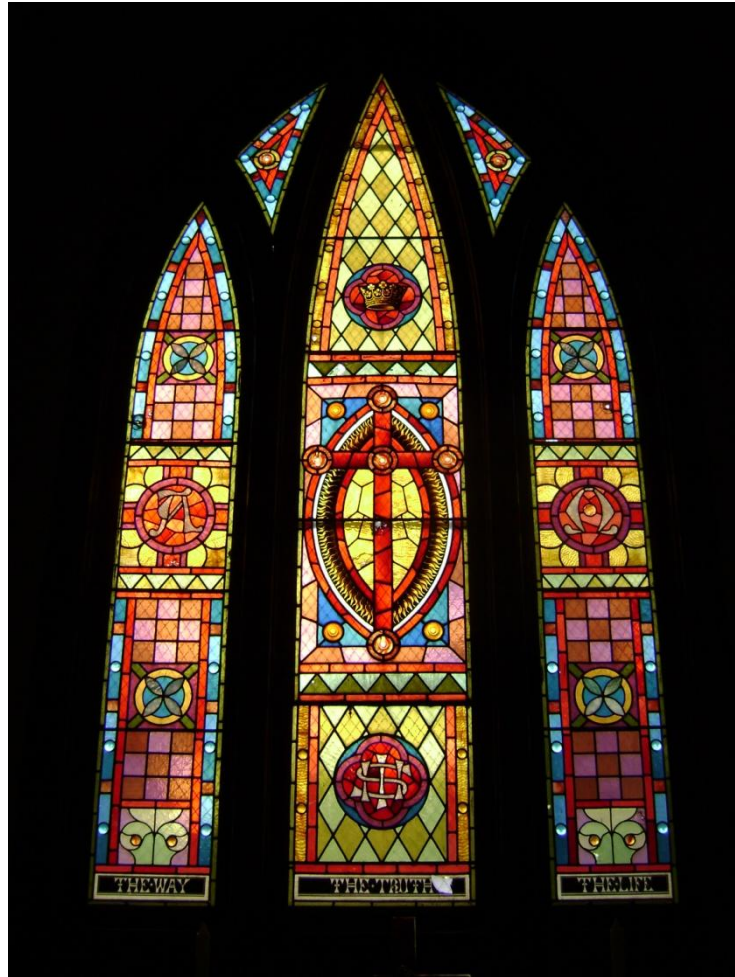
The final cost estimate of \$18,750 is based on the two similar estimates of \$16,740 and \$16,900, plus a contingency fund of \$1,700 for possible repair of structural members and a \$50 permit fee. Volunteers will provide \$750 worth of in-kind work.

Drawing

Trinity Episcopal Church
Groton, South Dakota



Conclusion and Recommendations



Trinity Episcopal Church is a rich piece of history for Groton, Brown County and South Dakota. Its style and craftsmanship make a powerful statement about the people who settled this area. They took time from "proving up" their land, planting their crops, and cultivating their tree claims to build a place of worship and fellowship. They donated hard-earned money to have stained glass windows custom made in Connecticut. They carved beautiful ecclesiastical furnishings with their own hands. Their pioneering spirit lives on in this church. The stained glass in this lovely sanctuary needs to be preserved so it can be enjoyed and appreciated by many more generations to come.

The stained and painted glass panels need to be removed, disassembled, and re-leaded. Structural members need attention and reinforcing where deficient. Exterior protective plexiglass needs to be removed and replaced by clear vented exterior glazing for protection. Exterior woodwork should be re-painted at this time.

Through the careful, attentive hands of skilled craftsmen, this stunning window can be restored to its original splendor. Its jewel-like beauty will continue to welcome and awe visitors as they enter the hushed, dark interior of this historic prairie church.