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Queen of England gave gifts to Lakeland church

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LAKELAND -- The All Saints Episcopal Church, S. Massachusetts Ave. and E. Lemon St., is unique in having an old church enclosed within the present structure. The Chapel, located south of the High Altar, entered from the east end of the south aisle, is a replica of the original church. Its furnishings and plan are the same as the first little English church founded in Acton, then rural Lakeland, in 1884.

Acton was quite a pretentious village established between Lakes Bonney and Parker. Most of the population were natives of England, Scotland and Ireland, and was almost exclusively men. It was named for an English family whose head at the time was Lord Acton. It was an ill-advised venture and destined to a very short life, ending about 1889.

The new Floridians naturally wanted to build a church to worship as they had been taught by their fathers. The resident manager made a trip to England, put on lectures about "Florida" and charged admission fees all of which were used to finance construction of the first building.

The late Herbert J. Drane; distinguished Congressman for many years and long a historian for All Saints, recorded that "The Princess of Wales, afterwards the Queen of England (Alexandra, 1844-1925), (wife of Edward VII), became interested and gave to the little church certain altar furnishings, consisting...of some brass vases and perhaps some altar hangings, all of which disappeared very soon by the hands of vandals -- the church being segregated and having no regular caretaker..."

An Episcopal congregation was formed in Lakeland in 1888 and this group moved the little Acton church building to town, using oxen for transport. The new and present edifice was built in 1924 and the old church was permanently recalled through design of the Chapel incorporated in the new structure.