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Pensacola's "new" Christ Church not new

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PENSACOLA --- They call that interesting gray stucco structure with a red tile roof at the northwest corner of North Palafox and West Wright Streets the "new" Christ Church. That becomes more of a misnomer every day, for the Episcopal sanctuary was built in 1902.

Age, of course, is relative. What makes this building "new" is that it became the new home of the Christ Church when the parish moved from Old Christ Church in Pensacola's historic Seville Square.

Old Christ Church was erected in 1832, is still standing, and is believed to be one of the oldest Protestant church buildings in the state of Florida. It was built as the result of a movement that was started by Rachel Jackson, the devout and beautiful wife of Andrew Jackson, Florida's first Governor and later President of the United States. When the Jacksons came to Pensacola in 1821 to take over from the Spanish government, Rachel was appalled at the wickedness of the city and the lack of religious influence.

The lovely church served well for many decades, but in 1902 the "new" building was constructed at a hilly site overlooking downtown Pensacola. Entrance to this building is between engaged Ionic columns that support a broken pediment. The facade rises to a bell gable topped with a concrete cross.

There is a part of the Old church in the new. The beautiful stained windows that were in the original building were moved to the new church.

After the parish moved, the old church was used by the Negro Episcopal congregation for several years. Then in 1936 Old Christ Church was deeded to the City of Pensacola to be used as a public library or a museum. For 20 years the Public Library made its home here, moving in 1957 to its modern and more spacious quarters at Gregory and Springs Streets. In August, 1960, the Pensacola Historical Museum was opened in this beautiful old building.

Meanwhile, the New Christ Church carries on the good work that was started by Rachel Jackson who had "prayed and prayed that a minister of the Gospel would come over and help the Lord" in Pensacola.