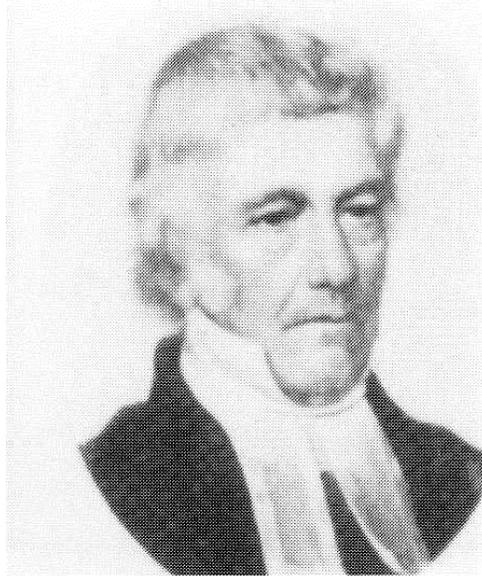


## The Letters of the Reverend Harry Crosswell, Trinity's Rector (1815-1858)

*Trinity's Historian the late Ed Getlein began editing these letters in 1979 as a regular column in the Parish Newsletter Still Small Voice. These first few (below) are some of the early letters, from the days of Ed's typewriter. Below them, the letters continue in the more up-to-date format in which they have enlightened us, the Reverend Crosswell's Dear People, for thirty years.*

editor's Note:

These last months I have observed, frequently, a vaguely familiar figure in and near Trinity. A tall man, quite old, angular, dressed in black, craggy face, hair the color of granite. I would see him just disappearing around the corner of a dim stairwell, or sitting in the shadows at the far end of the balcony. I resolved to confront him. Face to face he resembled George Healy's portrait of Andrew Jackson. It was the Rev. Dr. Harry Crosswell, Rector of Trinity from 1815 until his death in 1858. We talked at some length, I, eager for his views from the prospective of 120 years; he from the sheer hunger to talk with someone. He had opinions on many things. Remembering his early career as a newspaperman I invited him to write a few words now and then for the VOICE. He accepted, after modest protestations. And so, the VOICE will print, from time to time, Dr. Crosswell's views on a variety of topics. He welcomes reply. Herewith the first. E.G.



**CROSWELL, Rev. Harry**

My Dear People:

I look forward with as much alacrity as these ancient bones can summon to speaking with you as time and space allow. I had long ago despaired of such privilege, once having been laid to rest, as it were, in Mr. Hillhouse's famous swamp, now known, I understand, as Grove St. Cemetery. I can see that our building is in a state of preservation considerably better than my own. Delighted, too, that you have managed to cover over most of the garish decorations perpetrated by my illustrious successor. I trust, however, that you will soon be attending to the structural needs of the tower, as I am wont to spend a good deal of time there.

I remain, your faithful servant,  
H. Crosswell

MY DEAR PEOPLE:

4/11/79  
What a happy season is the Great Feast of Easter, affording as it does the opportunity to greet those fellow Churchmen not seen since Christmas. It is a curiosity that Easter should be one of the two holidays which seem to impell our biannual bretheren to the Church. One can understand Christmas. Every shopkeeper in the town is keenly aware of its promise. I am told that nowadays even the Congregationalists observe the Nativity. But Easter! Surely the lesson to be learned is that there exists, indeed, the possibility of a resurrection for each of us, and even I trust, for

Your faithful servant,  
H. Crosswell

MY DEAR PEOPLE: 2/20/77

The subject of music in the Church is one about which I have felt the need to comment for some time. And yet, I confess to being nearly at a loss for words on the topic... but not quite. The selections heard at your 9:15 service truly mystify me. Some of them seem better suited to the zeal and enthusiasm of a Methodist meeting house. In fairness, however, I must observe that those in attendance appear much caught up in the spirit of this music and participate with (to me) surprising gusto. I am particularly delighted by the presence of numerous children at this service as eager participants. Remarkable! The 11 o'clock offerings are much more comfortable for me, although I could do without the crimson livery. Dr. Harwood's legacy, I assume. The singing is splendid and the dear old hymns an easement indeed. Can't something be done about the tepid quality of the congregation singing? On two occasions I have found myself singing alone and suffered the ignominy of being mistaken for a malfunctioning organ pipe by the startled choirmaster.

With all good wishes for the season ahead, I beg to remain

Your faithful servant,  
H. Croswell

(Rector of Trinity 1815-58)

9-29-86

MY DEAR PEOPLE:

Perhaps the sole consolation for being consigned to this shadowy corner for what seems an eternity, like some clerical refuse waiting to be collected, is the opportunity to contemplate certain details of this splendid old building. Most especially I have been regarding the statuary atop the central altar and I am puzzled. Who *are* those people next to the Lord? One female wears a crown and, so, is presumed to be His mother in her role as queen of heaven. Yet she stands at the Lord's *left* side! As for the other female, I am mystified. Your parish historian ascribes her to be Elizabeth, which makes no sense at all. A riveting example, I aver, of the dangers with which attempts to imitate the ecclesiastical decorations of the papist are fraught.

Of course, the statuary was added long after the rectorship of

Your humble servant, H. Croswell

MY DEAR PEOPLE: 6/20/77

Summertime, at last! June 16th was the anniversary of my birth. Such commemorations are often occasions for reflection: life creeps away apace, but as our contemporaries run along even with us, the progress is almost imperceptible. This gentle season brings also to mind recollections of pleasant journeys on the accommodation wagon to Hamden, a delightful ramble past farms and orchards. It was in ~~York~~ <sup>NY</sup> a trip to a journey of twelve hours by steamboat. I had the dubious honor, on this trip, of meeting Mr. Asahel Nettleton, the wandering fanatic. With the easy impudence common to these adventurers he made as if to shake my hand, as though we had been old acquaintances. I left no doubt in his mind as to my opinion of his novel approach to theology. But I forget myself. It is summer and I am at peace, content to remain

Your faithful servant,  
H. Croswell

1-7-87

MY DEAR PEOPLE:

Now in the morning of the year I can but thank you, as indeed I do, for your steadfastness during the year lately past. It is a comfort quite beyond simple telling to contemplate your affection for this lovely old place. If it were not so, why, there would be no dwelling place at all for

Your departed but faithful servant, H. Croswell

MY DEAR PEOPLE:

2/23/57

Where in the world, I am compelled to enquire, have all the faithful gone to? The throngs who crowded our pews during the recent Christmas season brought a surge of hope and warmth to this otherwise desolate heart. It seemed quite like my own time, once more, when attendance at the Sunday services by all who were ambulatory, and a few who were not, was a natural and universally observed beginning of the week. Yet now all that happy multitude appears to have vanished into the day. Were they, indeed, a mere phantasm? An ocular deception of this superannuated cleric? I shall continue my vigil, having little choice in the matter, but for heaven's sake, a little company, please, a little company

For your bereft yet faithful servant

H. Croswell

MY DEAR PEOPLE:

Reflecting upon the barely audible state of congregational singing in church of a Sunday morning, one is put in mind of Mr. Handel's anthem: "Their Sound Is Gone Out". Indeed, like the flame of an ill-trimmed wick in a windy passage! Surely there is much to sing about in this glorious building, in the company of friends and fellow disciples, in the comfort of heat and light. In my own time, the building had neither heat nor light, save that which emanated in ripe abundance from pulpit and window. And yet, I aver, the singing each Sunday morning rivaled that of the blessed Seraphim itself.

As we dwell here among the lengthening shadows we beg, in your mornings of joy, for just a song at twilight, to cheer what remains of

Your antedeluvian servant,  
H. Croswell

MY DEAR PEOPLE,

6/2/58

It being a virtual impossibility to remain in respectable and blissful ignorance of the town's commemoration of the purported 350th anniversary of its founding, some observations seem unavoidable.

What first smites the sensibilities of this clerical ancient is the realization that what is being celebrated is the removal of the area's original inhabitants and their replacement by a band of fanatical religious separatists. That, surely, was the chief event of the year 1638 in these parts.

It gives pause, also, to reflect that without a doubt most of those celebrating now would have been speedily banished from this garden of Eden by its original planters. One was either a tithing member of that Biblical Utopia, or one was cast out into whatever darkness lay beyond the Puritan pale.

Far better, it seems to me, to celebrate the end of another dismal winter and the advent of spring and its attendant message of Hope and Light to all...even, I aver, to

Your faithful, though occasionally irascible, servant,

H. Croswell

MY DEAR PEOPLE,

1/6/59

The curious frenzy of the Holy season just past leads us to reflect upon certain observances in the Church calendar. Although the Nativity date was set in order to eclipse and replace ancient Pagan fertility rites of the winter solstice, it would appear that the solstice has won out. And yet, what has been eclipsed is surely the season of Advent, a liturgical designation towards which the Church has traditionally maintained an attitude of steadfast ambivalence. Christmas, on the other hand, that halcyon fortnight extending from December 25th to Epiphany, remains virtually intact. And so, while Advent may indeed be lost to the solstice celebrants and hemlock worshippers, Christmas is ours to save and cherish, if we have but the wit and the will. To so do would surely bring a welcome peace to all, and to none less than to your lingering servant,

H. Croswell

MY DEAR PEOPLE:

What is one of my ineffible antiquity to make of the mystifying events of this colorful time? Boxes that talk! Machines that fly! And now, in sooth, the Church has made a female bishop! And, indeed, the objections made by our more voluble brethren are more startling than the event itself. A break from tradition? But our very Church was founded upon a break from tradition. Scant seminary training? That seems to me perfectly in keeping with the earliest practices of the Church. I myself had no degree of any sort and became rector of this dear place well before my ordination to the priesthood. No, the question, I aver, is whether the Church's mission will be helped, or merely defined anew. I cannot but recollect the euphoria which greeted the enfranchisement of women. A useful event for the participants, no doubt, and yet we continue to elect scoundrels and buffoons to public office.

But I digress. The season of Eternal Hope is nearly upon us, awaited by all, and by none more than by

Your servant,  
H. Croswell  
(Rector 1815-1858)

My dear people:

3/16/89

It has not been my custom to bestow gratuitous compliments like some Romish priest sprinkling his holy water. Nevertheless, I am moved to public admiration for those faithful who arrive at the church each Sunday. They are not unlike the pilgrims of antiquity, whose holy quest was beset with a succession of ever more daunting obstacles to its fulfillment. So it has become at our own dear Trinity, surrounded by a succession of municipally imposed pitfalls, redoubts and impedimenta. Each Sunday brings some new parade or other public circus conceived, it seems, to hamper and discourage the churchgoer. Now, even entire streets are excavated and made unpassable to those intent upon their holy destination. That so many stay the course and actually gain the front steps is indeed a gladdening epiphany. "Welcome, Pilgrim," I say. Enter in, rest and pray. You are a comfort and a power of good to this observer who remains ever,

Your faithful servant,  
H. Croswell

MY DEAR PEOPLE:

3/12/90

I have been made aware that during a recent service in the church, two parish ladies were severely discomforted whilst attending from the north gallery. The immediate occasion of their distress seems to have been a supposed shaking of their bench, with no discernable cause in view. As usual, the blame has been laid at the door of your humble servant, and it may be with some justification. However, the day was Ash Wednesday, and the homily dealt at some length with that dusty state of ultimate residue. The subject of ashes, as anyone with a scintilla of wit might deduce, is one which never fails to agitate

your residual servant,  
H. Croswell  
Rector 1815-1858

**MY DEAR PEOPLE,**

Ash Wednesday surely suggests a quietude, a contemplative time. The very word is hushed and gray. We are, however, reminded of one particular such day upon which the holy services of that day were perforce cancelled due to what was, to my mind, entirely unwarranted displays of political bravado upon the town green. The day was March 4th in the year 1829. It was Ash Wednesday but also, alas, the inauguration day for President-elect Andrew Jackson. The Jacksonians had got their great guns drawn out upon the green and commenced to fire "minute guns" to the amount of 95 for Jackson's inauguration. [see note] Thankful that they had the decency to wait until afternoon for this grand object, it nevertheless forced the cancellation of our planned commemoration of the inauguration of the Lenten season. The juxtaposition of these two inaugurations, and what each portended, provided a veritable feast for thought to

Your wary servant,

H. Croswell  
(Trinity's Rector 1815-58)

Note: Jackson had run against John Quincy Adams four years earlier. He received fifteen more electoral votes than Adams, but not a majority. The House of Representatives then named Adams president. The Jacksonians were vindicated in 1828 when their man received 178 electoral votes to Adams' 83--a difference of 95.

May 2004

My Dear People,

The great season of Easter so lately passed has, as you might expect, especial significance for your servant, forgotten perhaps, but not quite gone. It is the reaffirmation of Hope that cheers this particular shade and yet, I blush to confess, it is another and far less worthy evocation that stirs a tremor of sharply remembered pleasure associated with this particular feast.

Considering the glorious, and occasionally inglorious, activities that attend the advent of the Easter season, it may come as something of a surprise to you, dear reader, to learn that in my corporeal time in this dear place, our puritan neighbors did not observe this greatest of Christian feasts. Whether this was due to an abhorrence of things considered "Romish" or simple parsimony, one cannot be certain. The result of this abstinence, however, was that on Easter Sundays the churchmen of Trinity provided the sole bright and joyous spot upon the town green. And a bright spot it was, indeed, with flowers from parish gardens bedecking the chancel, excellent music provided by Mr. John Willcox playing the new Erben organ, and the choristers singing wonderful anthems. It was an example not lost on those of our neighbors who had the temerity to attend one of our afternoon services as guests of Miss Anapest Grimsby, a maiden lady much given to entertaining certain members of the Presbyterian Society in her parlor, and in the church itself upon the occasion of interesting and colorful events taking place within our precincts.

*The contemplation today of these same neighbors celebrating the feast of Easter, their lintels all a-tremble with flowers and ribbons, brings a frisson of satisfaction to this ancient soul, and a conviction renewed that this season is, indeed, one full of Hope for all, even for*

Your servant,

H. Croswell (Trinity's Rector 1815-58)

June 2004

My Dear People,

*"What is so rare as a day in June?" as Mr. Lowell poetically asked. And he might have added: "...that some personage or other does not pay a visit to prominent places and cities" for purposes of public appearance and approval. Our own city has long been the host to such well publicized and short lived sojourns, whether for commencements at the college or for other more obviously political ends. One such day of fleeting glory comes easily to mind as this bright and busy month approaches.*

*It was upon on a warm June morning in the year 1833 that president Andrew Jackson sailed into the harbour aboard the steamship Splendid. Canons boomed, flags fluttered, and thousands of otherwise staid citizens giddily thronged at the steamboat landing. The Great Man rode from the wharf in an open barouche into the town. It was drawn by four handsome greys, and escorted to the statehouse by the scarlet liveried Foot Guard. There he was met by the governor and assorted dignitaries of the town and the college. The scene was not unlike Joseph Bonaparte's triumphal entry into the Bay of Naples. The presidential party, functionaries as well as the usual toadies and back-slappers, spent the night at the Tontine Hotel and, I am pleased to say, spent Sunday morning in Trinity Church. It was my good fortune to have prepared a sermon on Colossians III, urging my listeners to "put on the clothes of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience" etc., which, I may say, was well received. It is possible that the president may, in addition, have visited North Meeting House and the Methodist society later in the same day before embarking for Hartford. I had heard tales to this effect.*

*Subsequent enquiries led me to suspect that his principal reason for visiting the town was to assess the progress being made upon a new carriage which he had, some time previously, placed on order at the Brewster carriage factory as he spent some time visiting that establishment upon the Monday following. Nevertheless, it was a splendid day for all, not least for*

Your servant,

H. Croswell (Trinity's Rector 1815-58)

July 2004

My dear people,

*The recent festival upon the town green was a happy sight, indeed. As you might imagine, even a poor shade such as your servant can, upon occasion, become afflicted with a feeling of abandonment, no matter how splendid my isolation. I welcomed the gay throngs and music, the street performers, and the general atmosphere of a city enjoying itself.*

*For most of my time here, public entertainments were not welcome - a remnant, I suppose, of the Puritan hegemony in early times. As late as 1852, in fact, an attempt to let a circus perform in the town was stridently opposed by the college authorities and, as a result, the citizens deprived of the pleasures*

*of that particular summertime diversion. Even the great English actress Fanny Kemble, having delivered a spirited reading from William Shakespeare's plays in the Music Hall, was given quite poor notices in the Palladian newspaper.*

*But the prohibition of the circus was of especial sadness, for there was in the town at that time an elderly gentleman named, simply, Tobias. Short of stature, dark complexioned with a splendid white mustache and a small gold ring in one ear, he seemed to live in and around the town green, though no one seemed certain of the exact place of his abode. During the cold months he was nowhere to be found, but on the first warm spring day he would materialize on the green and begin to juggle large and small hoops with mesmerizing dexterity. He was a Romany of uncertain origins but one who had obviously performed much in public during his earlier life. Small boys would attempt to imitate him and ladies smiled at his dramatic flair. The juggler on the green became a familiar figure and a harbinger of summer. When rumors of a coming circus began to circulate, Mr. Tobias became more animated than ever, performing with his hoops nearly every day for the enjoyment of one and all, up and down the green, ever more daring in his feats of agility. It was his great hope to join that circus when it came to town, and then, perhaps, by traveling with those folk, to somehow find his lost Romany family. His hopes, alas, were dashed by the by the firm hand of the college, joined by the ever accommodating Common Council which issued the official proscription...*

*The circus never came. And Mr. Tobias was never seen again upon the green, performing with his hoops and delighting all who watched.*

*But summer is a time for gladness and it is with that in mind that I continue my watch upon the town green, perchance to catch a glimpse of joy and bring its company to*

*Your servant*

*H. Croswell (Trinity's Rector 1815-1858)*

*January 2005*

*My dear people,*

*As the holy tide of Christmas is upon us, it brings to my addled brain many associations, most being pleasant, a few discomfiting. It may be thus for many of you. Indeed, I would be surprised were it not so. It was on Christmas eve long, long ago that I bade a somewhat bitter farewell to the poor, worthless, deceitful dross of the political profession, indulged in by your servant by way of the publication of small journals of news and opinion. Little did I guess, on that unhappy night, what grace awaited me as a servant of Christ's Holy Church, and as Rector in this dear place. Perhaps my discovery of Truth and goodness was akin to that of those three Eastern Magi, traversing afar and, at the last, finding salvation in a most unexpected place.*

*The years I spent here I regard as golden, with not a drop of dross in the mix. And by some queer and unexpected twist of time I remain, though in a somewhat reduced state.*

*This small and holy spot on the town green has, over the years, become more and more an oasis of sanity amid the desert of raucous commercial enterprises which surround us.*

*Now in the holy season, when our doors are opened to many not seen for so long - old friends returning for a visit, new seekers of the Light, even, perhaps, a few accidental sojourners - let us rejoice together in this communion. For here is Beauty, here is Truth for all, not least than for your servant,*

*Harry Croswell*

(Trinity's Rector 1815-1858)

Note: December 24, 1811 Harry Croswell wrote his valedictory editorial in The Balance, an Albany, N.Y. newspaper. It included a theater review.

March 2005

My Dear People,

*The state of suspended animation in which I have dwelt for so very long rarely lends itself to strong emotion, much less astonishment. Imagine, therefore, the confoundment which suffused my revenant frame upon a recent Sunday morning as I viewed, from my customary aerie, the goings-on upon the very steps of our chancel. There, for all the world to see, was what appeared to be a theatrical enactment of that part of my early life which I had long sought to inter with the bones of other missteps and wrong-headed adventures. The players involved in this undertaking were, I must admit, quite capable, and I am as susceptible as the next man to public flattery, whether or not founded upon hard truth. Still, the spectacle of seeing this little drama played out upon so sacred a site led to some uneasiness. My discomfort was assuaged greatly, I admit, by the depiction of my old nemesis, once more exposed to the critical light of day. But I digress.*

*The season of Lent is upon us with its attendant calls upon our spirit of sacrifice and penance. I adjure you, dear friends, to liberally share that one gift with which we are all blessed, the gift of time, with those you love. As for penance, perhaps the drama of seeing pass so publicly before my eyes the still painful memories of my rash youthfulness will do as penance enough for*

Your servant

H. Croswell

Trinity's Rector 1815-1858

June 2005

My Dear People,

*As the prospect of warm days and nights stretches out before us, our thoughts turn easily to journeys made and journeys to come. Whether it be a simple ramble through the countryside, or a more ambitious adventure upon the waters of Long Island Sound, this is the season. It is also the season for visiting travelers to arrive at our doors, some anonymous sojourners, some with considerably more celebrity.*

*I recall a bright day in July in the year 1824, or thereabouts, on which no less a personage than the Marquis de LaFayette, hero of our Revolution, landed in New Haven. He stayed at the old Morse Hotel, at the corner of Church & Crown Streets (later to become the Lyceum Theater). Accompanied by a gaggle of municipal nabobs and assorted dignitaries from the nearby statehouse, he toured the town in a splendid coach drawn by a pair of handsome greys.*

*As the entourage moved down Temple Street, it came to a halt directly at our steps. The Great Man emerged all a-glitter in his military uniform, brass buttons and shimmering epaulets dancing in the summer sunshine. He had, apparently, been under the impression that our building housed a Romish establishment and wished to make some sort of pilgrimage visit.*

*The misunderstanding was doubtless due to the graceful stone and lofty pinnacles of Trinity, especially*

*in comparison to the severe steeples of our puritan neighbors. Happily, I was on hand as he went about genuflecting and waving his arms in cruciform, quickly disabusing him of his popish fantasy, and accepting his gracious apology.*

*As the coach moved sedately away, and I gazed about me at this happy land, I could not but reflect upon an old hymn:*

*"The ancient law departs, and all its terrors cease."*

*Ever your reflective servant,  
H. Croswell  
(Trinity's Rector 1815-1858)*

July 2005

*My Dear People*

*Such splendidly warm days as you have been enjoying put me in mind of pleasant summer rambles I was used to enjoy, managing to combine them with timely visits to members of my flock. In my time, of course, the ways to the water's edge were not so encumbered by tall buildings. The refreshing sea breezes swept in unimpeded, bringing the zest of salt air to all who cared to enjoy it. Especially bracing was the mile or so walk down Chapel St. to the lower green at Wooster Square, marking the end of the compact portion of the town. Our splendid new chapel of St. Paul's provided an elegant entrance to this area and, further along, the newly built Young Ladies' Institute, an establishment of which I was particularly proud, having been an early endorser of Professor Andrews's plan to establish an institute for young females. The institute provided instruction in the arts and sciences equal to that enjoyed by young men in their academies and colleges. Its faculty included lecturers from the College, and the curriculum for advanced students provided for them to attend lectures at the College. The school's proximity to St. Paul's was, indeed, felicitous and attracted many daughters of our parishioners.*

*The Institute stood near the middle of the east side of the square and occupied a handsome building of brick, having two & 1/2 storeys in the main part and two in each wing. Visiting here allowed me to combine it with a stop at St. Paul's as well.*

*And yet, the refreshment of the walk to this lower green was itself sufficient cause to make the trek. You may think that I have my geography wrong, ascribing such pleasure to this particular route. Your concern is understandable for you are now so cut off from the water's calming proximity. I hasten, therefore, to append a quotation from the prospectus of that Institute, describing it as being "one mile from Yale college, in an open and healthy situation, commanding a fine view of the town and harbor, and the beautiful hills which surround them."*

*Ah, well; "Time like an ever moving stream" & etc.*

*I remain your occasionally nostalgic servant,  
H. Croswell  
(Trinity's Rector 1815-1858)*

September 2005

*My Dear People,*

*I have long maintained a healthy distance between myself and mystic professions of sudden epiphanies, often accompanied by blinding lights and, perhaps, tinkling bells. My preference has been*

*to leave the field of such spectacular manifestations to the sidewalk evangelists. The names of Millennium Miller and Fairweather Platt spring to mind. Imagine, then, my astonishment upon looking up one morning in June to see the chancel awash in light streaming through a vast brightness where the coloured windows ought to have been. Indeed, those handsome windows were now a mere palimpsest of their former glory. What could this mean? Had my day of release arrived at last? Had I been as taken by surprise as those hapless, foolish maidens at the last trump?*

*It was, indeed, a welcome release from these hasty imaginings to realize the cause of this sudden illumination. Rather than the hand of the Divine, it was the hands of skilled artisans of stained glass that had brought about this phenomenon and would, doubtless, bring about the restoration of the status quo ante.*

*It was while ruminating about this event that I was put in mind of another, though far less evocative, brightening when our neighbors, the Center Meeting House, for reasons that remain a mystery, painted their entire building, bricks and all, flat white. One might suspect a variety of reasons for this transformation, but Christian charity moves us to avoid such conjecture. It is sufficient to note that the handsome brick has been restored, as will our many-hued windows. We will be as we were. Restored, renewed we shall all one day be, and even*

Your servant,

H. Croswell (Trinity's Rector 1815-1858)

November 2005

My dear people,

*The advent of a new season, notably the autumn with its bright colors and west winds, has inspired many a poet and wordsmith to eloquence far beyond my poor powers. My own associations of this season, now upon us with muscular intensity, are at odds with things poetic. A long, dry summer converted Temple Street into a dusty path, redolent with the summer's accumulation of what one might expect from a town full of well fed horses. Cows still pastured on the green until the early 1820's. Some relief from this state of things did come in the form of a paved walkway in front of the church and its neighboring religious societies, but that was not until 1840. It may surprise you, dear reader, to learn that the town did not decide to pave its streets until the late 1850's or so, quite near the end of my tenure here. In fact, the first paved road was Whalley Avenue from Broadway to Westville...but I digress.*

*When the autumn rains arrived the streets became veritable bogs, often impassable by foot, that being my primary mode of travel about the town, save for the occasional kindness of Miss Abigail Heaton, a maiden lady of some means. Relief, of course, arrived finally, in the form of the cleansing west winds and first frost, the first carrying off the melodious vapors, the second putting solid ground once more under foot. And always just in time to facilitate the return of the faithful from their summer absence, and set their feet safely churchward where your servant awaited, as even now,*

Faithfully,

H. Croswell (Trinity's Rector 1815-1858)

March 2006

My dear people,

*There has, apparently, been some stir concerning a lowered temperature within the building, un-noticed*

*by your servant, of course, but of some matter to pew holders. I am minded of similar concerns during my corporeal time in this dear place. Many of my flock had taken to bringing foot warmers fueled with charcoal into their pews: hence, the pew doors, a vain attempt to contain a bit of that precious warmth during winter Sundays. It was in the year 1822 that four stoves were purchased, paid for by private subscription, and installed in the side aisles. What contributed to the bizarre nature of this installation was the decision to extend the required smoke pipes through four of the windows. Thus, from the outside on a cold winter morning, the building resembled some great engine working up a head of steam for the final voyage. On the inside, when the wind was wrong, the place filled with more smoke than a popish funeral awash in incense. Eyes watered, coughs cackled, women wept and strong men winced. As for myself, since it was apparent that I might have been speaking in Urdu for all anyone was listening, I allowed my mind to drift idly on the waters of memory. It came to shore upon the words of Isaiah beholding God's presence: "and the posts of the door moved at the voice of Him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke."*

*Frivolous musings, I suppose, but helpful to the good humor of Your servant,*

*H. Croswell (Trinity's Rector 1815-1858)*

May 2006

*My Dear People,*

*The sweet scent of spring is unmistakably in the air, even, I aver, in the dusty air of my present circumstances. And with its coming are thoughts of so many other springs here in this grand old town. Many and many a morning I well remember when, with a new lightness in my step, did I leave my little house on Orange Street and walk to the church, passing, as I went, good citizens and a number of acquaintances also enjoying the end of winter. I recall in particular, one such morning in May. The streets were still wet from a late night shower, catching now the sun's rays. Birds were a chorus of song as I approached the elm-lined green. In front of the church was a sight which caused me to quicken my step and briefly wonder what was afoot, for stopped directly in front of the building was a quite splendid open Landau drawn by a pair of handsome grays. Standing in this conveyance were a young man in black morning coat accompanied by a little boy in a military costume, beating a drum. A small crowd had begun to gather. I approached and asked this gentleman what he was about. He introduced himself, with a theatrical bow, as Phineas T. Barnum, late of Bethel, and now proprietor of a museum of oddments and curiosities in New York. He was, presumably, drumming up trade for this enterprise, offering gratis tickets aboard the steam packet which plies daily between New Haven and the Metropolis. I advised this young impresario that the local constabulary might not look kindly on his gathering a crowd upon a public thoroughfare at this hour. At this, Mr. Barnum winked an eye at me and confided, Every crowd has a silver lining!*

*I smiled and, pondering the wisdom of this witticism, went on my way assured, once more, that the spring of the year does, indeed, bring out the rare birds.*

*I remain, as ever, Your servant,*

*H. Croswell (Trinity's Rector 1815-58)*

September 2006

*My Dear People,*

*The dog days are upon us, as every scribbler and wag never tires of reminding us. It was ever so. In my time it became the custom of many to board a steam packet for a sail across the waters of Long Island*

*Sound upon such days, finances allowing. Others with recourse to a carriage would set out along the byways and lanes of the town, an easy journey then, for beyond the confines of the town center there were mostly orchards and farmland. My own preference on such days, pastoral duties permitting, was to stroll up Prospect St. then little more than a wagon path once I passed the northern boundary of Mr. Hillhouse's cemetery with its mystifying Egyptian gateway. Other than the hat factory and dwelling of Glover Mansfield, the way was largely wooded. At the Farmington Canal crossing I would occasionally pause to watch the barges being towed up to Northfield or down to the harbor. Some families could usually be seen picnicking along its banks. The street was not called Prospect then but usually referred to as "Love Lane" for reasons which delicacy prevents me from enumerating here. The path stretched out beneath copious shade trees and cooling rivulets. Few buildings existed there until one reached the old Powder House, and the nearby home of Judge Morris, whose hospitality I would sometimes enjoy. The judge kept a very respectable cellar. Refreshed and restored, my return journey was with a lighter step and a contented heart.*

*That you all may enjoy a similar felicity is the sincere wish of*

*Your servant*

*H. Croswell (Trinity's Rector 1815-1858)*

*July 2007*

*My Dear People,*

*Upon a recent late afternoon as I sat in my accustomed aerie, lost in posthumous thought, I was roused from this reverie by a dazzling wall of colour streaming through the altar window. The lowering sun made the very air in that loft quiver with a presence heretofore unnoticed by this ancient observer.*

*It occurred to me that far too much of my earthly life was lived in the realm of black and white. I was, after all, a printer, a newspaper publisher, a political yacker and, finally, a wearer of clerical garb.*

*How wondrous is colour! It moves us, perhaps, a step closer to the Divine. I entreat you to rejoice in your good fortune at having around you these glorious windows that transform bare light into something quite wondrous.*

*Looking at what I have written I blush down to my fingertips at such confessional thoughts making their way into print at my hand. And yet, to be always imprisoned by mere logic is to be earthbound and drab. And who, alas, is more earthbound than your servant,*

*H. Croswell (Trinity's Rector 1815-1858)*

*September 2007*

*My Dear People,*

*These warm days of summer never fail to bring to mind the occasional outing enjoyed in the neighboring countryside. Since my only means of transport was the venerable shanks mare, wherever a parishioner possessed of a carriage invited this peripatetic cleric to join him of an afternoon in summer, I was but too happy to accept. So it was that on one particularly agreeable August day, Dr. Mathewson suggested a ride out to the town of Derby on the new Turnpike. The road ran from the house of Dr. Eneas Monson on York St., out to Derby Landing, a busy shipping center at the confluence of the Housatonic and Naugatuck rivers.*

*The road was a marvel of smooth, rut-free travel requiring but one stop, at the toll house situated near the Maltby Lakes (toll 8 cents for a one-horse pleasure carriage). The occasion was the launching of the schooner Modesty at the Hallock ship yard in which, I believe, Dr. Mathewson held some shares. Never having seen a ship launching before, I was quite impressed by the sight of this 200-ton ship sliding down the ways, flags a-flutter, brass band tootling, ladies tittering beneath their colorful parasols.*

*All in all, as delightful a day's outing as one could wish, arriving back in town in time for tea with Mrs. Samuel Ward and a discussion of plans for her daughter Mary's approaching nuptials.*

*With good wishes for a gentle summer to all, I remain*

*Your servant,*

*H. Croswell (Trinity's Rector 1815-1858)*

November 2007

*My Dear People,*

*As our justly revered town green turns from green to gold, I find myself reflecting upon the history of this verdant space of common comfort and the motley uses to which it has been put. The green has been host, over the years, to a veritable cavalcade of likely and unlikely activities. It has been, successively and occasionally simultaneously, a pasture for livestock, a cemetery, the site for a grammar school, a jail, three state houses and, of course, a succession of meeting houses, in addition to our own handsome Trinity Church. Thinking on these changes recently, I was reminded of the most bizarre such construction to which I was witness. This was the erection, in about 1828, of a new State House replacing the old "new brick" House. Built to resemble the ancient Greek temple to Theseus, perhaps, I suppose this reflected the town's belief that it, and not Hartford, would be declared to be the capitol of the state, and the city of elms was to be the new Athens. How pride goeth before a fall.*

*The arrival of so extraordinary a structure upon the green, was the more surprising since the Eagle Bank, long a revered and trusted house, had just failed and money was in short supply in the town. The undertaking was not without a certain amount of public discomfort as the site had been part of the old burying ground. Indeed, during the construction of this temple, small boys occasionally disinterred the odd, anonymous skull from the diggings. Looking out upon the tranquil greensward now, as is my wont, I am comforted by what seems the municipal assurance that public building upon the green will be no more, and the quiet walkways will remain a comfort to all, none less than to*

*Your servant,*

*H. Croswell (Trinity's Rector 1815-1858)*

February, 2008

*My Dear People,*

*It has long been a perversity of mine, I must disclose, that hearing certain seasonal music evokes thoughts of a completely opposite season. Hearing of late the lovely strains of wintry hymns sung by your splendid choirs, my thoughts strayed not to cozy firesides or frosty windows, but rather to remembrances of warm leafy days and their attendant pleasures. Such recollections often involve an excursion of some sort, and so it was that my thoughts strayed to a long-ago trip made, at the invitation of Mr. Atwater Clark, out to Amity Parish to view a Friction Match factory in which Mr. Clark had an interest.*

*At first the travel was uneventful, proceeding out through Hotchkisstown (now Westville) by way of the Litchfield turnpike, built to connect the New Haven court house to that in Litchfield. Once past Hotchkisstown, however, we left the highway for the "shunpike" (now Amity Rd.), being little more than a cart path, used by local residents to avoid the turnpike tolls. This was a tortuous but necessary way, as the factory was situated on Bladen's Brook, a small but lively stream along the Seymour road near Peck's Hill.*

*The factory was a marvel of ingenuity, it being one of the first such to mechanize the process of making these match sticks, power supplied by a water wheel. The boxes for them were made by local ladies in their homes. Captivating though the manufactory was, the surrounding countryside was even more so, with rolling hills and farmlands in full flower. The only other building in sight was a small structure devoted, I was told, to the manufacture of corkscrews. My host suggested another trip one day to inspect this latter establishment but, mindful of the rough and tumble of the passage out, I demurred, suggesting instead a late luncheon at the Clinton Hotel, a pleasant hostelry situated on the shun-pike. Not, perhaps, the best preparation for a return trip down that glorified ditch, but our host's excellent tap room helped smooth the rough ways back to New Haven.*

*May your own summer thoughts soften these wintry days for you, as they have for,*

*Your servant*

*H. Croswell (Trinity's Rector 1815-1858)*

*March, 2008*

*My Dear People,*

*Helping our flock to increase in number is, of course, of great importance to every congregation, but caution should be observed towards plans put forward to obtain this laudable end. Of all the crackpot schemes, over the years, to increase traffic to our church steps, one stands in high relief. It was advanced by one Elioenai Clark, a tavern keeper of highly dubious motive.*

*His grand plan, for which he sought the support of the clergy, was to somehow connect the town green to the Long Wharf and its bustling commerce. The opening of the Farmington Canal in 1828 or thereabouts, gave Clark the brilliant idea of persuading one and all to finance a "side cut," that is, an extension of the canal to the town's center, enabling custom to arrive from along the canal route to the houses of worship and, coincidentally, to his place of refreshment.*

*A word concerning the Long Wharf: it was the great enterprise of its time, extending 3480 ft. into the harbor, making possible ships from all the world to dock and trade here. It soon became the commercial center for the town. Each day at 3:00 pm a barge loaded with hundred of pounds of merchandise left the Wharf bound for Massachusetts, via the new Farmington canal. It even had its own justice system. Miscreants on the wharf were judged and appropriately punished within its borders, no involvement of the town constabulary being required.*

*Clark's scheme came to naught, as you may have guessed. The canal was eclipsed by the arrival of the railroad with a terminus at the Long Wharf and soon abandoned due to poor financing, heavy losses and, of course, the new steam rail cars.*

*God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform, as attested by the remained presence of*

*Your servant,*

H. Croswell (Trinity's Rector 1815-1858)

May, 2008

*My Dear People,*

*The advent of the spring season with its welcome new warmth and colorful gardens, has often been celebrated by troubadours and poets, some gifted, many wanting. For myself, it was a time of renewal, not simply of things spiritual, but on a much less lofty plane, things quite material. It was in long-awaited Maytime that my parish visiting walks would bring me to Poverty Square, a gore embraced within Broadway, Sperry, Whalley and Goffe streets.*

*In this small wedge of land, upon any clement morning in spring, a black gentleman named Hozea Rue rang his bell and shouted out in cadenced, often rhyming, calls the list of items on auction that day. It was sometimes possible to find quite useable items for my home, items to be given new life with a bit of scrubbing and polishing. Often, too, I was able to converse with those of my flock not regularly seen in church. Indeed, renewal was in the very air on those splendid mornings.*

*And none, I aver, longs for renewal more than*

*Your servant,*

H. Croswell (Trinity's Rector 1815-1858)

August, 2008

*My Dear People,*

*It was with some trepidation, I confess, that I anticipated another summer gala upon the town green, bringing with it, as it does, much very loud music and a general confusion of traffic. Imagine my unlooked for pleasure, then, on observing the portals along the row of churches. While colorful banners proclaiming welcome to all were a-flutter everywhere, our Puritan neighbors kept their doors shut and locked. Trinity alone stood with doors open, welcoming the passing pilgrim to music, drama and the sounds of life. There was, of course, an afternoon in which our next door neighbor did open its doors, but it was for a tour of their cellar and its gravestones. Welcome, indeed!*

*But it is summertime, a soft and felicitous season, and it should be so for all, even for*

*Your faithful, if sometimes acerbic, servant,*

H. Croswell (Trinity's Rector 1815-1858)