



HARRIET CHAPEL
Catoctin Furnace, Maryland

Harriet Chapel, Catoctin Parish, Frederick County, Maryland is part of a former iron making community which flourished in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A registered Frederick County Landmark, Harriet Chapel is the oldest building in the county which is still an active Episcopal church.

The village of Catoctin Furnace grew around a charcoal fired iron furnace which began operation in 1776. The earliest owner operators were the Johnson brothers. James was the builder and first ironmaster for the complex. His brothers, Thomas, Baker and Roger, all attorneys, were involved in management and land acquisition for this and several other iron enterprises. Thomas later became the first governor of Maryland. Catoctin Furnace passed from Johnson ownership following the death of Baker Johnson in 1811.

John Brien, a wealthy ironmaster, purchased the iron making complex in 1820. Like the previous owners, Brien employed both whites and blacks, some of whom were slaves. In order to provide a meeting house for the workers and their families, John Brien had a little stone chapel built during the winter of 1827-28.

At first it was used by visiting clergymen of different denominations. One of them, the Moravian pastor from nearby Graceham, provided services on a regular basis. By November 1832, a need for more worship services in his home church led the Moravian minister to discontinue regular services at Catoctin Furnace.

John Brien was a member of All Saints' Episcopal Church in Frederick. He arranged to have the chapel at Catoctin Furnace made a mission of All Saints' and, on October 25, 1833, it was consecrated as an Episcopal church by the Rt. Rev. William Murray Stone, third Bishop of Maryland. It was given the name Harriet Chapel in honor of Brien's deceased wife, the former Harriet McPherson of Frederick.

After the consecration, services at Harriet Chapel were provided by missionary priests. In 1855, the Convention of the Diocese of Maryland approved boundaries for a new parish, encompassing the northern part of Frederick County, to be carved out of All Saints' Parish and named Catoctin.

Following the death of John Brien, the furnace operation was bought by Peregrine Fitzhugh. In 1855 Fitzhugh gave the vestry of Catoctin Parish seven acres of land around Harriet Chapel and a house suitable for a rectory. Following the shutdown of the furnace early in the twentieth century, the land and house were sold.

Two other chapels, one in Thurmont and one in Walkersville, were established as a part of Catoctin Parish in the late nineteenth century. These were subsequently closed and sold.

In 1924 stone from an abandoned casting house at the furnace was used to build three Gothic arches separating the nave from the chancel area. Several other renovation and redecoration projects have made Harriet Chapel a place of quiet inspiration and meditation.

Among those who have worshipped in this historic church are three United States Presidents; Lyndon B. Johnson, Gerald R. Ford and Jimmy Carter and members of their families and official guests. Now a self supporting parish of the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland, Harriet Chapel recently celebrated the sesquicentennial of its consecration. As a part of the celebration a United States flag of 1833, a specially designed processional banner and a set of altar hangings were made by church members. The altar superfrontal depicts the village of Catoctin Furnace as it may have looked in mid nineteenth century when Harriet Chapel was young.

Visitors are always welcome.
Please feel free to rest and
meditate.

Harriet Chapel, 12625 Catoctin
Furnace Road, Thurmont, Maryland.
Located in the village of Catoctin
Furnace.
Telephone: (301) 271-4554

The Rev. Charles O. Shaffer,
Rector.
Rectory, 13736 Catoctin Furnace
Road, Thurmont, Maryland, 21788.
Telephone: (301) 271-4377.

Services:

Sundays:

Holy Eucharist Rite I 8:00am

Holy Eucharist Rite II 10:30am

Wednesdays:

Singing, sharing at Rectory
7:30pm

Other services as announced.

(1984)
