St. Stephen’s Church

The origin of St. Stephen’s Church dates back to the 1880’s when an Episcopal priest living in what was then called Pleasant Plains took an interest in neighborhood children and formed a Sunday school in his home.

In 1884 construction began on “The Chapel of the Hallowed Name” (pictured at right) on the East side of 14th Street at Kennesaw Avenue—today’s Irving Street. In 1902 enough growth had occurred in the little congregation that it petitioned to transfer from mission to parish status. When the petition was granted, the congregation took the name St. Stephen’s Church. A new church was built on the site of the Chapel of the Hallowed Name, only to be torn down in 1928.

In 1892, just one day after his ordination, The Rev. George Fiske Dudley began his forty-three year tenure as rector, at first of St. Stephen’s Church and then of St. Stephen and the Incarnation Church.

Dudley served as a military chaplain in Cuba in 1898, and in the D. C. National Guard. He was a Mason, chaplain to the Lions Club, and chaplain to a “commandery” of the Knights Templar.

Pleasant Plains grew fast once streetcar lines were extended north from downtown DC along 11th, 14th, and 16th Streets. The neighborhood was home to some of Washington’s wealthiest and most influential people.

The neighborhood became known as Columbia Heights in the late 1880s, named in honor of Columbia College (today’s George Washington University), which was then located just south of St. Stephen’s Church, along Columbia Road.

Today, Trinity Towers stands on the land once occupied by St. Stephen’s Church.