Church of the Incarnation

"The little grey stone ivy-covered church was considered quite out in the country.... Cattle browsed on the commons and brick yards were nearby," a writer for the old Evening Star newspaper wrote in 1928.

In 1865, Mrs. Jane Farnham donated a site at 12th and N Streets Northwest for the Episcopal church she attended, which had no building. Thanks in part to a large donation from Caleb Cushing, a U.S. Congressman from Massachusetts and Attorney General under President Franklin Pierce, the church was constructed. Incarnation was chosen for the name as Christmas—the Feast of the Incarnation—was on the church calendar at the time the donor handed over her family land to the vestry.

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The Church of the Incarnation was noted for the carvings and paintings of Bavarian-born clergyman/artist Johannes Adam Oertel, whose paintings were also displayed at the National Gallery. The altar and reredos he created for the Church of the Incarnation (pictured at left) and three of his paintings are in our chapel today; two were integral parts of the altar at the Church of the Incarnation.

The church register recorded the names of many prominent people in national and city affairs at a time when Washington was recovering from the Civil War.

In fine Anglican tradition, Incarnation had Washington's first boy choir.

The stained-glass windows in the Incarnation Chapel were built for the Church of the Incarnation and were moved here when this building was constructed.

Today, the Church of the Incarnation building houses the Mt. Zion Pentecostal Church.