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Pinellas' oldest church moves after four decades

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Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



PINELLAS' OLDEST CHURCH MOVES AFTER FOUR DECADES

By HAMPTON DUNN

ST. PETERSBURG --- It's a pretty church building --- Gothic architecture with board-and-batten construction, weathered pine board cathedral ceiling and long, high nave criss-crossed with ancient pine timbers. Small wonder, then, the congregation decided to move the original building, piece by piece, when the old neighborhood changed and a new location chosen.

St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church is the oldest church structure in Pinellas County. It was organized on April 20, 1887. It was constructed in the summer of 1887 by a handful of pioneers equipped with crude tools. Built of unterned pine, the church records indicate the first building cost \$673 (of which \$246 was raised in the U. S., \$383 in England, and \$44 at a bazaar held by the church members). Dr. John B. Abercrombie donated an acre of land for the church.

The church stood on the site at Lakeview Avenue and 19th Street South for more than 80 years. In 1970, however, the historic structure was moved to its present location at 34th Street and 35th Avenue, S. The pastor, the Rev. Dwight A. Filkins, said the move was made "to better serve the parish."

The Diocese of Southwest Florida retains the land adjacent to where the old church was built in 1887. In 1895 ground around St. Bartholomew's was consecrated as a cemetery -- the first in the area. Many of St. Petersburg's pioneer citizens rest in graves there. Among them is the late Abram C. Pheil, one-time Mayor and a successful real estate developer.

