

## Part VIII: Parish History



## **Parish History - Celebrating God's love for nearly 400 years!**

Christ Church Parish Kent Island is one of forty worshipping communities located within the Diocese of Easton occupying the nine counties in Maryland that lie east of the Chesapeake Bay. We are oldest, continuous Episcopal congregation in the United States.

Our history begins when William Claiborne, who came from England by way of Jamestown, Virginia, established a trading settlement in 1631 at Kent Fort, located at the southernmost end of Kent Island. Claiborne was most concerned that a church also be built so the settlers could continue to worship as they did in their homeland where the Church of England was the established church. In 1632, he brought The Reverend Richard James to the Kent Island shore to conduct worship services at Kent Fort. The earliest mention of the "framing of a church" was in 1636, probably at or near Kent Fort at the southernmost tip of the island.

The colony of Maryland was founded in 1632, a year after Christians were worshipping on Kent Island. Sixty years later, in 1692, The Church of England was officially established in the colony and the counties in Maryland were divided into 30 parishes. Of the 30 original parishes in the Colony of Maryland, 13 of these founding parishes are in what is now the Diocese of Easton. Christ Church on Kent Island was included in the original 30 parishes.



## PARISH HISTORY

During these early colonial days, the parish moved north on the island, and in 1652 built the first of three structures that would occupy our Broad Creek site. At the time, the town of Broad Creek was a thriving community with a tavern, tobacco warehouse, and a ferry that crossed the Bay to Annapolis. By 1712, the population of Maryland had grown fourfold, and a larger building was constructed and then enlarged again in 1748. Sadly, the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 witnessed the decline of the parish.



Construction started on the third church at Broad Creek in 1826 and completed in 1840. Just 50 years later, most of the residents of Broad Creek had moved into the growing village of Stevensville, where the Historic Christ Church was consecrated in 1880. (Read more about the Historic Christ Church at [friendsofhistoricchristchurch.org](http://friendsofhistoricchristchurch.org))

Today our parish still maintains the cemetery at Broad Creek, providing a peaceful, secluded, sacred, and picturesque setting in which to remember the lives of loved ones, gather one's thoughts, reflect on the past, or simply to relax and enjoy the beauty of nature.

In 1995 Christ Church Parish Kent Island moved from Historic Christ Church to our current location adjacent to Camp Wright, a ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Easton providing day and resident camp programs. We continue living God's mission, embracing our history as we look confidently to the future.

