

**OLD SAINT JAMES EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
(SAINT JAMES PARISH HALL)**

86-02 Broadway, Elmhurst, Queens

Block/Lot: 1549/01

Built: 1735-36; remodeled 1883

Architect/Builder (attributed): Joseph Moore, carpenter

Style: Colonial/Carpenter Gothic

Actions: Item Proposed for Calendar June 27, 2017

Erected in 1735-36, (Old) Saint James Episcopal Church is significant for its association with the early development of the town of Elmhurst, Queens, and the mission activity of the Church of England in the colonies. It is New York City's second-oldest extant religious building and oldest remaining vernacular Church of England mission church. An authentic example of the colonial period's wood-framed New England meetinghouse, it retains its early 18<sup>th</sup> century rectangular form, slightly flared roof ends, heavy timber framing, wood shingle siding, and round-arch fenestration; as well as later, 19<sup>th</sup>-century, Gothicizing details.



Elmhurst, founded by Dutch settlers in 1652 as Middleburgh and later named Newtown by the English, is one of the earliest European settlements on Long Island. In the 1600s Newtown's Protestant denominations shared an early community building for church services. By 1702, those claiming the Church of England in Newtown, Flushing, and Jamaica, Queens, had been formed into one three-village parish and were assigned a dedicated minister. As membership increased, each village constructed its own church. Newtown's church, built in 1735-36, was a simple rectangular building clad in shingles, with round-arch windows and a tower at the west end facing the graveyard. It was known then as "The Church of England in America, mission church at Newtowne." In 1761 the Newtown mission separated from Jamaica and Flushing and became the Church of England Parish of Saint James.

Although British troops used the building during the Revolutionary War, it remained intact and served as one of the earliest Episcopal churches in the New York diocese. In 1848 it became the parish hall when the congregation built a larger more elaborate church a block away. In 1883, a storm toppled the west end tower. While repairing the damage, the building's style was updated with Carpenter Gothic details including pointed-arch windows within the original round-arch openings, a gable end "truss," label molding, a shed-roof porch, and decorative brackets. These changes reflected the preference for Gothic styling during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A small rear addition was built on the foundation of the previous tower that was destroyed in the storm.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the hall served the parish and the community as a centrally-located meeting place for many organizations. Over the years, the building lost some of its ornamental trim and asbestos cladding covered its historic wood shingles. In 2004, the building was restored to its 1883 appearance (except the porch) using grants from the Landmarks Conservancy's Sacred Sites program and other funding sources.



Old Saint James Church, 1928  
(Newtown Historical Society)