

BISHOP JOHN HENRY HOBART AND THE FOUNDING OF ST. THOMAS CHURCH

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1. Focus: John Henry Hobart (1775-1830) was one of the leaders who revived the Episcopal Church, following the first decades of its independent life after the American Revolution and he inspired the founding of St. Thomas Church in 1823.
2. Summary of the lecture: An exploration of Bishop Hobart's founding vision of the Episcopal Church High Church tradition as a form of American Anglicanism suited to the future of the United States as a nation challenged by division over slavery and the rise of a dominant Protestant Evangelical tradition. St. Thomas Church was founded upon this vision.
3. Bishop Hobart's teacher and mentor was The Rt. Rev. William White, (1747-1830), Bishop of Pennsylvania and Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church. Bishop White in 1789 was the chief architect of the Constitution of the Episcopal Church and of the American version of the Book of Common Prayer. He laid the cornerstone of the first St. Thomas Church in Manhattan.
4. The Rev. Cornelius Roosevelt Duffie, an ardent disciple of Bishop Hobart, was elected the first rector of St. Thomas in 1823 at the age of 35. He was born in Manhattan in 1789, was educated at Columbia, and he served in the United States Navy during the War of 1812. His wife was Helena Bleeker, of the family for which Bleeker Street is named. In 1823 he was elected rector of St. Thomas Church. He was called "the gentle Duffie," and is described as "a quiet, simple, friendly soul, deeply religious, he had suffered much in his short life but learned how to turn suffering into the means of saintliness." On August 2, 1827 he preached his last sermon, and on August 20 he was seized by typhoid fever and died. Bishop Hobart reportedly burst into tears at the news of Duffie's death.
5. The subject of the next lecture: Ralph Adams Cram and the Architecture of St. Thomas Church: a Gothic vision for the modern, industrial city steeped in Episcopalian faith found expression in the fourth Saint Thomas Church. This lecture explores Cram's life, theology, and mission as reflected in his great church of Fifth Avenue.