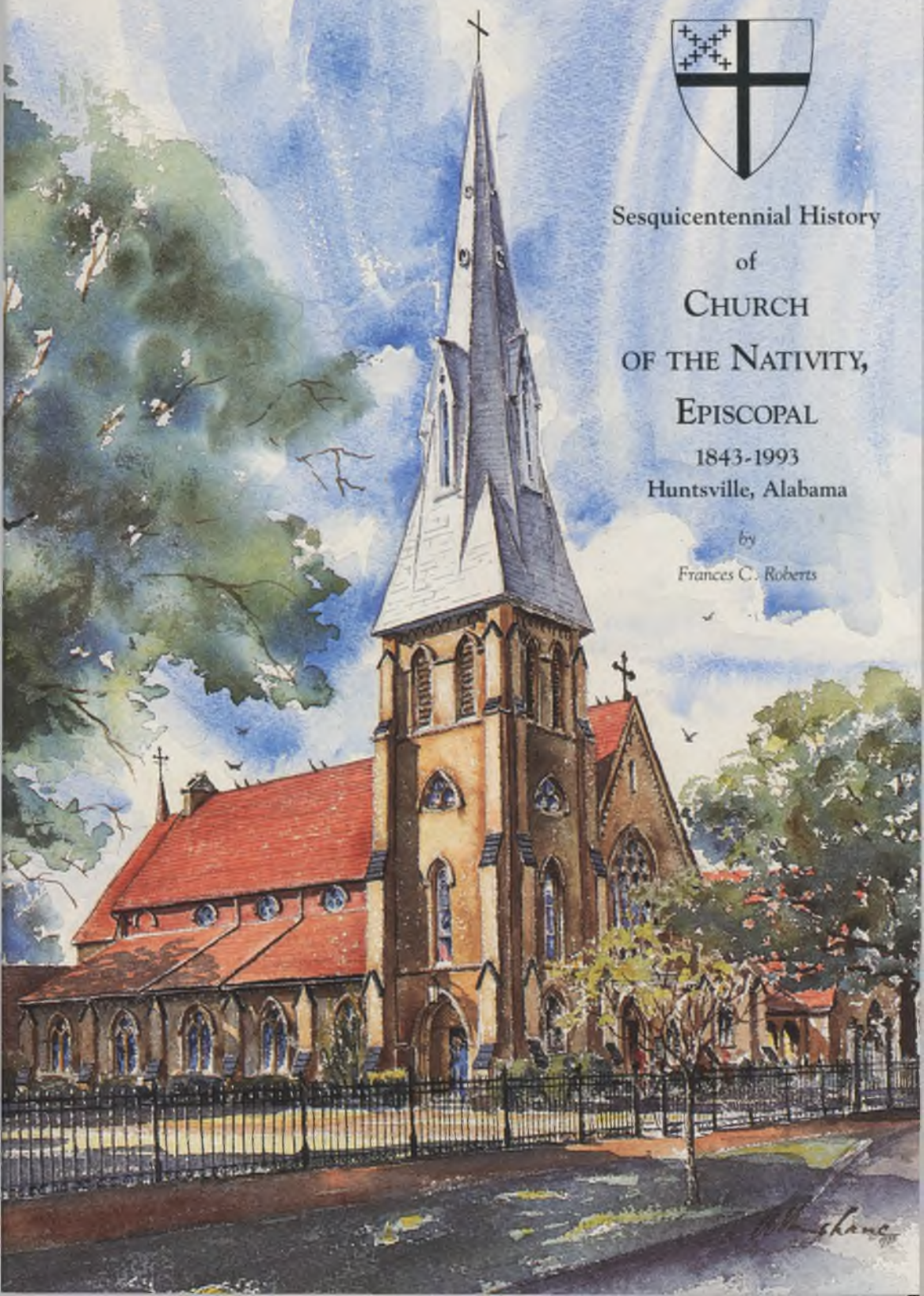




Sesquicentennial History
of
CHURCH
OF THE NATIVITY,
EPISCOPAL
1843-1993
Huntsville, Alabama

by
Frances C. Roberts





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This book is published to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Church of the Nativity in Huntsville, Alabama. It conveys the stories of many of the people of this church and their relationships to God and their neighbors.

The church's name is derived from the season of the year when a group met to form an association on December 17, 1842. At the Twelfth Convention of the Diocese of Alabama on February 16, 1843, the church was accepted into membership. At this time it became an official part of the Anglican heritage in America, which dates from 1789 when the Protestant Episcopal Church established its autonomy in the newly-formed United States.

Almost from the very beginning, the rector and the congregation took an active role in diocesan affairs and furnished the leadership for the expansion of the Episcopal Church in the Tennessee Valley. Eight years after the completion of the first small church building in 1847, the congregation dreamed of a larger church that might one day serve the needs of a much larger congregation. This dream came true when the present church building was completed in 1859 and dedicated in 1860.

Although the city of Huntsville was occupied during the Civil War, the church was spared because the sign over the door "Reverence My Sanctuary" was honored by federal occupation forces. From time to time services were suspended because the rector insisted upon praying for the president of the Confederacy.

After the Civil War and until the early years of the twentieth century, the church continued to grow and furnish spiritual guidance for many members of the community. During the first quarter of the twentieth century, the parish family became increasingly aware of the need for Christian social services, and participated in many of these activities at the parish, community, diocesan, national, and world levels.

In spite of challenging events associated with war, depression, and social revolution, each generation of members of the Church of the Nativity has been able, through God's guidance, to increase in understanding, compassion, service, and in numbers.

About the Author...

Frances Cabaniss Roberts, Professor Emerita, University of Alabama in Huntsville, is a writer, a counselor, a mentor, but most of all—a teacher. She is an authority on the history of Huntsville, Madison County, and the area that comprises the Great Bend of the Tennessee River. As a historian, she is a humanist in the finest sense of the word, lending active support to the arts, cultural affairs, and the people of her beloved region. Her greatest satisfaction comes when a student from a class long ago acknowledges that she touched his or her life and made a difference—and there have been many of these.

Dr. Roberts is a fourth-generation worshipper at the Episcopal Church of the Nativity in Huntsville, Alabama, and this history is a labor of love—in which she has striven to incorporate within the chronology of facts the words and deeds of oftentimes fallible humans who lived through the decades recounted herein. Thus, this work is not just a history of the church buildings, but also of the life and times of the last 150 years as it related to and was reflected in the Church of the Nativity.

About the Artist...

The watercolor painting, by Albert H. Lane (1917-1983), was presented to the church's choir in 1964. As a devoted member of the congregation for many years, he contributed generously of his artistic and musical talents to his church and to the community. The Music Auditorium in Joffrion Hall is named in his memory.

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