

St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral
300 Great Western Road, Glasgow, G4 9JB
Tel: +44 (0)141-339-6691
office@thecathedral.org.uk
www.thecathedral.org.uk

The St Mary's Heritage Project

A description of St Mary's Chapel, Renfield Street, c. 1870.

SOURCE:

Glasgow Citizen, 24 May 1902.

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In the *Citizen* news column the remark was made that old St Mary's Episcopal Church occupied the site on which the City of Glasgow Insurance Buildings now stands. It may interest some at the present day to learn what sort of a building old St Mary's Church was, what like its services were, and if it at all resembled the present church in Great Western Road.

At one time the Church of England would hold no communion with the Episcopal Church of Scotland, and, in consequence, that Church was content in those days to be a Scottish church, and seemingly lived at peace and in good fellowship with its neighbours, the clergyman saying openly from the pulpit his earnest desire was that Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Roman Catholics would all enter Heaven side by side, words that may have proved his passport into eternal happiness.

The exterior of St Mary's in Renfield Street was very plain, and when one entered the building, it was found equally so. The pews were old-fashioned, with doors, and grained oak. There was no altar, but a plain communion table, with the Ten Commandments painted on the panels behind, a reading desk and pulpit of equal height rose on either side, and galleries were placed the other three sides of the church.

The organ and choir were placed in the western gallery. The music was remarkably good, as members of the Choral Union composed its singers. There was no intoning; the incumbent (no Rectors in those days) read the prayers as if they were not read. No processions charmed the eye of those who love ritual, no crosses were seen, no flowers, nor candles lit in the daytime. Unlike the present custom, the clergy never entered the church until the service began, exactly as in Presbyterian churches.

Sir Archibald Alison, the historian, and family had a pew in front of the gallery to the left of the pulpit. Old St Mary's possessed no chimes.