



# Temperance Hall, 93 North Shore Road, Hamilton Parish



*Temperance Hall was photographed in 2002.*

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*This is part of a series of architectural articles by the Bermuda National Trust that will highlight some of Bermuda's endangered historic buildings.*

The Hamilton Parish Friendly Temperance Society was founded in 1846 and its first meetings were held in a building opposite Burchall's Cove. On August 13, 1850 the corner stone was laid for a new building which was to be erected a little further north and across from Davis' Pond. The land was conveyed by the Hon John William Foggo for the token sum of one shilling. Members of the Atlantic Phoenix Lodge No. 271 joined in the ceremony. The Society's trustees were six dedicated Hamilton Parish men: Benjamin Hill Sr, George Burgess, Daniel Bascome, Thomas Smith, Richard Augustus Burrows and Benjamin Hill Jr.

In May 1851 the building had reached to the wallplate when the Society's funds ran low and it was necessary to appeal to the community. Among those who came forward was Governor Charles Elliot with the very generous donation of £20.

As the name implies, the Friendly Temperance Society promoted "temperance and abstinence from the use of intoxicating liquors, and the



moral and religious education of the young". The temperance movement began in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain as a response to the miseries caused by the excessive use of alcohol, especially among young men. The movement's ideals spread overseas culminating in prohibition in the US from 1920 until 1933.

The Society felt that elementary education was essential and that the hall should also be used as a schoolroom. On August 24, 1857, their tenth anniversary, a school for Black children was opened with 74 boys and 55 girls. John Gilbert Allen was one of the first teachers, having previously taught in St George's. The school was originally funded by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge after the House of Assembly denied their petition for financial aid. The SPCK was founded in Britain in 1698 and is today the oldest Anglican mission organisation in the world.

By 1898 the headmistress of Temperance Hall School was Miss Eleanor Maria Burrows. She was the daughter of one of the original trustees and her house 'Elboro' still stands on North Shore Road opposite My Lord's Bay Lane. Mrs Ada Louise Tucker, the mother of renowned artist Charles Lloyd Tucker, was a student and for many years afterwards the music teacher. Mrs Rosalind Taylor Robinson who became head teacher in 1936 described the one-room school house in *Bermuda Recollections*, "We used the outdoors for classroom use in good weather – the spruce trees particularly made a good arbor – the children seated on the lower branches." This was clearly not an ideal learning environment. In the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century Temperance Hall School was one of the most overcrowded schools with an enrolment of over 100 pupils. Finally, in September 1950, Francis Patton Primary School opened, amalgamating Temperance Hall and Cripple Gate schools.

Temperance Hall is built in local stone and Gothic revival influences are seen in the pointed arches over the windows and door. It is one storey and has a gable roof decorated with finials. There are keystones over the windows and door and the hall is outlined in simple, white-painted pilasters. A multi-seat outhouse remains at the rear.

When the United Holy Church of Bermuda rented Temperance Hall in July 1978 it was dedicated Gospel Tabernacle Church. The building remained in an unchanged condition until 2000 when the church received permission to close-in two porches and minor internal alterations. In 2002 the Bermuda Government designated it a Grade 1 listed building.

In 2003 Hurricane Fabian took off the whole of the eastern side of the roof. Repairs were made which included, seemingly without planning permission, the removal of the front door which was replaced by a third window, altering the original façade of the old building.



Today Temperance Hall appears to be unused. Certainly it may not be being used for church services or any other activity as two rusting shipping containers have occupied the parking area for the last several years. Just recently a third container has joined the others.

It is extremely disappointing that this very historic building that has played such an important role in the education of Hamilton Parish children should now be used as a dumping ground.



*The façade of Temperance Hall changed when the central door was replaced by a third window.*



*The recent addition of a third container partially blocks the view and detracts even more from the Grade 1 listed building.*

**Sources:** *Bermuda's Architectural Heritage Series, Hamilton Parish*, by Diana Chudleigh; research by Joy Wilson-Tucker; various articles in *The Royal Gazette* including 29 Jun 1847, 17 Jul 1849, 13 & 20 Aug 1850, 20 May & 17 Jun 1851, 23 Aug 1853, 10 May 1945, 12 Mar 1950, 14 Jun 1959, 27 Aug 2002; United Holy Church of Bermuda Inc website; Bermuda Department of Planning website (B0714/00 and P0941/00).