NEW YORK CITY—St. Luke’s in the Fields, located at Hudson and Grove Streets in Greenwich Village, will open its doors to the public on Friday, June 15, 1979. The church, which is the third oldest extant chapel in Manhattan, was founded in 1822 by the Episcopal Bishop of New York.

In the early 1820’s, Greenwich Village was a rural farming community. Encouraged by the Bishop, a vestry was formed, and a small church was built. In 1831, Bishop Hobart laid the cornerstone for the new church. The 48 by 65 foot structure was designed by Clement C. Moore at a cost of $7,500. Part of the expense of the church was met by the sale of pew, 120 in number, and the sale of vaults in the churchyard.

The Reverend George Uptold, M.A., a graduate of Union College, Schenectady, New York, and the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City, was the first minister. He served in this capacity for eight years. The 1822 Diocesan Convention Journal described St. Luke’s Church as follows:

"The building is a neat and commodious edifice of modern dimensions. The desk, the pews, and the chancel are constructed with great judgment and taste, and its chancel is so elevated in front of the altar that the congregation may have a view of the services performed there."

During this period of the city’s history, the center of culture was the Battery area. With the center city becoming overcrowded and a yellow fever epidemic sweeping through New York, thousands of families started to flee to less crowded, healthier countryside areas, such as Greenwich Village. The combined migration, and the hard work of the parish rector, George Uptold, lead to the growth of the parish from thirty families to over 600.

The church at its inception was in a simple, rectangular structure with a very plain interior. In later years, elaborate changes were made to the church. With the great expansion of lower Manhattan, drastic changes came to the Village area. The one-time farm community became a village, and was surrounded by a poor and very dense population. The church was destroyed by fire, and the church was substantially damaged by fire and smoke. It was restored and re-consecrated on June 27, 1856 by Bishop H.C. Potter. The present lady’s chapel was added in 1917.

St. Luke’s in the Fields was always considered a mission church. It rarely had a wealthy family connected with it, thus it was not supported by its members alone. Only through the annual contribution of large sums by the Corporation of Trinity Church was St. Luke’s able to keep its doors open and not be abandoned.

In 1881, faced with a changing community and financial stress, the congregation moved uptown and built a new St. Luke’s Church at Convent Avenue and 41st Street. The old church and property was bought by Trinity Church for $150,000 and became a part of the Trinity Parish.

Between 1926 and 1930, under the wing of Trinity Church, this once prestigious area became the most fashionable townhouses being built around this four block complex. Bret Harte, author of stories about the Old West, was brought up in one of these townhouses. This very same dwelling is the present day parish house.

Education and community involvement have always been important at St. Luke’s. The school, a vital part of St. Luke’s block, grew out of an earlier Parish School for Boys and a later athletic and summer camping program. St. Luke’s School began in 1946 with a few elementary grades scattered in various buildings. Ten years later, classes from nursery through 8th grade occupied every floor from church to gymnasium. In 1953, a spacious modern school was built at a cost of $800,000 to accommodate more than 200 students. The St. Luke’s School was part of the five year, $1,000,000 renovation which ended in 1958. The four block renovation called for the destruction of some of the residential townhouses, preserving ten townhouses for use by the Vicar, church school, staff and parish-related projects. With the addition of the gardens and trees and the return of many of the buildings to their original redish-tan colored Holland brick, the complex has taken on the look of a miniature Williamsburg, Va. or the Georgetown section of Washington, D.C. architect Thomas M. Bell designed and built the school, and supervised its restoration.

The present rector of the church is Lee M. Laughlin Jr., who has been minister for seven years, and the present school principal is Katharine Taylor, who has served in this system since 1945.

The parish reverted back to St. Luke’s in the Field in 1976. This West Village community-minded facility has always served its constituents and is presently involved in work with the Caring Community (a golden age group), Women’s Activist Organization, and social reform groups. St. Luke’s Church symbolizes the social consciousness of Greenwich Village.

On June 15, 15 and 17, the Parent’s Association of St. Luke’s School is opening its gates to the public to raise money for its scholarship fund by holding an antique show and sale. For further information, contact Marv Morgenstein, (914) 654-9663 or Jane Munsew, administrative assistant, (212) 924-960.
CLASS OF 1814

REV. GEORGE UPPFOLD, formerly of Albany, was elected rector of St. Thomas's church, New York. Feb. 11, 1828

Munsell's Annals of Albany p. 163
CLASS OF 1814

REV. GEO. UPTFOLD resigned the rectoryship of St. Thomas's church in New York, and accepted that of Trinity church, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Munsell's Annals of Albany p. 231
George Upfold, first Protestant Episcopal bishop of Indiana, and 50th in succession in the American Episcopate, was born near Guilford, Surrey, Eng., May 7, 1796. In 1804 his parents emigrated to the United States and settled in Albany, N. Y. He was graduated from Union College, Schenectady, in 1814, and from the College of physicians and surgeons in 1816. In 1817 he began the study of theology under Bishop Hobart, who, on Oct. 1, 1818, ordained him deacon in Trinity church, New York, and on July 13, 1820, ordained him priest in Trinity church, Lansingburg, N. Y. After two years of pastoral work in Lansingburg, he became rector of St. Luke's church, New York City, and in 1830 rector of St. Thomas's church, New York city, and in 1831 rector of Trinity church, Pittsburg, Pa. On Dec. 16, 1849, he was consecrated bishop in Christ church, Indianapolis. On Jan. 1, 1850, he removed to Lafayette, where he was for one year rector of St. John's church, but in 1857 returned to Indianapolis. He received the degree of S. T. D. from Columbia college in 1831, and that of LL. D. from the Western university of Pennsylvania in 1856. Among Bishop Upfold's published writings are "The Last Hundred Years" (1845), and "Manual of Devotions for Domestic and Private Use" (N. Y., 1863). He died at Indianapolis, Ind., Aug. 26, 1872.


GEORGE UFPFOLD, MD., DD., LL.D., was born at Guilford, England, May 7th, 1796, and came to this country at the age of six years. He was ordained as an Episcopal minister and is now Bishop of the diocese of Indiana. He received his degree of M. D. from the College of Physicians and Surgeons at New York.

From: The Evening Star July 29, 1864

Rev. GEORGE UFPFOLD, A.M.M.D. Coll Med. et Chir. Nov. Ebor, & 1814, a resident of New York City, was a member of the Philomathean Society. (Died: 1872)

Philomathean Catalogue 1830.