



ORIGINAL STONE construction, at right, will be incorporated into the addition soon to be underway at St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Alexandria.

St. Thomas Breaks Ground For Addition

ALEXANDRIA TWP. — Ground-breaking ceremonies were held Sunday at St. Thomas Episcopal Church for the first new construction the congregation has seen since the original cornerstone was laid in 1769.

Although there have been several restorations made to the building since then, no expansion has ever been undertaken.

The addition — a parish hall — will incorporate the original stone church. The addition measures 2,000 square feet, and the original building is 1,200 square feet.

A brochure detailing the work penned by church member Vicki Varga explains, "Architect Susan Rochelle's sensitive design for the parish hall respects the integrity and simplicity of our historic stone chapel, designated a National Historic Site in 1977."

The addition will include classroom space with partition walls, a gathering area, a small kitchen, two bathrooms, an office, a nursery, a basement storage area and a wheelchair-accessible entrance.

Changes have come slowly for this congregation, first established in 1723. Electricity was installed in the building in 1960 and heat came a full 18 years later.

In 1986 a temporary annex was

set up allowing for meeting space. A year later a well was drilled, stopping the practice of parishioners bringing water from home for church ceremonies. There is still no indoor bathroom.

For 270 years, writes the Rev. Ann Holt, "People have been baptized, married and buried, have prayed and sung with reverence and dignity from our small building, just as it is. Do things have to change? Do we need more?"

Recognizing that "the church in the late 20th century has expectations from its membership and plays a part of their lives in ways it did not two centuries ago," she