

Pamilla Ann Kirk  
1795 – November 6, 1860

Section 18 # 180056

Pamilla Ann Kirk was listed as one of the early members of Christ Church (Episcopal) established in Nashville in 1829. Pew rentals were a standard way of raising funds to support the work of a parish. A church member paid for the number of seats needed in a pew for one person or for family members. This financial practice was in effect at Christ Church from its founding. As the years went on, some members objected to this practice. The Rev. Charles Tomes, rector at Christ Church, left to start a new Episcopal church with “free pews.” Pamilla Ann Kirk left with him. Church of the Advent was organized in 1857 with “free pews.”

A local newspaper account, dated December 20, 1848, informed readers of the success of Mrs. Kirk’s Infant School. The writer noticed “so many happy faces we have seldom seen together as in the case of these little children, who are as well drilled as a company of regulars.” On his visit, just before the holidays, the children were gathered around a table piled with “cakes, candies and fruits.”

Her school was located on High Street (now 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue North) between Church and Broad in a brick building. Prior to the Civil War, there were many private schools in Nashville. A private school taught by a female teacher was often called a “dame’s school.” Usually a female teacher was called “Mrs.” even if she was not married. An article in *Tennessean* in 1931, quoted a former student Robert I. Moore who remembered that he had witnessed the scene depicted on Pamilla Ann Kirk’s monument at City Cemetery with “three children standing close by the old dame’s chair, her arm half around them while she taught, talking softly in a soft low friendly tone of voice.” And he also recalled that “the chair shown in the bas-relief on the monument was an exact replica of her original chair.”

Her will, signed on November 3, 1860, directed that after her funeral expenses and any other debts were paid, bequests were to be made to three women, including Mrs. Elizabeth Plummer. Also to Mrs. Plummer she gave her bed, mattress and bed clothing. U.S. Census 1860 in Davidson County listed Pamella (sic) A. Kirk, aged 65 years, Primary Teacher, born in Virginia, lived at Mrs. Elizabeth Plummer’s boarding house. In a Codicil, she directed that any monies left after the different bequests should be given to Church of the Advent, Nashville.

#### Sources

Christ Church Nashville Parish Registers. Members  
*Republican Banner*, December 20, 1848. City Cemetery website  
U.S. Census 1860. Davidson County, TN. On-line  
Davidson County Wills. Probate 1861. Will Book 18. Page 427. TSLA. On-line  
*Tennessean*, June 24, 1931. School history and tombstone inscription. City Cemetery website  
Monument at City Cemetery. Photograph. City Cemetery website

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