

St. Paul's Episcopal Church

Samantha Dickson and Claire Svehla

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St. Paul's also Connects to:

- St. James Episcopal Church
- All Saints' Cathedral in Milwaukee

Historical Overview

While Episcopal services were held in Milwaukee as early as 1836, St. Paul's congregation was formally organized on May 23, 1838 and is registered as the oldest Episcopal congregation in Milwaukee. During the earliest years, the congregation held services in the Milwaukee courthouse. St. Paul's first church was constructed on the northeast corner of Mason and Jefferson in downtown Milwaukee in January 1845. The congregation prided itself of being a "low church" instead of a "high church." The difference between the two is that high churches use incense or other catholic inspired traditions held in some Episcopal churches while low churches did not. In 1850 the St. Paul's congregation established Forest Home Cemetery where notable Milwaukee brewing families such as the Schlitz and Blatz would later be buried. In 1881 land was purchased for the construction of the current St. Paul's church for a total of \$16,000 to accommodate a growing congregation of over 1,000 parishioners. The current St. Paul's church was constructed in 1884 on the southwest corner of Marshall and Knapp street on Yankee Hill where most members of the congregation resided. It is there that the congregation has remained to this day.

During the time frame of 1890 to 1940, St. Paul's congregation was gradually moving away from Yankee Hill but many families with historical ties to the congregation were still attending. During those years, in 1902 the church acquired the property that will become the church's gift shop, the church and Forest Home Cemetery separated in terms of management in 1925. A great fire engulfed much of St. Paul's on December 20, 1950. There was talk of possibly not rebuilding and moving to the suburbs, but it was eventually decided that St. Paul's would be restored. During the repair process, members of St. Paul's either moved to other congregations or attended services held at the First Baptist church, which was originally located on where St. Paul's little park now stands. The repairs of the church were finished on January 25, 1953. After the First Baptist suffered a fire in 1974, they sold their property to St. Paul's which the congregation then turned into a park.

While women were allowed to vote in the church by the 1960s, it was not until 1981 that a woman served as Senior Warden on the Vestry, her name was Mary McKey. More women gained leadership roles in more recent years. From 1994 to 1999 Gale Davis served as the first female Rector of the congregation then Amy Richter served from 2000 to 2007 as the following Rector. In May 2010, construction began for installing a new organ, more bathrooms in the Great Hall and better lighting. That construction was finished on December 24th, 2010, in time for the Christmas eve service. The current Rector, Father Bradley Toebben, began his service on June 4, 2017 on Pentecost Sunday.

Timeline

- Summer 1836 First Episcopal service in Milwaukee - Held by Dr. Gregory.
- 5/23/1838 St. Paul's congregation formally organized.
- 1840 - 1845 Milwaukee County courthouse served as worship space.

- 1844 Vestry authorized the building of the first church, a wooden structure.
- 1/1845 First services held in the first St. Paul's church, located on north east corner of Mason and Jefferson.
- 1848 - 1857 Church building was expanded and became landlocked. There became a need for a new church.
- 1850 St. Paul's established Forest Home Cemetery.
- 1881 Property for the current church was purchased for \$16,000 & church was commissioned.
- 1883 Cornerstone laid.
- 1884 Church proper was constructed & Tiffany windows installed.
- 10/12/1884 First service in the new church held.
- 1885 Chapel and meeting rooms finished construction.
- 1890 - 1940 St. Paul's congregation members gradually moved away from Yankee Hill but still attended St. Paul's.
- 1902 St. Paul's acquired the property that would become the church's Thrift Shop.
- 1925 Church & Forest Home Cemetery separated in terms of books & management practices.
- 9/1944 Rev. Holmes Whitmore retired - credited with having the longest and most stable term at St. Paul's, 34 years total.
- After WWII Membership began to decline.
- 12/20/1950 The Great St. Paul's fire.
- 1/25/1953 First service held in the remodeled church.
- 1974 First Baptist Church sold their property to St. Paul's & it became the little park that stands facing Ogden Ave.
- 1981 Mary McKey is voted as the first woman to serve as Senior Warden on the Vestry.
- 1994 - 1999 Gale Davis serves as St. Paul's first female priest.
- 2000 - 2007 Amy Richter serves as priest & created a new organ committee.
- 5/2010 Construction for a new organ, more bathrooms in the Great Hall & better lighting began.
- 12/24/2010 Construction completed.
- 6/4/2017 Pentecost Sunday, Father Brad Toebben becomes the current Rector at St. Paul's.

Annotated Bibliography

Haubrich, Paul A. *A Journey through the History of St. Paul's Church: 1838 to 2013*. Milwaukee: St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 2013.

This book was written by a former UWM professor and member of St. Paul's and was published to honor their 175th anniversary in 2013. It provides a detailed look at the history of the congregation

as it moved from the courthouse to its first and then final buildings. Haubrich grounds the history in records preserved by various rectors and other church members.

St. Paul's Episcopal Church Records. St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Milwaukee Wisconsin.

The records held by St. Paul's date to the church's founding in 1838. Much of what we were able to view were older records from the nineteenth century. Much of their holdings had to do with financial records, including the purchase of the land for their first church, funding for their second and current building and its accoutrements, as well as more recent financial materials from the twenty-first century that we did not get to view. The church also has extensive photograph collections, though those items are not well organized and their exact scope cannot easily be determined.

Church and Cemetery Records (Genealogical Society of Utah Project): Milwaukee County, Wisconsin. Milwaukee Micro 70. University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee Libraries, Archives Department.

The materials related to St. Paul's Episcopal Church in this collection includes church records from 1836 to 1982. It consists of four items on one reel of microfilm. Records included are primarily vital records pertaining to the church and its members, including baptisms, marriages, deaths and burials, births, confirmations, and alms and obligations.

Spatial History

Location 1: Milwaukee County Courthouse (first centralized meeting place)

Location 2: northeast corner of Mason and Jefferson (1st church)

Location 3: Forest Home Cemetery (established by St. Paul's)

Location 4: northeast corner of Marshall and Knapp (2nd and current church)

Location 5: still centered on previous location but with a wider scope to demonstrate the dispersal of the congregation further from the Yankee Hill neighborhood