

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH

IN BROOKLINE

A CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF ITS BUILDINGS

COMPILED
WITH AN AFTERWORD
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ON THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE
INCORPORATION OF THE CHURCH

31 OCTOBER 1999

**ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, BROOKLINE
CHRONOLOGY OF ITS BUILDINGS
and AFTERWORD**

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Sources: RPB; Robert Payne Bigelow, author; A Sketch of the History of St. Paul's Church in Brookline, 1949
CMM; Corporation meeting minutes
VMM; Vestry meeting minutes
D&S; Records at the office of Donham & Sweeney, Architects

- 1) 8 March 1848; Meeting at the Aspinwall law offices, Boston, to organize an Episcopal Church in Brookline. Augustus Aspinwall pledges to give the land. William Aspinwall would raise subscriptions. Harrison Fay pledged \$2,000. (RPB & CMM)
- 2) June 1849; First services held in Brookline Town Hall. (RPB)
- 3) 8 July 1849; First services held in Brookline Town Hall. Rev. Thos. Clarke, Assistant Minister, Trinity Church Boston, officiating. (CMM)
- 4) 3 October 1849; "A meeting of the worshipers" in Town Hall voted to organize, elected officers and adopted the name, St. Paul's Church in Brookline.
- 5) 31 October 1849; St. Paul's Church in Brookline formally incorporated. (RPB & PR)

Incorporators: Augustus Aspinwall
Harrison Fay
Benjamin Howard
Eliakim Littell
James Patten
John Clarke, Sr.
Harrison Bird
Frederick P. Ladd
James S. Amory
John Shepherd
William Aspinwall, Clerk

- 6) 1 April, 1850; First Annual Meeting of the Corporation held at Town Hall. (RPB & CMM)
- 7) 15 April 1850; The adjourned annual meeting appointed a committee "to look out for a suitable site." (CMM)

- 8) 13 May 1850; The adjourned Annual Meeting voted to accept the gift of land worth \$1,500, a farm under lease to David Perry. (CMM)
- 9) 17 June 1850; The adjourned meeting of 10 June 1850 “voted that the Wardens and the Clerk be a Committee to obtain subscriptions for the building of the Church, and voted that the Wardens, the Vestry and Mr. Moses B. Williams be the Building Committee.” (CMM)
- 10) 1850; Architect Richard Upjohn, designer of Trinity Church, Wall Street, NYC, was retained by Augustus Aspinwall and Harrison Fay. (RPB)
- 11) 10 June 1851; A special meeting voted “the rules by which the Building Committee are to be governed.” Among the “rules” was the provision that “the Treasurer shall collect 25% of each subscription before beginning to build.” (CMM)
- 12) 29 July 1851; Cornerstone for new church laid by Rt. Rev. Manton Eastburn, D.D., Bishop of Massachusetts, accompanied by nine clergymen. The cornerstone contained, among other things, The Holy Bible, The Book of Common Prayer, Bishop Reynold’s Tract on the Reformation, Bishop Eastburn’s sermon before the Evangelical Knowledge Society and his sermon for the 150th Anniversary of the Propagation Society, and a few coins deposited by children of the Sunday School. (RPB & CMM)
- 13) 17 December 1852: Church completed and paid for. The body of the church cost \$12,000. Augustus Aspinwall contributed \$2,000 and Harrison Fay contributed \$5,000. The tower cost an additional \$13,000, paid equally by Aspinwall and Fay. Together, Aspinwall and Fay paid 80% of the cost of the new church building. Timothy Corey Leeds donated the bell, cast in London, at a cost of \$1,000. (RPB)
- 14) 23 December 1852; Church consecrated by Bishop Eastburn. (RPB)
- 15) 7 July 1858; Corporation appointed a committee (Amos A. Lawrence, James S. Amory and Thomas Parsons) to raise money for a chapel. A Building Committee was also appointed consisting of the Rector and the Wardens, Augustus Aspinwall and Harrison Fay. A ladies committee raised \$5,800 and Augustus Aspinwall gave the land. (RPB & CMM)
- 16) 1858; Richard Upjohn retained to prepare the plans for the chapel (now the Parish Hall). (RPB)
- 17) 1859; Chapel dedicated. (CMM)

- 18) 15 February 1862; Rev. Dr. Stone was authorized to relocate the pulpit, make it smaller and light it with gas. (RPB)
- 19) 1863; Rev. Wharton restores the pulpit to its previous location. (RPB)
- 20) 1 November 1870; Vestry votes to consult Richard Upjohn, Architect, regarding the design of stalls in the Chancel. (VMM)
- 21) 15 June 1871; Vestry votes to move the pulpit (again), and to build 3 new horse stalls. (VMM)
- 22) Summer 1874; Stone reredos constructed. Mural paintings of the four Evangelists and panels with the Creed and Lord's Prayer installed on east wall of the church. (RPB)
- 23) 16 April 1878; William Aspinwall offers a lot of land for a Rectory; no action taken. (VMM)
- 24) 18 June 1880; Rev. Storrs presented plans by the noted Boston architectural firm of Peabody & Stearns for enlargement of the Chapel to make more room for the Sunday School. (RPB)
- 25) October 1880; Chapel extension completed and porch added. (RPB)
- 26) 19 July 1883; Vestry votes to instruct Richard M. Upjohn, son of the original architect, to prepare plans to complete the interior of the church in accordance with his father's original intent. \$5,180 was raised, \$2,000 from Mrs. Augustus Lowell. The stone reredos was given away and the murals painted over. (RPB & VMM)
- 27) 1883; Brass lectern donated by Miss Adele G. Thayer. (RPB)
- 28) Easter, 1885; Chase family gives \$10,000 to build a rectory in honor of their father, Henry S. Chase, warden from 1872 to 1885. (RPB)
- 29) 8 June 1885; The lot at the corner of Aspinwall Avenue and Perry Street was purchased for \$15,000. The houses on the lot were sold for \$1,250; \$14,250 was subscribed. (RPB & VMM)
- 30) 30 July 1885; Vestry votes to accept plans prepared by Peabody & Stearns. Architects paid for by the Chase family to design the new Rectory. (RPB & VMM)
- 31) 4 August 1885; Ground broken for new Rectory. (RPB)

- 32) 18 May 1886; Rectory complete. The cost of the building was “much more than \$10,000”, but the Chase family paid the overage. (RPB)
- 33) 1892; New communion table (our present one) was designed by Richard M. Upjohn; cost \$500. (RPB)
- 34) December 1892; Plans for a building and cloister for a future boy’s choir were prepared. No construction ensued. (RPB)
- 35) 21 March 1895; Vestry voted to permit Rev. Storrs to raise funds to build a Parish House.
- 36) 4 June 1895; J. A. Schweinfurth plans for Parish House were approved by Vestry. Mrs. Augustus Lowell gave \$5,000. (VMM)
- 37) 3 July 1895; Ground broken for Parish House. Construction included a new porch on the Chapel and “extensive” changes in the church. (RPB & VMM)
- 38) 4 February 1896; Parish House was dedicated. The total cost was \$16,624.50. (RPB & VMM)
- 39) Spring 1896; Rev. Storrs authorized to dispose of remaining horse stalls that stood between the chapel and the church. (RPB)
- 40) 5 April 1900; The Vestry voted to light the church with electricity in place of gas and to lay new floors in the Chancel and Nave. The Chancel floor was mosaic. White marble steps to the Chancel were also installed. (VMM)
- 41) 17 December 1911; \$750 was raised to buy a 10 ft. wide strip of land on the north side of the chapel to prevent an apartment building from being built next to the chapel. (RPB & VMM)
- 42) 29 October 1912; Vestry decision made to erect a wooden building at the rear of the Chapel for a kitchen and a women’s toilet at a cost not to exceed \$1,000. (VMM)
- 43) 30 December 1913; Vestry voted to substitute electricity for gas light in the Parish House and Rectory. (VMM)
- 44) January 1923; System of pew rents was abolished. (RPB)
- 45) 1925; Rev. Clark reported to the Bishop that St. Paul’s communicants. Extensive renovations to the Parish Hall and Chapel were carried out. Rooms were made in the basement and a stage added to the Chapel. (RPB)

- 46) 1936; The Clark doors installed. (RPB)
- 47) 6 January 1976; Sanctuary burns. (D&S)
- 48) Spring 1976; A planning committee was formed to assess the church's role in the community. (D&S)
- 49) 6 May 1977; The planning committee's report resulted in a decision to call a new full time rector. (D&S)
- 50) September 1977; Vestry establishes a Space Needs Committee to explore various space options. (D&S)
- 51) May 1978; Rev. George M. Chapman, Jr. hired as new rector. (D&S)
- 52) 4 June 1978; A special meeting of the Parish appointed a building committee to rebuild the burned sanctuary and sets a cap of \$500,000. (D&S)
- 53) 12 October 1978; Building Committee voted to hire Donham & Sweeney Architects of Boston to design the rebuilding of the sanctuary. The charge to the architect was to design a multi-purpose space, the principal use being for worship services. (D&S)
- 54) 27 March 1979; Walsh Brothers Construction Co. of Cambridge, MA hired as the construction manager and builder. (D&S)
- 55) 29 May 1979; Vestry votes to proceed with construction. (D&S)
- 56) June, July, & August 1979; Donham & Sweeney prepares final designs and construction drawings. (D&S)
- 57) 23 August 1979; Construction starts. (D&S)
- 58) 1980; Vestry commissions a new Baroque style, tracker organ by Bozeman-Gibson of Deerfield, NH. (D&S)
- 59) 15 September 1980; Construction complete; final cost, \$457,966. (D&S)
- 60) 13 January 1981; Re-consecration of rebuilt sanctuary by Rt. Rev. John Coburn, Bishop of Massachusetts. (D&S)
- 61) 26 September 1982; Dedication concert for the new tracker organ. (D&S)

AFTERWARD

I have long been curious as to why the organizers of a small country church in the new suburbs of Boston reached all the way to New York City to hire one of the most famous architects in America, Richard Upjohn. And why would they choose the Gothic Revival, a significant departure from traditional New England architectural styles? The answers lie, in part, with incorrect assumptions behind the questions.

Boston in the 1840's was experiencing an economic boon and expansion of wealth, not unlike what we are experiencing today. The industrial revolution, the China trade and other shipping, as well as the management of the legal and financial aspects of business created a wealthy and worldly class of people. Among the incorporators of St. Paul's Church were prominent lawyers, bankers, investors and owners of large amounts of property who worked out of offices in the financial center of Boston. They were not simple country folk.

Their chosen architect, Upjohn, although from New York City, was not unknown to them. Born in 1802 in Shaftsbury, England, 20 miles west of Salisbury, Upjohn emigrated to the United States at age 27. By 1834 he was working in Boston for the architect of The Cathedral Church of St. Paul and Quincy Market, Alexander Parris. By 1836 Upjohn had designed his first church, St. John's in Bangor, Maine. In 1839, Upjohn was called to consult on the structural condition of Trinity Church, New York City. He established his architecture practice in New York, but by the time he was contacted to design St. Paul's Brookline he had designed the new Trinity Church, New York City, and at least 6 other Episcopal churches in New York, New Jersey, Maine and Pennsylvania. In 1846, Upjohn turned down the commission for a new church in Boston, saying he "could not conscientiously furnish a plan for a Unitarian Church being an Episcopalian."

The incorporators of St. Paul's appear to have been truly committed Christians and Episcopalians. As such they must have been aware of the philosophic currents coursing through the Anglican world. The Ecclesiological Movement in England and the United States was a reform of the Anglican Church that sought to return the Church to the traditional forms of worship and architecture which they believed to be medieval forms. Classical forms of architecture, particularly the Federal and Greek Revival forms dominant in Boston, were considered to be pagan, derived from the pre-Christian Greeks. The reformers believed that a true Christian architecture had to be Gothic. Early examples of a Gothic Revival existed in New England (St. John the Evangelist on Bowdoin Street, Boston, 1830), but it took Richard Upjohn to create a truly American Gothic Revival. After all, he was the only American architect who had actually grown up experiencing real Gothic churches and knew their complexity in a way that drawings could not convey to American architects. With this experience, combined with his innate talents, he was destined to become the premier ecclesiastical and Gothic Revival architect of his time. The incorporators of St. Paul's, principally Augustus Aspinwall and Harrison Fay, were able to discern this in an architect who was only 15 years into his independent practice.

The first design for St. Paul's prepared by Upjohn was a very simple building, with a nave and chancel within the same pitched roof form. Subsequently, a second, more ambitious design was prepared that, while keeping the nave, pulled the chancel into a smaller attached pitched roof form and a south porch/entry. This too was not accepted by Aspinwall and Fay, and a third design, far more ambitious, was prepared and accepted. It had a central nave with north and south side aisles, a raised attached chancel, and most spectacularly, a tall asymmetrically positioned tower topped with a pointed spire as tall as the tower it grew out of.

The incorporators of St. Paul's Church were ambitious and successful men who had ambitions for their new church. They wanted to be on the forefront of the new thinking and they wanted the best. They got it. The noted architectural historian, William H. Pierson, Jr., described it as a masterpiece.

In his later years, Richard Upjohn came especially to visit the church once more. Sitting in a chair on a neighboring lawn, he was quoted by Ellen Chase, one of the donors of the Rectory, "I am not likely to see it again. It has been the work most after my heart. Some churches I have built with the Vestry; this I built alone."